The future of digital public services: Exploring omnichannel delivery to those in need

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Abstract

In an era marked by rapid societal, economic, and environmental transformations, the pressure on public governance and the provisioning of digital public services has intensified. To face the emerging challenges, it is time to take a step back and rethink the way forward – which is the main motivation for this workshop. We offer the conference participants a chance to reflect and jointly explore the future of public services. Following an interactive and engaging working approach, we will address questions, such as (1) Which channels are the most appropriate to deliver which digital public service to whom?; (2) What are the limitations of proactive digital public service delivery?; and (3) How can we reach citizens in need seamlessly across county borders?

Keywords
public services, digital transformation, omnichannel delivery, proactivity, leaving no one behind

1. Introduction

Globalization, technological progress, industry 5.0, and smart cities are just a few phenomena that play a role in everyday life and the needs of citizens and businesses. Ongoing developments outside the service providers' sovereignty impact the service delivery requirements for the service users (citizens, businesses and public administrations). These developments include technological advancements as part of societal and economic progress, including mobile solutions, AI, blockchain, and environmental and political pressures in climate change and crises.

The expectation is that the public sector should respond adequately to these crises by transforming digital public services towards citizen-centric service delivery [1]. All these developments put pressure on decision makers and, therefore, shape the development and delivery of digital public services. As Bertot, J., Estevez, E., & Janowski, T. [2], noted "*continuing innovation in public service delivery is mandatory to address diverse social needs, raising social aspirations, economic pressure and unequal conditions for public service provision within and across countries.*" However, this pressure has different effects on public governance due to its idiosyncratic digital public services development and different digital transformation maturity.

The decision concerning the design of digital public services and choices over digital infrastructures affect the channels through which the service is offered. For instance, changing preferences indicate a significant shift towards digital channels while confirming the ongoing relevance of traditional channels for specific segments and tasks. This underlines the need for an omnichannel strategy that ensures seamless and effective service delivery across all channels, catering to the diverse needs of citizens and businesses for inclusive and responsive public service provision [3].

2. Scope and objectives of the workshop

This workshop aims to gather researchers, policymakers, and practitioners engaged in the evolution of digital public services to address the following objectives:

- *Foster collaborative discussion* by facilitating critical discussions on omnichannel delivery's role and implementation in digital public services.
- *Anticipate future service needs* by identifying and exploring emerging needs in public service delivery.
- *Identify avenues for future research* by collectively exploring the complexities, challenges, policies, and opportunities of omnichannel delivery, proactive service models and cross-border delivery of digital public services.

3. Workshop outline

The workshop will begin with a welcome and an introduction to set the context for the day's discussions. Organizers will present the key theme underlining the critical role of omnichannel approaches in modernizing public service delivery. This initial talk will sketch the current state of digital public services. Next, we will divide the participants into three breakout groups. Each group will be led by a moderator who will facilitate the discussion, document the findings, and note the points that the group agrees upon. The research questions that will be developed will address the most relevant aspects of this workshop. To conclude, we will focus on reflections and the research agenda based on the day's discussions and identify avenues for future research.

References

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