Research Article

Digitalizing Government Services Through the Paspas Permit Implementation Towards A Citizen-Centered Public Service Operation in Valenzuela City

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ABSTRACT

The increasing digitalization of public services has driven governments to integrate information and communication technology (ICT) into governance. In the Philippines, despite efforts to enhance e-governance, bureaucratic inefficiencies continue to hinder progress. The Paspas Permit system launched in Valenzuela City in 2019, aims to streamline business permit transactions, reducing processing time and promoting transparency. This study evaluates the implementation, performance, and user adoption of the system, employing a mixed-method research design that combines quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. Findings indicate that while Paspas Permit improves efficiency, adoption remains low due to digital literacy gaps, system complexity, and lack of awareness. While many users appreciate its convenience, some prefer traditional methods, citing trust and usability concerns. The study underscores the need for enhanced user engagement, continuous system improvements, and targeted promotion strategies to increase adoption and retention. Insights from this research contribute to e-governance policy discussions and provide recommendations for optimizing digital service delivery in local government units.

Keywords: Digitalization, E-Government, Citizen-Centered, Public Service

Introduction

The rapid global digitalization has revolutionized public service delivery, prompting governments worldwide to integrate government procedures with information technology. However, in the Philippines, digitalization, which commenced in 1971, has yet to be fully embraced to propel the country's development, causing it to lag behind its neighbors. Despite this, significant progress has been made in implementing e-government to address these challenges.

In Valenzuela City, a notable example of digital transformation is the Paspas Permit system, simplifying business processes by digitizing permit transactions between the local government unit (LGU) and entrepreneurs. This innovative system issues temporary permits

within 10 seconds of payment confirmation, streamlining government transactions and enhancing convenience. By eliminating the need for in-person visits to the Valenzuela City Hall, the Paspas Permit system fosters transparency and combats corruption associated with traditional bureaucratic procedures. Consequently, constituents can now swiftly complete government transactions online, promoting efficiency and ease of access.

In light of these advancements, this research focuses on examining the implementation of the e- government system, specifically the "Paspas Permit" system in Valenzuela City. The objectives include identifying the factors influencing citizen usage, assessing citizen empowerment levels, pinpointing system challenges, and devising an action plan to enhance the Paspas Permit program.
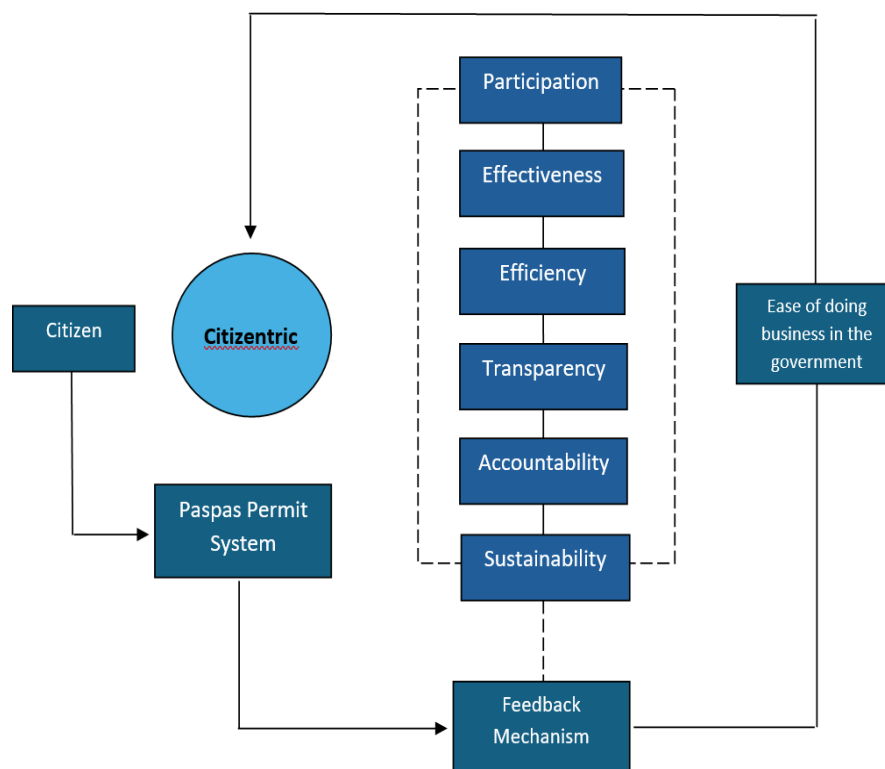
Conceptual Framework

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

The illustration in Figure 1 depicts the functioning of digitalized services and the interactions between citizens, businesses, and public administrators within the system. In this conceptual framework, the local government acts as the implementing agency of the Paspas Permit, focusing on its citizen-centric aspects, such as user satisfaction and feedback mechanisms integral to the Net Promoter Score (NPS) framework. These factors contribute to the ease of doing business in the city and align with New Public Management (NPM) principles, emphasizing efficiency and effectiveness in public service delivery.

The primary function of the Paspas Permit system is to offer digital services to citizens efficiently, allowing for the application of business permits through computers or mobile phones. A citizen-centered implementation ensures streamlined business processes, transparency, accountability, and overall effectiveness in public service delivery. The collaboration of these elements leads to a more efficient and transparent business transaction process.

As digitalization continues to shape global systems, governments must embrace innovation in e- government development. New Public

Management underscores the need to streamline bureaucratic processes for enhanced operational efficiency. While efficiency and digitalization are crucial in e- governance, the Net Promoter Score philosophy emphasizes the importance of centering people in the development process, empowering citizens within government initiatives.

Guided by digital governance theory, NPM, and NPS, the researcher aims to identify factors influencing Paspas Permit users, evaluate its citizen-centered aspects, address challenges faced by users and implementers, and propose enhancements. Through a blend of exploratory analysis, literature review, interviews, and focused discussions, this study seeks to qualitatively and quantitatively explore how digitalizing public services through Paspas Permit implementation contributes to achieving citizen-centered public service in the local government, particularly in Valenzuela City.

B. Data Triangulation

Method/s
A. The study used a mixed-method research design, which entails the utilization of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Demographic profile of the respondents, along with assessments, other data, and information, was obtained using a quantitative approach. A five-point likert scale was used to succinctly grasp the respondents' experiences, perceptions, and behaviors. Additionally, the researcher employed qualitative methods through semi-structured interviews with the key informants of this study, open-ended questions in the questionnaire, and information from secondary sources. Through this method, the researcher was able to determine the issues and challenges encountered in the implementation and use of the digitized services of the Paspas Permit online system, users' assessment of the system, and necessary steps to enhance Paspas Permit.
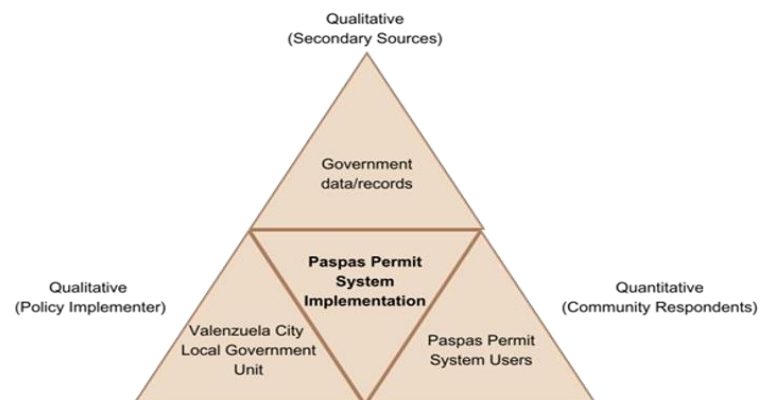

Figure 2. Data Triangulation

The triangular model presented above illustrates the intricate relationship between three key elements of Valenzuela City's Paspas Permit System Implementation: pre-existing governmental data/records, the Valenzuela LGU as the system implementer, and the users of the Paspas Permit system. This model emphasizes the interdependence of these components, showcasing a holistic view of the implementation process and facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the study. In essence, this model highlights the interconnectedness of the system, demonstrating how each element influences and is influenced by the others, thus providing a crucial framework for analyzing the Paspas Permit's success and challenges. Qualitative data plays a crucial role in elucidating the "how" and "why" behind quantitative findings, providing depth and insight into the research outcomes. On the other hand, quantitative results can be further validated or questioned by qualitative perspectives, enhancing the overall credibility of the study and offering a more nuanced context for interpretation. This interplay

between qualitative and quantitative data enriches the research findings, ensuring a robust and comprehensive analysis.

Results
Implementation of Paspas Permit

Business renewals and applications in Valenzuela city were processed through personal visits in the city hall before 2019. This traditional method has caused delays and frustrated customers due to its slow service delivery. To resolve this issue, the city local government implemented a one-stop shop and end-to-end online business application and renewal platform in the fourth quarter of 2019, this now known as Paspas Permit. This system is an online permit application platform that enables business owners in the city to register, request, process, renew, and pay for their business permit application easily. Apart from aiming to materialize ease of doing business in the city, it was also implemented to encourage and stimulate business activities.

Moreover, Paspas Permit also optimizes citizens' participation towards a citizen-centered public service. Its initial implementation was considered a success, with a recorded 1,113 new accounts and an increased collection by 2,787.25% in 2020. However, at present, while there are over 19,000 recorded registered business establishments in the city, only 2,717 of them use the online system. This indicates a low user rate as opposed to the sector it aims to serve.

Performance of Paspas Permit

Customers of the Paspas Permit system generally expressed satisfaction with its ease of use compared to traditional methods. However, certain users, particularly older individuals or those less tech-savvy, found the interface overwhelming and confusing. Despite these challenges, improvements in website functionality and usability were acknowledged, alongside promotional efforts through digital and traditional media channels. Customer support services played a vital role in assisting users through the system.

While many users appreciated the system's efficiency in business processes, some respondents voiced dissatisfaction due to interface issues, website crashes, and transaction glitches. Concerns regarding sustainability and the need for regular maintenance were also raised. Despite positive aspects, a segment of users maintained low trust in the system, showing a preference for traditional methods.

The decline in new user numbers and low retention rates highlight the necessity for enhanced promotion and user engagement strategies. The LGU should prioritize overcoming adoption barriers, addressing the needs of businesses still reliant on manual processes. Implementing mandatory usage for corporations and enhancing user experience could foster improved retention rates and system growth.

Factors Influencing Paspas Users in Using the System
Table 1: Distribution of How Respondents Learn the Paspas Permit

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage
Valenzuela LGU	231	66.19
Online Advertisement	82	23.50
Friends/Neighbors	36	10.31
Total	**349**	**100**

Out of the total 349 respondents surveyed, a significant majority of 231 individuals, accounting for 66.19% of the sample, reported learning about the Paspas Permit system through the city LGU's robust advertising efforts. This information is crucial for understanding the impact of promotional strategies on user awareness and adoption rates within the community. Additionally, 82 respondents, representing 23.50% of the total, mentioned discovering the system through online advertisements, highlighting the importance of digital marketing in reaching a broader audience. Moreover, 36 respondents, comprising 10.31% of the sample,

indicated that they became aware of the system through word-of-mouth referrals from friends or neighbors, underscoring the role of interpersonal communication in disseminating information about public services.

These findings provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of different communication channels in promoting the Paspas Permit system to residents. The overwhelming majority of respondents influenced by the city LGU's advertising efforts suggest the significance of traditional promotional methods in raising awareness about government services. The substantial percentage of individuals reached through online advertisements indicates the growing importance of digital platforms in engaging with tech-savvy audiences. Furthermore, the impact of word-of-mouth referrals highlights the role of social networks and community relationships in driving public service adoption.

In the broader research field, these findings contribute to the understanding of how diverse marketing strategies influence user knowledge and engagement with e-government systems. By analyzing the varying impacts of different communication channels, researchers can glean insights into effective promotional tactics for enhancing citizen participation in digital government initiatives. Additionally, these results underscore the multifaceted nature of information dissemination in public service delivery, emphasizing the need for integrated marketing approaches to ensure comprehensive outreach and user education.

Table 2. Factors that Influence respondents in using Paspas Permit

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage
Mandated by the LGU ordinance	225	64.47
Easy to access	48	13.75
Save time and money	36	10.32
Alternative transaction	23	6.51
Others	17	4.87
Total	**349**	**100.00**

The research findings indicate that the awareness and utilization of the Paspas Permit system are influenced by various factors. A significant majority of 225 respondents reported that their awareness of the system stemmed from the LGU's mandate as per city ordinance. This highlights the pivotal role of regulatory enforcement in promoting system awareness among residents. Additionally, a notable group of respondents identified other key factors contributing to their awareness and utilization of the system. These included the system's ease of access (48 respondents), perceived time and cost savings (36 respondents), and the system's utility as an alternative transaction method (23 respondents). A smaller percentage of respondents (17 individuals) cited additional reasons, showcasing the diverse array of influences shaping citizen engagement with the Paspas Permit system.

The research underscores the multifaceted nature of factors influencing citizen awareness and adoption of e-government services. By recognizing the significance of regulatory mandates, accessibility, cost- effectiveness, and convenience in driving user engagement, policymakers and service providers can tailor their strategies to enhance system utilization and citizen participation. Understanding the varied motivations behind user behavior provides valuable insights for designing targeted promotional campaigns, improving service functionality, and addressing user needs effectively.

In the broader research field, these findings contribute to the evolving discourse on e-government adoption and citizen engagement. By delving into the nuanced reasons behind user awareness and utilization of digital services, researchers can enrich their understanding of the complex interplay between policy mandates, user experience, and service benefits. This

deeper analysis not only informs practical strategies for enhancing e-government implementation but also sheds light on the intricate

dynamics of public service delivery in the digital age.

Empowering Citizen-centered Public Service in Valenzuela City

Table 3. Satisfaction on the Accessibility of the Paspas Permit

Indicators	WM	SD	Interpretation
1. Accessing the Paspas permit online	3.30	0.95	Moderately Satisfied
2. Ease of navigating website/ application	3.17	0.90	Moderately Satisfied
3. Ease of downloading material	3.09	0.89	Moderately Satisfied
4. Availability of information /documents on the website	3.25	0.97	Moderately Satisfied
5. Clarity of online forms	3.23	0.87	Moderately Satisfied
6. Presentation of website/application	3.22	0.84	Moderately Satisfied
Composite Weighted Mean and SD	**3.21**	**0.90**	**Moderately Satisfied**

The data presented above reflects user satisfaction levels with the accessibility of the Paspas Permit system across various indicators, indicating a moderate level of satisfaction among users. While the system performs adequately in key areas such as online access, navigation, document availability, form clarity, and presentation, there are opportunities for further enhancements to elevate user satisfaction levels and ensure a seamless and user-centric experience in accessing government services through the platform.

Respondents highlight the proactive efforts of the Local Government Unit (LGU) to enhance accessibility and promote the use of the Paspas Permit system. By employing various

informational materials and social media platforms for dissemination, the LGU demonstrates a commitment to educating citizens on system access. The presence of instructional posters at the municipality further supports user navigation within the system, potentially increasing awareness and utilization among residents.

This user-centric initiative not only showcases the LGU's dedication to improving accessibility but also signifies a commitment to supporting citizens in navigating the system effectively. Through active promotion and facilitation of access to the Paspas Permit system via multiple channels, the LGU aims to empower users and streamline their engagement with government services.

Table 4. Paspas Permit User Satisfaction: Service Delivery and Responsiveness

Indicators	WM	SD	Interpretation
1. The online Paspas permit system is user-interface friendly	3.80	1.12	Satisfied
2. Does the service you received took into account your individual circumstances and preferences.	3.70	1.09	Satisfied
3. The Paspas online system is attentive to users' needs	3.74	1.10	Satisfied
4. The Paspas online system has speedy service in responding to users' queries/ concerns	3.66	1.14	Satisfied
5. How satisfied are you in getting the service in terms of its time pace?	3.68	1.16	Satisfied
6. How satisfied are you in their responsiveness to your queries/concerns in availing this service?	3.60	1.19	Satisfied
7. In terms of its user-centered service delivery and responsiveness, how satisfied were you with the service you got?	3.63	1.20	Satisfied
8. Was the service provided better than you expected?	3.62	1.21	Satisfied
Composite Weighted Mean and SD	**3.68**	**1.21**	**Satisfied**

The respondents expressed satisfaction with various aspects of the system, including the user interface, responsiveness to user needs, service speed, quality of service, and overall user-centered approach. The weighted mean of 3.68 and a standard deviation of 1.21 indicate a moderate to high level of user satisfaction with the Paspas Permit system's user experience.

The positive feedback on the user interface, attention to user needs, service speed, responsiveness, and user-centric nature of the system highlights the effectiveness of the design and implementation in meeting user expectations. These findings underscore the importance of user-centered design principles in enhancing user satisfaction and engagement with e-government services.

In the broader research field, these results contribute valuable insights into the critical factors that drive user satisfaction with digital government systems. By analyzing user perceptions of the system's usability, responsiveness, and overall user experience, researchers can identify areas for improvement and innovation in e-government service delivery. Understanding the key drivers of user satisfaction can inform policymakers and service providers on how to design and optimize digital platforms to meet the evolving needs and expectations of citizens.

Challenges in the Implementation of Paspas Permit

The challenges in implementing the Paspas Permit system were identified by the respondents in this study, revealing concerns regarding the clarity of the website's presentation. Users expressed dissatisfaction with the system's user-friendliness, indicating a preference for traditional methods that offer them a sense of assurance. The feedback underscores the need for enhancements, especially in light of retention rate issues observed with the system. Users highlighted difficulties in navigating the website, frequent downtime, prolonged resolution times for user concerns, and a perceived lack of visible progress in issue resolution. These insights emphasize the imperative to prioritize user needs and improve service delivery to enhance citizen participation.

Towards an Enhanced Paspas Permit

While the findings of this study generally reflect positive user satisfaction with the Paspas Permit system, it is crucial for the Local Government Unit (LGU) to address the highlighted issues effectively. Specifically, attention should be given to concerns related to the system's interface, convenience, accessibility, frequent outages, and payment methods. Externally, efforts should be made to mitigate user dissatisfaction, encourage non-users to transition to the system, and establish partnerships with a broader network of banks to enhance payment options.

To overcome these persistent challenges and improve the overall user experience, several recommendations are proposed. These include strategies to increase adoption rates, enhance the system's interface, improve website functionality, provide seminars or tutorials for elderly and non-tech-savvy business owners, conduct regular consultations and evaluations, expand payment options, and establish satellite offices for user convenience. By addressing these issues comprehensively, the LGU can enhance public service delivery, fostering efficiency, effectiveness, and transparency. Furthermore, these initiatives will contribute to the advancement of digitalization and e-governance efforts within the city, ultimately benefiting both users and the broader community.

Discussion
Implementation of Paspas Permit

Before 2019, business renewals and applications in Valenzuela City relied on traditional, face to face, in-person visits, leading to delays and frustrations for stakeholders. In response, the city introduced the Paspas Permit system, an online platform designed for registering, renewing, and processing payments for business permits. The system's primary goal was to enhance service efficiency and stimulate business activities within the city. Initially, the implementation of the system showed promising results, evidenced by the creation of 1,113 new accounts and a remarkable 2,787.25% increase in collections in 2020. However, despite having over 19,000 registered businesses in the city, only 2,717 are actively utilizing the online system, indicating a low adoption rate.

This data underscores the significant shift from traditional in-person processes to digital platforms for business permit transactions in Valenzuela City. While the initial success of the Paspas Permit system is evident in the surge of new accounts and revenue collection, the low adoption rate among registered businesses raises important considerations for further analysis. Understanding the factors contributing to the underutilization of the system is crucial for policymakers and city officials to enhance user engagement and maximize the system's potential impact on streamlining business processes and promoting economic growth.

In the broader research landscape, these findings contribute to the discourse on e-government implementation and digital transformation in local governance. By exploring the challenges and opportunities associated with transitioning to online platforms for public service delivery, researchers can identify strategies to overcome barriers to adoption, enhance user experience, and drive greater participation in digital government initiatives. This deeper analysis sheds light on the complexities of integrating technology into administrative processes and highlights the importance of user-centric approaches in advancing e-governance practices.

Performance of Paspas Permit System

Customers of the Paspas Permit system generally found it more user-friendly compared to traditional methods, although challenges were observed, particularly among older users struggling with the interface. While improvements have been acknowledged, issues such as system crashes, transaction difficulties, and concerns regarding sustainability persist. Some users expressed low trust in the system, opting for manual processing methods instead. The decline in new users and retention rates underscores the importance of enhancing promotion strategies, increasing user engagement, and addressing barriers to adoption effectively. To address these challenges, the Local Government Unit (LGU) should consider reinstating mandatory usage for corporations and focus on enhancing the overall user experience to drive retention and foster system growth.

This analysis provides valuable insights into the complexities of user adoption and satisfaction with e- government systems, particularly in transitioning from traditional to digital service delivery methods. By delving into the nuances of user experiences, challenges, and preferences, researchers can identify key areas for improvement in system design, functionality, and user engagement strategies. Understanding the factors influencing user trust, adoption rates, and retention is essential for policymakers and service providers to tailor their approaches effectively, ultimately enhancing the success and impact of e-government initiatives.

In the broader research context, these findings contribute to the evolving discourse on digital transformation in public service delivery. By examining user perceptions, behaviors, and challenges in adopting e- government systems, researchers can inform evidence-based strategies to optimize user experiences, drive system utilization, and promote the broader uptake of digital government services. This deeper analysis enhances our understanding of the dynamics shaping e-governance practices and highlights the importance of user-centric approaches in advancing digital government agendas.

Factors Influencing Valenzuela Citizen's in Using Paspas Permit

Respondents Introduction to Paspas Permit

A significant portion of respondents became aware of the Paspas Permit system through the active promotion by the Valenzuela LGU, followed by online advertisements and word-of-mouth from friends or neighbors. Additionally, some respondents highlighted the use of traditional promotional materials, such as tarpaulins, flyers, and booklets that provided detailed information on how to access the system. One respondent noted, "*Maraming umiikot para magpamigay ng mga fliers*," which translates to "There are circulating and distributed flyers." This statement underscores the effectiveness of grassroots promotional efforts in disseminating information about the Paspas Permit system. The reliance on both digital and traditional marketing strategies suggests that

while online outreach is crucial, personal inter-actions and physical materials remain vital in ensuring that citizens are informed and engaged. This multi-channel approach not only broadens awareness but also reinforces the importance of community involvement in promoting government initiatives, ultimately fostering greater participation in the system. According to Sinha (2021), the efficiency and success of a government can be understood by the reach of e-governance to its citizens. It is crucial that the Valenzuela City LGU bolster its campaign efforts in advertising the Paspas Permit System to ensure the progressing development of digitalizing government processes towards e-governance in the city. As Hanisch et al. (2022) and Vaia et al. (2022) mentioned, digital governance has the capacity to enhance the efficiency of public service delivery --- therefore, supporting efforts for this is essential.

Furthermore, the passage of Ordinance No. 726 in 2020 marked a significant turning point for the Paspas Permit system. This ordinance mandated its use by all corporations in Valenzuela City, substantially expanding the program's reach and impact. The regulatory mandate underscores the crucial role of policy enforcement in driving adoption rates, demonstrating that legal requirements can be a powerful catalyst for increased utilization of digital government services. This development highlights the importance of integrating legal frameworks with technological advancements to ensure the successful implementation of e-governance initiatives.

Factors Influencing Valenzuela Citizens in Using Paspas Permit

The survey results indicate that the awareness and utilization of the Paspas Permit system in Valenzuela City are shaped by various influencing factors, each contributing to citizens' decisions to engage with the system. The most significant factor is the mandated implementation of the system by the Local Government Unit (LGU) ordinance. This finding emphasizes the power of regulatory requirements in driving system adoption. When citizens perceive that using the Paspas Permit system is not just beneficial but also obligatory, they are more likely to participate. This suggests that

policy enforcement plays a crucial role in shaping public behavior and can be leveraged to enhance the uptake of digital government services.

In addition to the mandated aspect, respondents highlighted ease of access as a key factor influencing their engagement with the Paspas Permit system. This underscores the essential role of user-friendly design in fostering participation, aligning with established research on the significance of a positive user experience. A system that is perceived as easy to navigate can significantly enhance user satisfaction, ultimately leading to higher utilization rates. Therefore, this finding suggests that continuous improvements in the system's accessibility and user interface should be prioritized to maintain and increase participation rates effectively. Time and cost savings were cited by some respondents, indicating that citizens recognize the practical benefits of the Paspas Permit system. This highlights a critical aspect of e-governance: when digital solutions effectively streamline processes and reduce costs, they become more attractive to users. The positive correlation between perceived efficiency and willingness to use the system can serve as a strong incentive for further adoption among citizens who may be initially hesitant.

Furthermore, other respondents viewed the system as an alternative transaction method, suggesting that individuals appreciate having multiple avenues for engaging with government services. This flexibility can cater to diverse user preferences and needs, thereby broadening the system's appeal. Lastly, the small percentage of respondents identified other reasons indicates a diversity of influences on citizen engagement. This highlights the need for further qualitative exploration to understand these varying perspectives better.

The result reveals that awareness and utilization of the Paspas Permit system are influenced by a combination of regulatory mandates, user accessibility, practical benefits, and the availability of alternative methods. These insights can inform future enhancements to the system, ensuring that it effectively meets citizens' needs and encourages broader participation. The system's accessibility significantly influenced Paspas Permit usage. Respondents

reported saving both time and money by avoiding trips to City Hall to process business transactions, a key motivator for adopting the system over traditional methods. For some, it offered a convenient alternative for business renewals and applications. Beyond these primary factors, however, other influences emerged. Some respondents cited word-of- mouth referrals from acquaintances, as evidenced by these statements: "*Kasi yung mga katabi naming na business nag renew gamit ang Paspas Permit*" (Because the businesses beside us renewed using Paspas Permit), and "*Dahil sa kakilala naming na may business rin kaya nag try kami gamitin yung Paspas Permit*" (Because we have acquaintances with businesses, that's why we tried Paspas Permit), added by another respondent. Furthermore, other contributing factors included altered routines established during the pandemic and mandates from the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR). This diversity of influences highlights the multifaceted nature of technology adoption and underscores the importance of considering various motivational factors when evaluating the success of e-governance initiatives.

These statements highlight the influence of social networks and external mandates on Paspas Permit adoption. The tendency of individuals to follow the actions of their peers underscores the importance of showcasing successful implementations to encourage wider usage. To expand the system's reach, the LGU should prioritize accessibility improvements to incentivize business owners to utilize the system, creating a multiplier effect on user numbers. The pandemic further highlighted the system's value, as noted by a respondent: "*Wala kasi kaming ibang option noong pandemic, walang face-to-face*" (We had no other options during the pandemic; there were no face-to-face transactions). This experience demonstrated the system's flexibility in times of crisis, providing essential continuity for social, economic, and governmental functions while simultaneously training citizens in digital systems—a crucial step towards broader e-governance adoption. Furthermore, external mandates, such as those from the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), also played a significant role. As Respondent explained: "*Dahil online seller rin kami at nirequired na ni BIR ang tax registration sa mga online sellers and part ng requirements to register sa BIR is to have a business registration*" (Because we are online sellers, and the BIR required tax registration for online sellers, and part of the requirements to register with the BIR is to have your business registered). This illustrates how external regulatory pressures can significantly influence the adoption of digital government services. The combined effect of social influence, crisis- driven necessity, and external mandates underscores the complex interplay of factors driving the adoption of the Paspas Permit system.

Additionally, the LGU introduced initiatives to ensure business registration through mandates requiring corporations and the top 200 businesses to utilize the Paspas Permit system. Quoting the key informant directly, he stated: "*Kasi po nung pandemic, yung pumasok ito bawal lumabas yung tao diba, tapos yung services ng city hall sarado rin, pero may mga skeletal workforce pa rin. Ngayon, ang nangyari nun, yung mga nag o-online [selling], kasi may mga tao na nag re-renew at nag a-apply ng business permit, kahit na pandemic, kaya nagamit rin talaga yung online natin…. Tsaka isa rin sa nagpalaki ay yung naglabas si BIR yung mga nag o-online selling, kailangan na rin nilang mag apply ng business permit, kasi baka di ba mahuli sila ng BIR.*" (During the pandemic, people were prohibited from going out, and the city hall services were also temporarily closed, although there was a skeletal workforce. What happened was those that were doing online selling were renewing and applying for business permits even during the pandemic, hence the online system was really used. Also, one of the factors was the BIR's memorandum ordering those doing online selling to apply for a business permit, because they may get caught by the BIR.)

This insight underscores how external regulatory pressures, such as the BIR's mandate, served as a crucial motivator for businesses to engage with the Paspas Permit system. The key informant further elaborated on how smaller businesses utilized the system to avoid in-person visits to the city hall, emphasizing the convenience of having permits delivered directly to them. He added, "*Tsaka nagkaroon din ng*

ordinance yung city, yung top 200 na negosyo, ang gagawin ay mandatory online sila para may gumamit ng system. Siyempre, hindi sila maka process ng manual kasi naka mandatory sila. Later on, nagpasa ulit ng ordinance na lahat ng corporation na negosyo, naka mandatory na online rin."

(Moreover, there was a city ordinance that mandated the top 200 businesses to use the system. Of course, they can't process their permits manually because they were mandated. Later on, an ordinance was then passed requiring all corporations to process their permits online.)

This highlights the dual role of policy mandates and technological solutions in ensuring business continuity during challenging times such as a pandemic. The combination of regulatory pressure and the necessity for operational flexibility led to increased engagement with the Paspas Permit system, illustrating how crises can catalyze the adoption of digital governance solutions. The informant's insights reveal that the Paspas Permit system not only facilitated essential business functions during the pandemic but also laid the groundwork for a more robust digital infrastructure for future governance. These measures taken by the LGU and the BIR proved to be consequential to the high rate of registrants during the pandemic.

Empowering Citizen-centered Public Service in Valenzuela City

Satisfaction with the accessibility of the Paspas Permit system is a crucial factor in determining user experience and system effectiveness in facilitating seamless interactions with government services. The ease of access to essential permits and processes plays a pivotal role in enhancing citizen engagement and promoting efficiency in administrative transactions. Evaluating user satisfaction regarding accessibility provides valuable insights into the system's usability, impact, and alignment with citizen needs. The table below illustrates the accessibility of the Paspas Permit system, emphasizing the significance of user-friendly design and streamlined processes in fostering positive interactions and enhancing overall service delivery.

Users have expressed moderate satisfaction with accessing the Paspas permit online,

indicating that the system's online accessibility meets user expectations to a reasonable extent, offering a convenient and efficient method for obtaining permits digitally. Their moderate satisfaction with navigating the website or application suggests that users find the system relatively user-friendly and intuitive, with opportunities for further improvement in enhancing the navigation experience. Additionally, users are moderately satisfied with downloading materials from the system, essential for efficient document access, indicating satisfactory performance in this aspect. The moderate satisfaction level regarding information and document availability on the website suggests that users perceive the system as adequately equipped with necessary resources to support their transactions effectively. Satisfaction with the clarity of online forms indicates that the system provides clear and understandable forms for users to complete transactions accurately and efficiently. Furthermore, the moderate satisfaction with the presentation of the website or application signifies that users find the visual layout and design of the system satisfactory, contributing to a positive user experience.

Overall, user satisfaction with the accessibility of the Paspas Permit system reflects a moderate level of satisfaction across various aspects. While users generally find the system satisfactory in terms of online access, navigation, document availability, form clarity, and presentation, there are opportunities for enhancement to improve the overall user experience. Implementing strategies to address navigation, clarity, and user experience is essential for further enhancing user satisfaction and streamlining processes. By evolving the program based on these results, a more user-centric and efficient service delivery experience can be achieved, leading to increased user engagement and satisfaction.
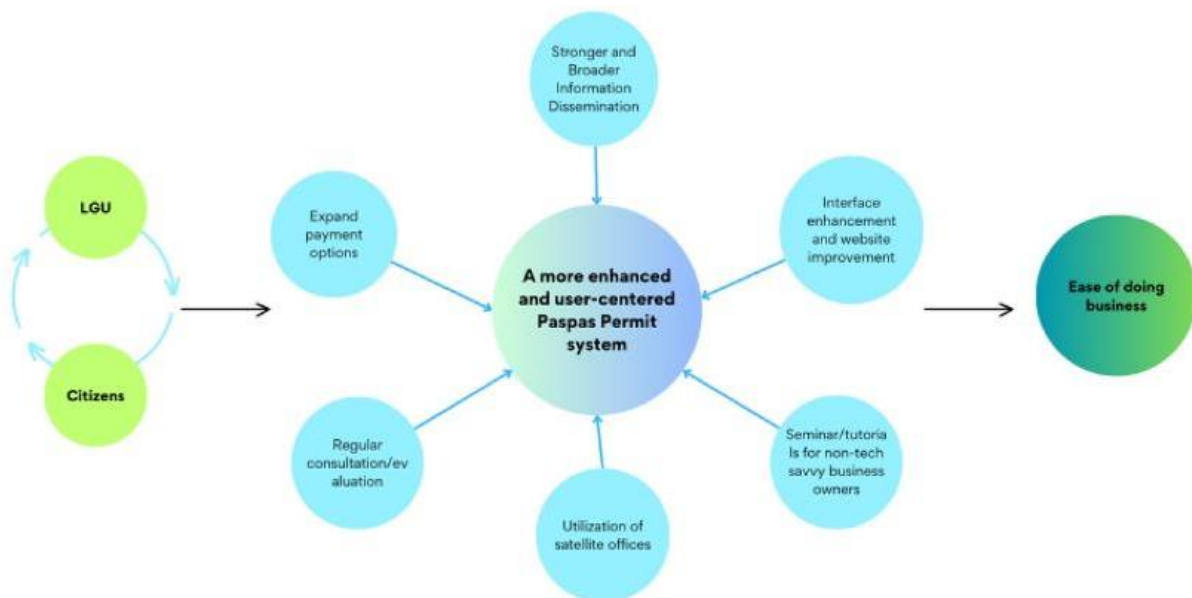
Challenges in the Implementation of Paspas Permit

In contrast to the prior findings, there were problems identified by respondents who expressed their frustration, this feedback underscores the importance of clear communication and timely updates to address user concerns and ensure a seamless experience when

utilizing the Paspas Permit system. The feedback from respondents highlighting problems with the lack of visible progress and unaddressed user concerns regarding the Paspas Permit system underscores critical issues in the system's implementation and responsiveness to user needs. Users expressing frustration over the absence of updates and unresolved matters signal potential gaps in communication and user support. These findings emphasize the necessity for the implementing institution to prioritize clear communication, timely updates, and proactive issue resolution to enhance user satisfaction and system effectiveness. Additionally, the survey responses revealing challenges

in resolving user issues point to a crucial area for improvement in the system's operational efficiency and user support mechanisms. Singh's (2014) insights on e-governance underscore the importance of efficient service delivery and user empowerment through accessible information, aligning with the significance of addressing user concerns and optimizing system performance in advancing digital governance practices. By addressing these challenges effectively, policymakers can strengthen user trust, improve system retention rates, and promote a more seamless and user-centric e- government experience in Valenzuela City and beyond.

Towards an Enhanced Paspas Permit

Figure 3: Action Plan

The comprehensive analysis of the challenges and recommendations for enhancing the Paspas Permit system presented in this study offers valuable insights into the complexities of implementing and optimizing e-government services. The identified barriers, including perceived complexity for older and non-tech-savvy users, frequent downtimes, limited payment options, and the need for broader user engagement strategies, reflect common challenges faced in digital service delivery.

For example, simplifying the interface could involve replacing complex forms with a series of short, clear questions, using larger fonts and more visual cues, and incorporating progress bars to track the application process. The researcher's recommendations, such as simplifying the interface, offering tutorials for users, enhancing system maintenance, expanding payment options, leveraging social media for promotion, and establishing satellite offices for user assistance, address these challenges effec-

tively. By focusing on user- centric design, continuous improvement, and proactive engagement strategies, policymakers can overcome barriers to system adoption, enhance user experience, and foster greater participation in digital public services. In summary, the analysis underscores the critical need for user-centric design, system reliability, and proactive user engagement in advancing e-government services. The identified barriers, such as complexity for older users and limited payment options, pose significant challenges that require targeted solutions for system optimization. The action plan outlined by the researcher presents a comprehensive strategy to address these issues effectively by enhancing user accessibility, system functionality, and user support mechanisms. Implementing these recommendations is vital for enhancing service delivery, increasing user satisfaction, and promoting the long-term success of the Paspas Permit system in Valenzuela City.

Conclusion

The digitalization of public service delivery has significantly impacted governments worldwide, including Valenzuela City, where e-governance initiatives like Paspas Permit have been introduced to streamline business processes and enhance public service efficiency. Despite successful citizen engagement and strides in digitalization, the researcher's evaluation revealed lingering issues such as trust deficits, preference for traditional methods, and perceived barriers to using online services among business owners. While the Local Government Unit (LGU) has made efforts to center the system around citizens, challenges persist, with some users citing ongoing technical issues and a lack of visible progress. These findings underscore the need for comprehensive enhancements to Paspas Permit, focusing not only on resolving technical issues but also on improving user retention and facilitating the transition of traditional method users to the new digital system.

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