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**HOW DO CITIZEN SHOPS ADDRESS USER'S NEEDS?**

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**Abstract**

In order to address new demands from citizens and companies, public agencies have been developing new forms of delivering public services within a multi-channel logic. In this context, Citizen Shops have been designed to improve speed of response, procedures simplification and, most of all, service quality.

This paper considers that service quality is strongly connected to quality perceived by the users, and consequently focuses on citizen's expectations and perceptions within a marketing perspective. Emotions and the zone of tolerance are also analysed.

Given the nature of the research problem, investigation followed a case-study methodology. The authors present an adaptation of the Critical Incident Technique and analyse an extensive qualitative and quantitative data collection.

In terms of conclusions, this study sheds light on the type of relationship that occurs between the citizen and the public agency in an environment featured by an innovative organizational culture in the context of Public Administration, strongly influenced by the societal circumstances.

**Keywords:** Public services delivery, citizen shops, quality, satisfaction, expectations

## 1. Introduction

Public services have huge impacts in citizens' well being and in economies' competitiveness, and modern societies demand a growing efficiency and effectiveness from public agencies. New Public Management defends a set of strategies to fulfill those objectives: cutting costs, disaggregating traditional bureaucratic organizations into separate agencies, decentralizing of management authority within each public agency, separating provision and purchase of public services, introducing market and quasi market-type mechanisms, requiring staff to work to performance targets, indicators and output objectives, establishing greater flexibility in public employment and, finally, increasing emphasis on service quality and customer responsiveness (Pollitt, 1995). In this sense, we can say that NPM aims at meeting the needs of the citizens and firms and not those of bureaucracy. Public services quality became one of the priorities (Roy and Seguin 2000; Ling 2002), satisfying the different public's needs, with a clear focus on favouring good governance and national economic competitiveness.

However, it is widely recognized that there are some very relevant principles that NPM do not recognize as specific values of the public context: citizenship, justice, equality and political dependence (cf. Frederickson, 1994; Moe, 1994; Mintzberg, 1996; Denhardt and Denhardt, 2000; Fountain, 2001).

In the meanwhile, modern public administrations have been assuming a growing set of significant responsibilities, in which more and more actors take part – private and semi-private entities – resulting in a growing fragmentation of a huge public sector. But as citizens have been demonstrating a clear preference for solving several items with the least contacts with the Administration, coordination between public organizations became a central issue in the last decade (cf. Hagen and Kubicek, 2000; Bovaird, 2001; Pollitt, 2003). Indeed, there has been a trend of public services concentration on the basis of *one-stop-shopping*, significantly enhanced by the significant advances on the information and communications technology (Toonen and Raadschelders, 1997).

Simultaneously, as in the private context, there has been an increasing pressure to assess public services' performance. It's not an easy challenge, though. First of all, because we are dealing with services. The concept and measurement of services' quality has brought up some

controversy in the services marketing debate (Brady and Cronin, 2001). In effect, assessing services quality is much more complex than when we are dealing with products, because services are “deeds, acts or performances” (Berry, 1980), and have specific characteristics – intangibility, inseparability between production and consumption, perishability and heterogeneity (cf. Berkowitz *et al.*, 1986) that make them a unique (cf. Grönroos, 1990; Kotler and Andreasen, 1995). In fact, there are many subjective aspects that are difficult to measure within a quantitative framework – a smile, a courtesy, a word of support or sympathy. Besides, public services’ quality should be assessed from a multiple perspective: citizens (cf. Wirtz and Tomlin, 2000; Vigoda, 2000; Osborne and Gaebler 1992), civil servants (cf. Schneider and Bowen, 1985), all other stakeholders – politicians, consultants, managers, professionals (Pollitt, 2003) and society in general – because there may be conflicting interests that must be taken into consideration (cf. Freeman, 1984; Freeman and Reed, 1983).

Considering their nature, public services can be viewed as experiences – which can vary between a mere series of episodes (encounters, moments of truth) and a true relationship – between three parts: the citizen, the public agency and society.

This paper aims at analyzing how to assess citizen shops users’ needs in order to improve the quality level of the service provided, within a highly relational framework. The model presented in Section 3 encompasses the role of perceptions and expectations, moderated by a degree of tolerance and considering the role of emotions, using a multidimensional construct. The empirical work, explained in Section 4, provides a detailed assessment considering both quantitative and qualitative indicators. More specifically, the paper presents the case of Public Service Citizens’ Shops, a recent and innovative channel for the physical delivery of public services.

The paper is divided in seven sections. After this introduction, Section 2 presents a short literature review on the main elements of public services’ quality assessment. Then, the main research question and model of investigation are presented in Section 3. The methodological options are discussed in Section 4 and Section 5 presents the case-study. Results and implications are discussed in Section 6 and the paper ends with a conclusion in Section 7.

## 2. Literature Review

If we aim at understanding the level of service quality, the relationship between expectations and perceptions should be considered. In the services quality literature there are two main paradigms: the expectation-disconfirmation paradigm and the performance paradigm. The first one considers that perceived service quality results from the comparison between performance and expectations (Oliver, 1980), whilst the performance paradigm argues that expectations are irrelevant and only performance should be considered. These two perspectives gave rise to two alternative frameworks: SERVQUAL (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1985; Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman, 1988) and SERVPERF (Cronin and Taylor, 1992). Although they are widely used in services quality assessment, some authors believe that they are too generic and, consequently, a few adaptations should be made for each specific context (cf. Carman, 1990; Finn and Lamb, 1991; Dabholkar *et al.*, 2000; Zhao *et al.*, 2002). In this research we consider that it is possible to adapt the frameworks designed for private services to assess public services quality and both citizens' expectations and perceptions considered, as explained in Section 4.

It is also important to clarify the relation between quality and satisfaction. Although it is consensual that customer satisfaction is essential for organization success (cf. Vavra, 1997; Dabholkar, Shepherd and Thorpe, 2000; Keiningham, Munn and Evans, 2003; Fornell *et al.*, 2006; Stradling, Anable and Carreno, 2007), not everybody agrees on the relation between those two constructs (Luo and Homburg, 2007) and there isn't any universal definition for satisfaction (cf. Yi, 1990; Peterson and Wilson, 1992). As a matter of fact, for some authors satisfaction is an evaluation process (cf. Hunt, 1977; Oliver, 1980; Fornell, 1992), but for others it is the answer to that evaluation process (cf. Howard and Sheth, 1969; Oliver, 1980, 1997; Westbrook and Reilly, 1983; Tse and Wilton, 1988). It can also be viewed as a cognitive answer (cf. Howard and Sheth, 1969; Tse and Wilton, 1988; Bolton and Drew, 1991) or an affective response (Westbrook and Reilly, 1983; Cadotte, Woodruff and Jenkins, 1987). Besides, some authors argue that satisfaction precedes quality (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1988; Bitner, 1990; Bolton and Drew, 1991), while others support the opposite, in the sense that it is perceived service quality that leads to satisfaction (Oliver, 1993; Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1994; Cronin and Taylor, 1994; Fornell *et al.*, 1996; Grönroos, 2000; Brady *et al.*, 2002). In this context, the relation between expectations' disconfirmation and satisfaction with public services is still barely explored (Roch and Poister, 2006), although there has been some research in this arena,

concluding that disconfirmation is positively related to satisfaction with public services (cf. Beck, Rainey and Traut, 1990; DeHoog, Lowery and Lyons, 1990; Van Ryzin, 2004).

Thirdly, there is still no consensus on the relation between satisfaction and dissatisfaction. In fact, most service quality literature looks for identifying the dimensions or attributes that generate positive evaluations of quality by customers, neglecting the negative dimensions that result in dissatisfaction (Dawes and Rowley, 1999; Liljander, 1999). However, satisfaction and dissatisfaction with services cannot simply be considered opposites (Bleuel, 1990; Johnston, 1995), because controlling dissatisfaction may not necessarily lead to satisfaction. In the same sense, researchers from other fields of knowledge also have pointed out the importance of dissatisfaction analysis, without considering it merely opposite to satisfaction (cf. Herzberg, 1968; Kano *et al.*, 1984). In fact, when we consider the concerns of customers with information accuracy, waiting time, attendance duration, bad attendance, and so forth (negative incidents) satisfaction becomes to some extent a secondary concern (cf. Johnston, 1995; Dawes and Rowley, 1999). In sum, it is important to identify both the sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

The degree of tolerance is also a central element in this research. In practice, users usually recognize that it is not always possible to attain their expectations, and accept service heterogeneity (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1996), admitting a lower service level without feeling dissatisfied. The concept of “zone of tolerance” – accepted service performance level somewhere between the adequate and the desired level of expectations – was introduced by Berry and Parasuraman (1991). Situational factors, service positioning, previous experiences and word-of-mouth may help to redefine their expectations.

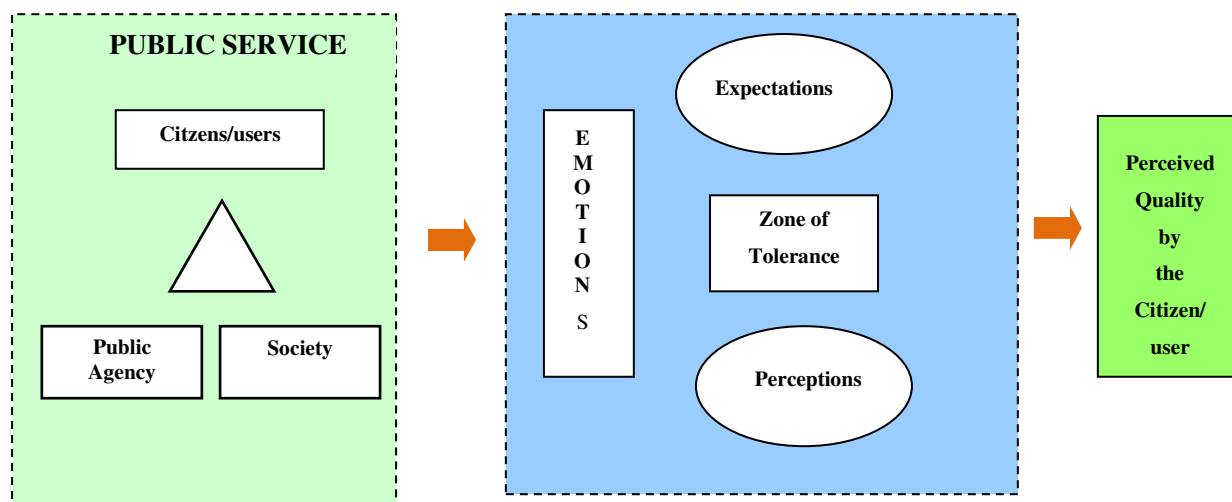
Finally, we believe that the role of emotions is important to assess services quality. As a matter of fact, emotions exert a great influence in tolerance and, consequently, in satisfaction, because individuals may already have a predisposition to see incidents as positive or negative. In fact, the evaluation of a particular episode may not result from incidents, once satisfaction can be strongly related to the customer mood when he or she receives the service (Johnston, 1995). Indeed, the positive and negative emotions that customers associate with the service, as well as their intensity and frequency (Friman, *et al.*, 2001) have a growing importance in literature in the creation of satisfaction, and it is extremely important to understand citizens’ feelings and

reactions when they contact public services (Vigoda-Gadot, 2000). Despite there is a lack of research on the linkage between emotions and satisfaction in the public services' context, which emotions management may change negative emotions into positive ones.

### **3. Research Questions and Model of Investigation**

This investigation aims at analyzing how to assess citizen shops users' needs in order to improve the quality level of the service provided. Thus, the central problem of the research is identifying the determinants of public service quality from user's viewpoint. An innovative and successful channel of public service delivery – the Portuguese Citizens Shops – frames the research context. This study focuses on a central key research question in the context of the Citizen Shops: How can citizens/user's perceptions of public service quality be addressed?

In order to understand the specific context of public services, the empirical research firstly considers the relationships developed during the public service encounter between the citizen, the public agency and society (all other stakeholders), considering the public service encounter as a succession of episodes involving those three parts. Considering the specificities of this context, the paper focuses on citizens' perceived quality, comparing perceptions and expectations, which can result from previous experiences, word-of-mouth, suggested positioning and personal needs. Additionally, customers' and employees' emotions are considered to exert a significant effect on citizens' perceptions, because the encounter seems to be strongly relational and emotions are considered to have an important influence on the evaluation of each episode. Moreover, the research considers the existence of a zone of tolerance, in the sense that citizens may admit that their expectations may not always be met, and therefore accept a service performance level somewhere between the adequate and desired level of expectations and still not feel dissatisfied. These relations are considered in our model of investigation (Figure 1).



**Figure 1 – Model of investigation**

Since the research focuses the case of the Citizen Shops, the research questions also imply exploring the following issues: knowing the organizational processes, identifying the positive and negative aspects of delivering public services through the Citizen Shops, exploring how can citizens' needs and demands can be more effectively addressed and also understanding the value of physically delivered public services without real service integration.

#### **4. Methodological Approach**

This section aims at presenting and justifying the methodological options that were on the basis of the empirical research. From the literature of services marketing there are basically two forms of evaluating the quality of a given service (Schröder *et al.*, 2000): attribute and incident based measurements. The first provide a general evaluation of the service quality - the customers evaluate more than only the result of the service, they also evaluate the process of service delivery and its dimensions or attributes. The incident based measurements are based in the analysis of critical incidents, defined as "specific interactions between customers and service firm employees that are especially satisfying or especially dissatisfying" (Bitner, Booms and Tetreault, 1990, p. 73). These incidents are used to identify the determinants of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Traditionally, attribute based-models have been preferred for assessing private

services quality, but public services' specific features justify a specially designed framework for their evaluation.

In fact, since these topics are still scarcely known, qualitative studies have a valuable contribution. According to Yin (1994), the exploratory research is the most adequate when the research questions are of the type "how?" and when the main purpose is to understand a subject that is still almost unknown. Therefore, this research follows a predominantly explanatory qualitative methodology and, among the alternatives, it was chosen the case-study approach, using multiple sources of empirical evidence. As a matter of fact, case-studies are considered an adequate methodology for exploratory and explanatory research (Yin, 1994). More precisely, it was chosen the Citizen Shop case-study. The choice of this particular case-study was based on four main reasons. Firstly, because despite of its growing importance for the daily lives of urban populations, there is still scarce research about this public service delivery channel. Secondly, because it follows the one-stop-shopping trend in public management. On the other hand, because it is an innovative approach that combines traditional Public Administration and e-Government. Finally, for its organizational diversity and complexity.

The empirical work consisted in an extensive questionnaire, personal interviews and focus groups. The first part of the questionnaire was used to assess satisfaction, expectations and loyalty of users. The second part focused on the incident analysis. As a matter of fact, used as an exploratory technique, an important set of data was collected by means of verbal reports (Ericsson and Simon, 1980) and it was used an adaptation of the Critical Incident Technique - CIT (Flanagan, 1954). This technique was introduced in the marketing literature by Swan and Rao (1975) and in the services marketing arena by Bitner, Booms and Tetreault (1990), and since then, many studies have been based in CIT adaptations (cf. Edvardsson, 1988, 1992; Bitner, 1990; Stauss and Hentschell, 1992; Stauss, 1993; Standvik and Liljander, 1994; Keaveney, 1995; Stauss and Weinlich, 1997; Bostschen *et al.*, 1996; Olsen, 1996; Roos and Strandvik, 1996; Roos, 1996, 1999; Decker and Meissner, 1997). The incidents were collected with the citizens using a questionnaire and then were categorized according to the five dimensions proposed in SERVQUAL (Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman, 1988). Qualitative data was also obtained by means of personal semi-structured interviews and focus groups. In fact, focus groups have been extensively used in services marketing research, and in a few cases their advantages have also been explored in the public services analysis (Krueger, 1994). Qualitative data gathered from

interviews and focus groups was coded in categories intimately related with the conceptual framework and research questions. It was used QSR Nvivo 2.0.

The third and last part of the questionnaire was used to make an importance/performance analysis (Martilla and James, 1977). This procedure does not conflict with the case-study methodology, which allows the use of qualitative and quantitative methods (Amaratunga and Baldry, 2001; Jensen and Rodgers, 2001). In fact, data diversity may be considered one of the main contributions of this research, since triangulation strengthens constructs and hypothesis (Eisenhardt, 1989). The analysis followed the principles of the grounded-theory approach aiming at the emergence of new theoretical constructs on the basis of the data analyzed (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

## **5. The Case of the Citizen Shop**

The first Portuguese Citizen Shop was founded in Lisbon in 1999. The idea came from the Citizen Attendance Service in Bahia (“Poupa Tempo”), a huge Brazilian state, where citizens have to travel long distances to have access to some public services. Since then, nineteen more have been created, firstly in the main Portuguese cities and more recently in smaller locations.

Citizen Shops were designed to implement the administrative modernization started in the 80s inspired in the main principles of New Public Management. This aimed at breaking with the traditional slow and bureaucratic delivery, following a logic of concentration, accessibility, simplification and speed of response. Citizens Shops intend to be citizen-focused, in order to deliver better service quality and improving the relationship between Administration and the citizen. In practice, they are like a shopping center where the citizen can find a broad variety of public and private services (about 60% / 40%) that do have a great importance for their daily lives and, consequently, have a very significant demand: Water, Electricity, Gas and Telephones; Banks; Certificates and Registrations; Post-office; Personal Documents; Taxes; Labour Relations and Professional Training; Social Security; Health Services; Services for Public Servants; Communications and Transports, among others. Conditions, processes and staff are agreed between the respective central public agency and the Citizen Shop management unit.

There is a great concern about the physical infrastructures. The building for each Citizen Shop has good accessibility, including for disabled people, good working conditions and a modern layout. Some supporting services are also available such as coffee shops, cash machines, copies and photo services, waiting areas and places for attendance of disabled people. The opening hours are extended, compared to traditional offices, and there is a special emphasis on recruitment based on skills and competence, which is supposed to be constantly improved by training courses and motivation techniques. There is also an extensive use of information technology facilities and databases. There has been created a call centre and an information service available by sms that allows the user to know the estimated waiting time for his/her ticket.

Citizen shops are managed by a Management Unit that is responsible for the facilities management and the relations with all public and private entities present at the Shop. Since 2007 the Management Units report to a superior agency (“AMA - Agência para a Modernização Administrativa” – “Agency for Administrative Modernization”). They do not have administrative nor financial autonomy. Relations between AMA and the Shops tend to be informal. All agencies present at the Shops have to respect the rules defined for the Shop, and there is a very close contact between them and the Management Unit in order to improve internal quality indicators. The manager is also in charge of managing complaints, as well as suggestions and appraisals, and there are regular meetings with the local service coordinators in order to achieve better service quality levels. It is made a service quality assessment with the users by questionnaire in the Shops at least twice a year. AMA is responsible for processing all data and also for defining measures to improve service quality levels together with Management Units.

In practice, data was collected from November 2004 until May 2007 by means of interviews, focus groups and questionnaires. The evidence was collected in six Citizen Shops, located in the most important Portuguese cities: Aveiro, Braga, Coimbra, Lisbon, Porto and Viseu. This option aimed at assuring robustness of analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989) and saturation (Smith, 1990). Data collection is presented on Table 1. The interviews had a strong ethic concern, since all participants were previously informed about the purpose of the investigation and were asked permission for tape recording, as well as guaranteed absolute anonymity. The questionnaire was divided in three parts: the first part inquired about users’ satisfaction, expectations and loyalty.

Then, the second part of the questionnaire was used to collect incidents (both positive and negative). We not only considered the incidents that were really critical, but also all other moderately relevant incidents. The last part was destined to gather data to be used in the importance/performance analysis (the participants were asked to rate in a five point Lickert scale 29 items that resulted from the qualitative data analysis).

Interviews	Focus Groups	Questionnaires
Top Manager Citizen Shop Managers Service Coordinators Front-office Personnel Supporting Services	Citizen Shops users Front-office Personnel	Pre-test Random sample Answer rate = 84.7% Structure: 3 parts N° incidents = 130 (41 positive; 89 negative)
Total interviews = 59 Recording time = 28.5 hours	Total F. G. = 4 Recording time = 5 hours	Total Questionnaires = 340

**Table 1 – Data collection**

## 6. Discussion

Relationship analysis within the Shop as a point of departure of the empirical work led to a few interesting findings. We divided those relationships in two main categories: internal relationships (between the management unit and the entities that operate in the Shop) and external relationships (relating to citizens/users). Concerning the first ones, management units appeared as an essential link between all independent entities present at the Shop, promoting a partnership among all of them and focusing on using an effective leadership to support a high quality service to the citizen. We could identify a unique “culture of Citizen Shop”, that gives a particular attention to employees’ motivation and compromise. They feel proud of working in the Shop and assume their responsibilities with a great sense of completion, mainly due to the significant autonomy from the central offices. Team work is encouraged everyday and staff really feels committed to service objectives and strongly supported by the management unit. Frequent meetings between managers and service coordinators enhance this spirit.

“Our relationship with the Management Unit is very focused on responsibility, changing opinions, decision participation, sharing results and knowing that the Unit supports us not only in successes but also when things do not go so well...”

G (4) (UA 86)

The coordinating agency (AMA) puts a lot of effort in promoting this “culture” as a means of attaining a high service quality level. Despite of the diversity of the services provided in the Shop, the purpose is to develop an image that should be distinctive.

However, we could also find some episodes of lack of motivation among staff, mainly due to contractual conditions and stress in coping with some difficult clients and also shortage of human resources. The average waiting time is very high for some services, and employees feel stressed a significant part of their working hours.

Secondly, considering external relationships, although we expected them to develop as a sequence of independent episodes, there could be noticed some true relationships. In addition, there is a great diversity of profiles and behaviours among the users, who have shown to be increasingly demanding and, sometimes, causing conflicts in the interaction. Though, this highly depends on the type of Shop, and is more common in the big cities because people in the other Shops tend to be more tolerant. It could also be found that the main motivation for going to a Citizen Shop is not related to the attendance quality itself, but instead with physical service concentration and extended working hours. Another interesting finding has to do with the “culture of shop” identified in all Shops, encouraged by the management units that focus primarily on serving the citizen. Finally, in a time of economic downturn, relationships in the Shop seem to be intimately related to economic and sociological aspects of the population served, mainly due to the nature of some services provided, namely social support.

The research question, “How can citizens/user’s perceptions of public service quality be addressed?” also led to some motivating results. Perceptions appeared to be very sensitive to expectations. The original positioning suggested by the Citizen Shops and word-of-mouth were found to be the two main sources of expectation disconfirmation and, consequently, primarily causes of dissatisfaction. Moreover, citizens’ expectations are extremely dynamic, tending to be gradually more demanding.

“In fact I thought that everything was solved more rapidly, but it’s not bad...”

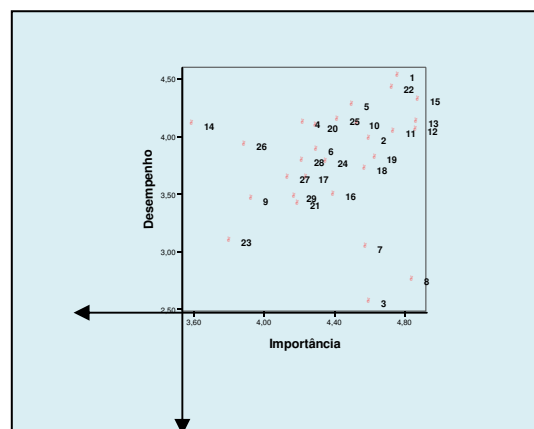
“Advertising gave the idea that we could solve more issues in the Shop, but some services aren’t really provided.”

FG (1) (UA 20 - 21)

In what concerns perceptions, there was not found a homogeneous pattern in the six Shops where the empirical research was made. The results of the importance/performance analysis showed that most of the items had a good average both for importance and performance, with best scores for opening hours, physical concentration, confidence on information and competence and courtesy of contact personnel (Figure 2). On the other hand, tangibles (both physical evidence and personnel presentation) appeared as neutral attributes as they showed significant scores on performance despite being considered unimportant subjects. Oppositely, waiting time showed a low average punctuation, as it was the most criticized dimension of the service, and showed up as a primarily source of dissatisfaction:

“Yes, because quick of response was largely advertised, but in fact the best in the Shop is physical concentration.”  
 FG (3) (UA 48 – 49 - 50)

Two other items – parking and waiting conditions – were also considered to have a poor performance, despite their importance to the users.



**Figure 2 – Importance/performance analysis**

Globally, from the qualitative data, the interviewees tend to show a positive judgement, but this appreciation is still very limited by the poor image they have about Public Administration as a whole.

It was gathered a total of 138 incidents: 46 positive incidents and 92 negative ones (Table 2). In fact, empathy is a predominantly satisfying dimension, while speed of response is mainly a dissatisfying one.

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Nº positive incidents</b>	<b>Nº negative incidents</b>
Tangibles	-	3
Confidence	1	16
Responsiveness	16	<b>41</b>
Security	13	11
Empathy	<b>15</b>	7
Emotions	-	7
Others	1	7
<b>Total</b>	46	92

**Table 2 – Incidents collected**

Although users tend to be very critical of public services in general, they also tend to demonstrate a reasonable degree of tolerance in relation to the limitations they find in the Shops, mainly due to the dimensions they value positively and as they get used to the Shop. Situational items, word-of-mouth, previous experiences and the compulsive character of the service shape the adequate level of expectation. Finally, emotions appear to have a predominantly negative influence on the interaction process between the citizen and the civil servant. The front-office employee has a crucial role on moderating emotions. Nevertheless, encounters in the Citizen Shops appeared to be less emotional than those that occur in traditional agencies.

## **7. Conclusions**

Public Administrations are facing new challenges both from citizens and firms. Public services' quality is viewed as essential to national development and international recognition. Doing better with less, in a very specific context where justice and equality are important values and stakeholders are very diverse and sometimes have conflicting perspectives, seems to be a difficult challenge. Society as a whole plays an important role, due to the intrinsic features of

public services, and management decisions often give rise to contradicting opinions and judgements.

In this context, it is essential to assess public services from the users' viewpoint, and public managers have the mission to handle the users' experiences in two senses: focusing on preventing the occurrence of negative incidents and on recovering the service when dissatisfaction arises, and using positive incidents as learning experiences for the organization. Constructs and frameworks designed to assess private services' quality seem to be useful to the public context, but yet they need to be adapted to the specificities of the public services' arena. Thus, the central purpose of this research was to understand the determinants of public services' quality. The focus on citizens' perspective within a highly relational framework, complemented by the analysis of the value to society, was found to give new insights on public services assessment.

In our opinion, the paper has three main contributions: theoretical, methodological and practical. The first group results from each part of the model that resulted from the main research question and framed the empirical work. Firstly, the research confirms that public services are a peculiar type of relationships involving three agents: the citizen, the public agency and the society itself. Secondly, public service quality was considered from the citizen viewpoint, in view of their expectations and perceptions. Additionally, the attributes were classified as primarily source of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, or neutral. The investigation confirmed the existence of a certain degree of tolerance in citizens' public services assessments. Another contribution came from the importance given to emotions during the interaction period. However, it was not evident their impact on citizens' satisfaction, which suggests that relationships that occur in the Citizen Shops are less emotional than those that develop in the traditional public agencies, the same way that new forms of delivery of goods and services tend to become less emotional. Another contribution is the selected case-study of physically concentrated delivery of public services. It is a trend in the most developed countries but in spite of its growing importance there is still a lack of investigation.

Secondly, the research has some methodological contributions, mainly due to the combination of attribute based measures and incident analysis, which was very useful to understand how citizens' perceptions are created. Besides, it was used a dyadic approach, considering both users'

and civil servants' viewpoints. It was collected a great variety of data which was used in multiple ways, qualitatively and quantitatively, in order to get as much information as possible. This allowed answering the research questions in spite of barely knowing the subject in the very beginning.

Lastly, there are also a number of contributions to management: the importance of managing citizens' expectations to an adequate level, identifying the factors that are mainly sources of dissatisfaction, developing an organizational culture, coordinating the services delivered and managing the front-office.

Nevertheless, this research also presents some limitations. The first one results from not being possible to generalize the conclusions of a single case-study. Secondly, confidentiality prevented the use of certain controversial subjects that could enrich the investigation. There were also found some difficulties in collecting, classifying and interpreting incidents. Moreover, due to time restrictions, it was not possible to apply a question on expectations confirmation/disconfirmation in the questionnaire. Finally, the researchers were not allowed to obtain any internal quantitative performance indicators that would enrich the conclusions, by comparison to data collected.

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