

Role of Akshaya in E- governance: A Study Based on Entrepreneurs of Malappuram District

Communication & Journalism
Research
4 (1&2) p 69 - 78
©The Author(s) 2015
Reprints and Permissions:
masscomhod@uoc.ac.in
ISSN 2348 – 5663

Deepa P K

Research Scholar, Dept. Of Library and Information Science, University of Calicut, Kerala India.

Dr. Abdul Azeez T A

Deputy Librarian, CHMK Library, University of Calicut, Kerala, India.

Abstract

The advent of Information Technology (IT) made it possible for the government to become e-enabled and transform itself in to a government online and bring the masses closer to government. It provides a unique and new opportunity in the fields of education, health, rural development, poverty alleviation, employment etc. The 'Akshaya' has been a high profile project of the government of Kerala for providing e-governance services. The study aims to assess and evaluate the services of Akshaya centres. A structured questionnaire was distributed among 100 entrepreneurs of Malappuram district out of which 92 persons responded to this survey. The study revealed the e-governance services of Akshaya centres, their beneficiaries and the problem faced by the entrepreneurs while running the centre. Based on the survey some suggestions have been put forward for the improvement of the working of Akshaya centre.

Keywords

E- governance, Akshaya, E- Payment, Entrepreneurs, Malappuram

Introduction

Akshaya was conceived as a landmark ICT project by Kerala state Information Technology Mission to bring the benefits of this technology to the entire population of the state. Akshaya bridges a digital divide in state which helps to fulfil the socio-economic development targets of the state of Kerala.

Correspondence: Email: deepapk14@gmail.com

E-Governance is increasingly being viewed as the route for governments to strengthen good governance, for it not only improves efficiency, accountability and transparency of government processes, but it can also be a tool to empower citizens by enabling them to participate in the decision-making processes of governments. At the same time, this process also enables involvement and empowerment of marginalized groups through their participation in the government process.

The government of Kerala has been trying its level best to promote e-governance in all areas like education, health care, public utilities etc. Akshaya, the unique project of Kerala is a key component of the e-governance road map of the state. In the initial phase Akshaya project aims IT literacy to at least one member of each families in the state. In the second phase programme some new services being implemented. The Government to citizen (G2C) services implemented newly in Akshaya includes e-payment, e-filing etc. Akshaya project now gets an outstanding opportunity to react to the demands of citizens by offering new methods of service delivery to meet the expectations of the users.

Need and significance of the study

The present study aims to investigate the role of Akshya in e-governance with special reference to entrepreneurs of Malappuram District. One of the key objectives of Akshaya is Information Technology (IT) dissemination to the masses. Now Akshaya offer various e-governance services to the citizens and it is necessary to study its e-governance services. The study would help to know how Akshaya centres are helpful to the public, what are the services they offer, what are the benefits the project brought to the community and to understand the problems encountered by stakeholders at Akshaya Project.

Objectives of the study

1. To assess the E-governance service provided through the Akshaya
2. To assess the service rendering time of Akshya
3. To know the beneficiaries of Akshaya centre
4. To Know the frequency of use of E-governance services
5. To know the problems faced by the entrepreneur while running Akshaya centre

Methodology

The population used for the study consists of Akshaya centre Entrepreneurs. Data were collected using questionnaire methods and the questionnaire was designed based on the objectives of the study. Malappuram district are divided into 14 block panchayath. From which 100 Akshaya centers are selected randomly from six block panchayath. The selected blocks include Arecode, Tirur, Thirurangadi, Tanur , Mankada and Kuttippuram. The investigator distributed 100 questionnaires to selected Akshaya Center Entrepreneurs. Out of 100 questionnaires, 92 were duly filled in and returned back which included 81 from male entrepreneurs and 11 from female entrepreneurs. All the questions in the questionnaire were analyzed on the basis of formulated objectives and interpretations were made through analysis.

Review of literature

Gomez and Elizabeth (2010) conducted a study on public access to ICT user's perceptions of trust in libraries, telecenters and cyber cafes. The purpose of the study was to understand what is happening at different types of public access venues, how they were meeting the needs of underserved communities in different countries, and how they can be strengthened to better contribute to global development. The main question of the study was to find out what are the opportunities to strengthen institutions that offer public access to information and communication especially through the use of digital ICT. The study was conducted in partnership with local research teams who studied public libraries, telecenters, cyber cafes and other venues of importance in each country. Multiple data collection and analysis methods like document review, expert and operator interviews, user surveys, site visits and focus groups were used to provide data. The study was conducted during 2007-2009 by the University of Washington (UW) in 25 countries, where there was public library system. The findings of the study reveal that the use of public access venues were shaped by the trust factors like safety concerns, relevance of the information, reputation of the institution, and users perception of how "cool" these venues were.

While libraries tend to be trusted as most reputable, telecenters tend to be trusted as most relevant to meet local needs, and cyber cafes tend to be perceived as most "cool". These findings provided valuable insight into understanding how people trust different types of public access ICT venues. The insight presented can help to inform future research to better understand the causes and consequences of trust in public access ICT. Understanding these perceptions of the way services were provided in venues that offer public access to ICT.

Gopakumar and Rajalekshmi (2007) conducted a study on e-governance through telecenters. The main purpose of the study was to look at the issue of e-governance services through telecenters from the broader perspective governance and to discuss the importance of trust between citizens and intermediaries in the realization of e-governance services. The study was primarily based on case study of Akshaya telecenter project in Kerala. Multiple data collection methods were employed for the study. The data sources included documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation and participant observation. The finding of the study revealed that through the personal trust between the people and the intermediary seems apparently important for making a payment system successful, a deeper investigation revealed that it was on the account of the institutional trust in government that the payment system was able to function. The study tried to highlight how the institutional membership of the intermediary is critical for effective e-governance service delivery.

Data analysis and interpretations

Service rendering time

Service rendering time in terms of working hours were collected and analyzed here.

Table 1: Service rendering time

Time	Akshaya entrepreneurs		Total
	Male	Female	
5 hr	-	-	
8hr	38 (46.91%)	9 (81.81%)	47 (51.08%)
10hr	30 (37.03%)	2 (18.18%)	32 (34.78%)
Above 10hr	13 (16.04%)	-	13 (14.13%)

The table 1 shows that about half of the male entrepreneurs (46.91 percent) are working eight hours a day, 37.03 percent male entrepreneurs working ten hours a day. A few of the male entrepreneurs are working more than ten hours a day. Most of the female entrepreneurs (81.81 percent) are working eight hours a day and a very few number of female entrepreneurs are working ten hours a day.

The overall analysis shows that about half of the Akshaya centres (51.08 percent) working eight hours a day. A good number of Akshaya centre (34.78

percent) working 10 hours in a day. A very few Akshaya centres (14.13 percent) are working above 10 hours.

Beneficiaries of Akshaya service

All the categories of the society get the advantages of Akshaya service. Table 2 shows the entrepreneurs opinion regarding the beneficiaries of Akshaya services.

Table 2: Beneficiaries of Akshaya service

Users	Akshaya Entrepreneurs		Total
	Male	Female	
Private Employees	36 (44.44%)	7 (63.63%)	43 (46.73%)
Businessmen	30 (37.03%)	9 (81.81%)	39 (42.39%)
Government employees	42 (51.85%)	8 (72.72%)	50 (54.34%)
Agriculturist	40 (49.38%)	9 (81.81%)	49 (53.26%)
Students	56 (69.13%)	10 (90.90%)	66 (71.73%)

The male entrepreneurs responded that 69.13 percent of the users are students and half of user categories are government employees. According to the female entrepreneur's majority of (90.90 percent) users are the students. 81.81 percent of users are businessmen and agriculturist.

The overall analysis shows that a large majority of the users are (71.73 percent) students. More than 50 percent of users are from the categories of government employees as well as agriculturist. About half of (46.73 percent) the users of Akshaya centres are the private employees, 42.39 percent users are businessmen. The overall analysis shows that students are the main users of the Akshaya centres and they get more benefits from the Akshaya centre.

E-payment services through Akshaya

Akshaya centre provides different e-payment services. The table 3 shows the different e-payment services. Which include KSEB bill payment, KWA (Kerala Water Authority), BSNL(Bharath Sanchar Nigam Ltd.), University fee etc.

Table3: E-payment services

E-payments	Akshaya entrepreneurs		Total
	Male	Female	
KSEB	57 (70.37%)	7 (63.63%)	64 (69.56%)
KWA	1 (1.23%)	1 (9.09%)	2 (2.17%)
BSNL	63 (77.77%)	7 (63.63%)	70 (76.08%)
University Fee	65 (80.24%)	9 (81.81%)	74 (80.43%)
Others	19 (23.45%)	6 (54.54%)	25 (27.17%)

Majority of the male entrepreneurs (80.24 percent) provide university fee payment through their centre and 77.77 percent pay BSNL bill. Majority of the female entrepreneurs (81.24 percent) provide university fee through Akshaya centre. 63.63 percent mentioned KSEB payment and BSNL payment. A few of them are approached for KWA bill payment.

From the overall analysis it is clear that Majority of the entrepreneurs (ie.80.43 percent) provide University fee payment through Akshaya. 76.08 percent mentioned that they provide BSNL payment. 69.56 percent pointed out that Akshaya centre provide KSEB e-payment service and a few of the entrepreneurs (2.17%) provide KWA e-payment service.

Frequency of use of E-governance services through Akshaya

The table 4 shows the opinion regarding frequency of using e-governance services. Now there are so many G2C services that are provided through the Akshya centres which include E-payment, E-filing, Rural E-banking, UDI and Online application of ration card etc.

Table 4: Frequency of use of E-governance services through Akshaya

Services	Mostly		Often		Rarely		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
E-literacy	36 (44.44 %)	7 (63.63 %)	18 (22.22 %)	1 (9.09%)	7 (8.64%)	1 (9.09%)	70 (76.08 %)
E-payment	52 (64.19 %)	9 (81.81 %)	24 (29.62 %)	1 (9.09%)	2 (2.46%)	-	88 (95.65 %)
E-filing	25 (30.86 %)	3 (27.27 %)	9 (11.11 %)	2 (18.18%)	4 (4.93%)	1 (9.09%)	44 (47.82 %)
E-ticketing	40 (49.38 %)	4 (36.36 %)	14 (17.28 %)	6 (54.54%)	13 (16.04 %)	-	77 (83.69 %)
SPARK	12 (14.81 %)	2 (18.18 %)	3 (3.70%)	4 (36.36%)	3 (3.70%)	2 (18.18 %)	26 (28.26 %)
Janamithri Police Station	5 (6.17%)	2 (18.18 %)	3 (3.70%)	1 (9.09%)	2 (2.46%)	1 (9.09%)	14 (15.21 %)
Rural e- banking	7 (8.64%)	2 (18.18 %)	2 (2.46%)	3 (27.27%)	2 (2.46%)	-	16 (17.39 %)
E-krishi	8 (9.87%)	3 (27.27 %)	3 (3.70%)	2 (18.18%)	2 (2.46%)	2 (18.18 %)	20 (21.73 %)
Ente Gramam	4 (4.93%)	1 (9.09%)	3 (3.70%)	-	2 (2.46%)	2 (18.18 %)	12 (13.04 %)
Intel Learning	11 (13.56 %)	3 (36.36 %)	3 (3.70%)	1 (9.09%)	9 (11.11 %)	2 (18.18 %)	29 (31.52 %)
Medical transcription	7 (8.64%)	2 (18.18 %)	5 (6.17%)	-	6 (7.40%)	1 (9.09%)	21 (22.82 %)
E-vidya	30 37.03%	7 (63.63 %)	20 24.69%	4 (36.36%)	3 33.70%	-	64 (69.56 %)

Woman empowerment programmes	8 (9.87%)	3 (27.27%)	2 (2.46%)	-	2 (2.46%)	-	15 (16.3%)
Online Application of ration card	68 (83.95%)	11 (100%)	7 (8.64%)	-	1 (1.23%)	-	87 (94.56%)
Registration of BPL/APL	17 (20.98%)	10 (90.90%)	3 (3.70%)	1 (9.09%)	-	-	31 (33.69%)
E-District	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Unique Identification Number/Aadhar	63 (77.77%)	11 (100%)	12 (14.81%)	-	3 (3.70%)	-	89 (96.73%)
E-manal	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Others	3 (3.70%)	2 (18.18%)	1 (1.23%)	1 (9.09%)	1 (1.23%)	-	8 (8.69%)

The table 4 shows that 83.95% male entrepreneurs indicated that they provide online application of ration card and 77.77 percent used service related to the Unique Identification Number. 24.69 percent male entrepreneur often provides E-vidya services and Intel learning is the rarely provided service by the male entrepreneur.

In case of female entrepreneurs all of them provide UDI and Online application for ration card frequently and 90.90 percent female entrepreneurs provide registration of BPL/APL service. 54.54 percent female entrepreneur often provides E-ticketing service. SPARK, E-krishi, Ente Gramam and Intel learning are the often provided (18.18%) services by the female entrepreneurs.

The overall analysis shows that Unique Identification Number is the most frequently providing service, followed by e-payment service and online application of ration card service.

Problem while running Akshaya centre

There is a lot of problem faced by the entrepreneurs while running the Akshaya centre. Table 5 shows the main problems faced by the entrepreneurs of Malappuram district.

Table 5: Problem while running akshaya centre

Problems	Akshya Entrepreneurs		Total
	Male	Female	
Financial problem	56 (69.13%)	9 (81.81%)	65 (70.65%)
Lack of training program	12 (14.81%)	3 (27.27%)	15 (16.30%)
Lack of infrastructure facility	60 (74.07%)	10 (90.90%)	70 (76.08%)
Lack of trained staff	56 (69.13%)	8 (72.72%)	64 (69.56%)
Lack of participation of society	10 (12.34%)	6 (54.54%)	16 (17.39%)

According to 74.07 percent male entrepreneurs their main problem while running Akshaya centre is lack of infrastructure facility and 69.13 percent faced both financial as well as lack of availability of trained staff. In case of female entrepreneurs, majority (90.90%) are facing lack of infrastructure facility 81.81 percent facing financial problem.

Majority of the entrepreneurs (76.08 %) opined that lack of infrastructure facility is the main problem for running Akshaya centre and 70.65 percent of the entrepreneurs are facing financial problem. A few of the entrepreneurs mentioned about the lack of training programme.

Suggestions for the improvement

Development in information and communication technologies (ICT) are transformed the society in dramatic way. It plays a vital role in society and provides transparency in governance. It helps to provide and exchange information with citizens, business or other government departments. The view and comments received from the entrepreneurs of Akshaya helped the investigators to offer some feasible suggestions for the improvement of services of Akshaya centres in Malappuram District. The following are the suggestions.

The financial difficulty of Akshaya centres can overcome by increasing the service charges to a certain extent. At present the government offered a very meager amount for their service.

Government, quasi-government, local self government institution may entrust more services through Akshaya. This will help the Akshaya centre's financially. For rendering better services in addition to net facility they need more machineries and equipments. The government should implement special funding mechanism to meet the economic problems faced by the Akshaya centre.

For the smooth functioning of Akshaya centre there should be strong connection between the government, Akshaya authority and the public. Net speed is more important for the smooth functioning of various services. So the authority should provide high speed net facility.

Akshaya officials should conduct regular meetings with the entrepreneurs to discuss common problems faced by the Akshaya centre. The Akshaya centre's should situate in a place where there is sufficient transport facility.

Conclusion

E-governance services provided through the Akshaya centre varies from time to time but it helps to deliver the government services to the public effectively. Now Akshaya centres are widely used for various E-governance services like e-payment, UID, e-ticketing, and so many educational services. The success of provision of services depends on the entrepreneurs itself. The entrepreneurs make new possibilities for job and Akshaya helps the people to satisfy their government to citizen services. Akshaya act as a multipurpose community centre to deliver the government services more accessible to the public and reduce the time and money they spend.

References

- Gomez, R., & Elizabeth, G. (2010). The "Cool factor" of public access to ICT user's perception of trust in Libraries, Telecenters and cyber cafes in developing countries. *Information technology and people*, 23 (3), 247-264.
- Gopakumar, K., & Rajalekshmi (2007). E-governance services through Telecenters: The role of human intermediary and issues and trust. *Information technologies and international development*, 4 (1), 19-35.
- Prabhu, C. S. R. (2004). *E-governance: Concept and case studies*. New Delhi: Prentice- Hall of India.
- (2015). Retrieved March 12, 2015, from <http://www.akshaya.kerala.gov.in>