

MEASURING CITIZEN CREDIBILITY IN THE SERVICE OF STATE ADMINISTRATIVE AGENCIES – A CASE STUDY OF THE SOUTH CENTRAL COAST

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: 09/11/2024 Revised: 13/3/2025 Published: 14/3/2025 KEYWORDS Quality Public administrative services Citizen satisfaction Citizen credibility South Central coast	Customer satisfaction is a crucial goal, influencing the success and sustainability of almost all service organizations. The study aims to measure citizen satisfaction and credibility with the services of state administrative agencies through a case study in the South Central Coast region. The article uses quantitative research methods to collect data from 456 citizens through a survey questionnaire with 38 observation variables and a 5-level Likert scale to assess citizens' feelings about the services of State administrative agencies in the South Central Coastal region. This study used reliability, exploratory, confirm factor analysis, and structure equation modeling to test the hypotheses. The structure equation modeling analysis shows that citizen satisfaction is directly and positively affected by the quality of public administrative services and perceived value. Citizens' credibility is positively affected by satisfaction. These findings suggest some implications for state administrative agencies in the South Central Coast region to improve citizen satisfaction and credibility in coming time.

ĐO LƯỜNG MỨC ĐỘ TÍN NHIỆM CỦA NGƯỜI DÂN ĐỐI VỚI SỰ PHỤC VỤ CỦA CƠ QUAN HÀNH CHÍNH NHÀ NƯỚC – NGHIÊN CỨU TẠI VÙNG DUYÊN HẢI NAM TRUNG BỘ

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Trường Đại học Thành Đông

THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO	TÓM TẮT
Ngày nhận bài: 09/11/2024 Ngày hoàn thiện: 13/3/2025 Ngày đăng: 14/3/2025 TỪ KHÓA Chất lượng Dịch vụ hành chính công Sự hài lòng của người dân Sự tín nhiệm của người dân Duyên hải Nam Trung Bộ	Sự hài lòng của khách hàng là một mục tiêu quan trọng, ảnh hưởng đến sự thành công và bền vững của hầu hết các tổ chức dịch vụ. Mục đích của nghiên cứu này nhằm đo lường sự hài lòng và mức độ tín nhiệm của người dân đối với sự phục vụ của cơ quan hành chính nhà nước với nghiên cứu điển hình tại vùng duyên hải Nam Trung Bộ. Bài báo sử dụng phương pháp nghiên cứu định lượng để thu thập dữ liệu từ 456 người dân thông qua bảng câu hỏi khảo sát với 38 biến quan sát và thang đo Likert 5 mức độ để đánh giá cảm nhận của người dân về sự phục vụ của các cơ quan hành chính Nhà nước khu vực Duyên hải Nam Trung Bộ. Để kiểm định các giả thuyết, độ tin cậy nhân tố khám phá, nhân tố khẳng định và mô hình cấu trúc tuyến tính được phân tích. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy, sự hài lòng của người dân bị tác động trực tiếp tích cực bởi chất lượng dịch vụ hành chính công và giá trị cảm nhận. Sự tín nhiệm của người dân bị tác động tích cực bởi sự hài lòng của người dân. Các phát hiện này đã gợi mở một số hàm ý quản trị cho các cơ quan hành chính nhà nước tại vùng duyên hải Nam Trung Bộ nâng cao sự hài lòng và sự tín nhiệm của người dân trong thời gian tới.

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1. Introduction

At present, one of the most crucial issues is the dynamic nature and role of government and the process of governance [1]. In recent decades, public credibility in government services has been widely studied by public administration scholars [2], [3]. Credibility is an essential indicator within governance mechanisms and relates to citizens' confidence in public institutions [4]. In the context of new public management, credibility is a crucial factor in enhancing the efficiency of activities within state administrative agencies. Fukuyama indicated that the decline in citizens' confidence in the government is associated with low levels of citizen satisfaction. If citizens lack trust, they will assess the quality of public services and the performance of state administrative agencies poorly [5].

The South Central Coast (SCC) is a rapidly growing region in Vietnam's fisheries sector. In 2020, the SCC contributed 32.5 percent of the country's aquaculture production, making fisheries a crucial industry in the region. Consequently, fisheries-related public services provided by state administrative agencies have played a vital role in promoting the development of the fishery economy in the SCC. However, administrative procedures are complicated and time-consuming for citizens. Moreover, the approach of cadres and public servants is unsympathetic to citizens and slow to respond to their needs. As a result, the Provincial Competitiveness Index (PCI) of South Central Coast provinces is low [6].

According to Li and Shang [7] of all the factors that affect citizens' satisfaction and loyalty, service quality and perceived value could generate the intention to continue using the government's public administrative services. In other words, they have credibility with the government. In Vietnam, a study by Dinh et al. [8] analyzed the relationships among the quality of public administrative services, public perception, satisfaction, and credit among residents in Phan Thiet City. Additionally, a study by Nguyen et al. [9] also analyzed the impact of public service quality on citizen satisfaction and trust in state administrative agencies in Hanoi. Lately, Pham et al. [10] proved that perceived value has a positive and crucial impact on citizen satisfaction and loyalty in an emerging country like Vietnam. Although the above studies analyzed citizen satisfaction and trust in public institutions, they do not assess the impact of perceived value on citizen satisfaction and credibility. Moreover, there is no empirical investigation of state administrative agencies on the SCC. Based on the above situation and research gap, this article aims to measure citizen credibility in the services of state administrative agencies on the SCC, focusing on the mediating role of citizen satisfaction in the relationship with public administration service quality and perceived value. Based on the analysis, the study suggests implications for upgrading citizen satisfaction and credit in the services of state administrative agencies in the future.

2. Methods

2.1. Research model and hypothesis

Service quality has become a special concern of scholars and managers in most countries. Well-known service quality measurement models such as SERVQUAL [11], SERVPERF [12], technical and functional quality model [13] have proven their suitability for measuring quality in many service sectors. However, Blank [14] argued that SERVQUAL or SERVPERF models are inconsistent with public administrative services because they do not consider specific factors such as administrative procedures, attitudes of public servants, or service access. Therefore, in this study, we developed a framework for evaluating public administrative service quality based on the characteristics of this service, including service access, administrative procedures, attitudes and competencies of public servants, service results and ability to resolve requests. In addition, this study added a "perceived value" factor to reflect how people evaluate services based on the benefits which they perceive compared to the cost and time spent. More importantly, this research

developed that the “citizen credibility” scale is vital in the public service context because credibility in the government and administrative agencies strongly affects cooperation and management efficiency [15].

2.1.1. The relationship between public administration service quality and citizen satisfaction

Public administration service quality is the difference between citizens’ expectations of public administration service and their assessment of service outcomes [16]. Thus, citizen satisfaction depends on the difference between the results received and citizens’ expectations. If the results obtained are lower than expectations, citizens will not be satisfied. Conversely, if results meet or exceed expectations, citizens will be pleased [17]. The study [18] stated that service quality is the most significant factor affecting customer satisfaction. Thus, the establishment of service quality precedes the occurrence of satisfaction. Therefore, the first hypothesis proposed in the study is:

H1: Public administration service quality has a positive impact on citizen satisfaction.

2.1.2. The relationship between perceived value and citizen satisfaction

Perceived value is a crucial factor influencing customer satisfaction and behaviour. Zeithaml [19] defined perceived value as the consumer’s overall assessment of a product’s utility based on perceptions of what is received and given. Zeithaml et al. [20] described service quality as an intangible and difficult-to-measure concept. Meanwhile, perceived value is a measurable quantity determined by customer satisfaction with the ratio of their receive compared with the given. Furthermore, the authors of [21] suggested that customer satisfaction increases when customers perceive that they receive good service at a low price. The second hypothesis proposed in the study is:

H2: Perceived value has a positive impact on citizen satisfaction.

2.1.3. The relationship between citizen satisfaction and citizen credibility

Citizen credibility is confidence in the services provided by state administrative agencies [8]. According to the American Customer Satisfaction Index model, perceived quality, customer expectations, and perceived value shape customer satisfaction. In particular, citizen satisfaction creates engagement and credibility for public authorities. Additionally, the study by Dinh et al. [8] confirmed that higher citizen satisfaction leads to greater credibility in administrative units. The third hypothesis proposed in the study is:

H3: Citizen satisfaction has a positive impact on citizen credibility.

The authors propose the research model by the Figure 1.

2.2. Scale design

We built the preliminary scale based on the factors in the research model and draw it from domestic studies. Five evaluation criteria for public administration service quality set by the Ministry of Home Affairs [22] were utilized in this study. The scales for perceived value, citizen satisfaction, and credibility were developed based on results obtained from in-depth interviews with five experts in public administration and discussions with twenty citizens who use public administration service at state administrative agencies on the SCC.

2.3. Sample and data collection

Hair et al. [23] stated that the minimum sample size for exploratory factor analysis is 50, preferably 100 or more. The ratio of observations on an analytic variable of 5:1 or 10:1 will provide the minimum sample size of the study to ensure reliability. In this study, the 10:1 rule was adopted. 38 proxy variables were considered, so the number of samples needed was 380. To limit invalid answer sheets, the authors surveyed 456 citizens (an increase of 20 percent compared to the calculation formula).

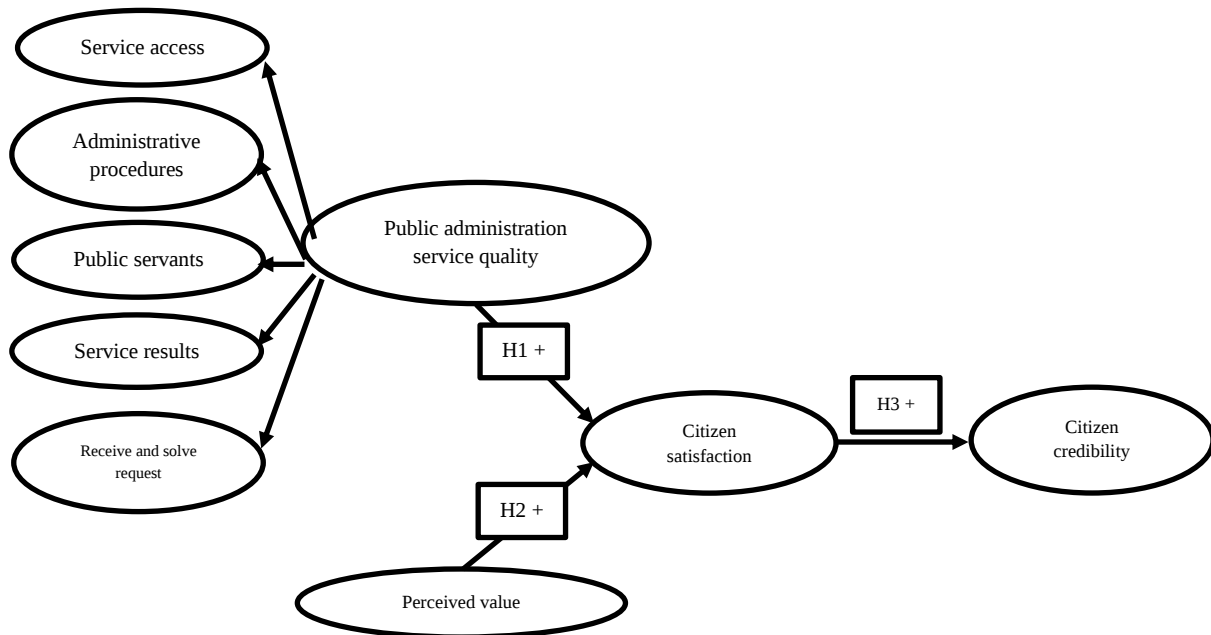


Figure 1. Research Model

The study used a convenient sampling method for citizens using public administration service at the State administrative agencies on the South Central Coast. The survey period is from January 1st to January 31st, 2022. We directly sent survey forms in Vietnamese to citizens.

After data cleaning, the study obtained 417 valid responses, achieving a return rate of 91.4 percent. Male respondents constituted 62.1 percent of the sample. 83.6 per cent of respondents were middle-aged (above 35 years old). Approximately two-thirds of the respondents had an intermediate education level or a college or bachelor's degree (78.7 percent). Figure 2 shows the result of sample characteristics.

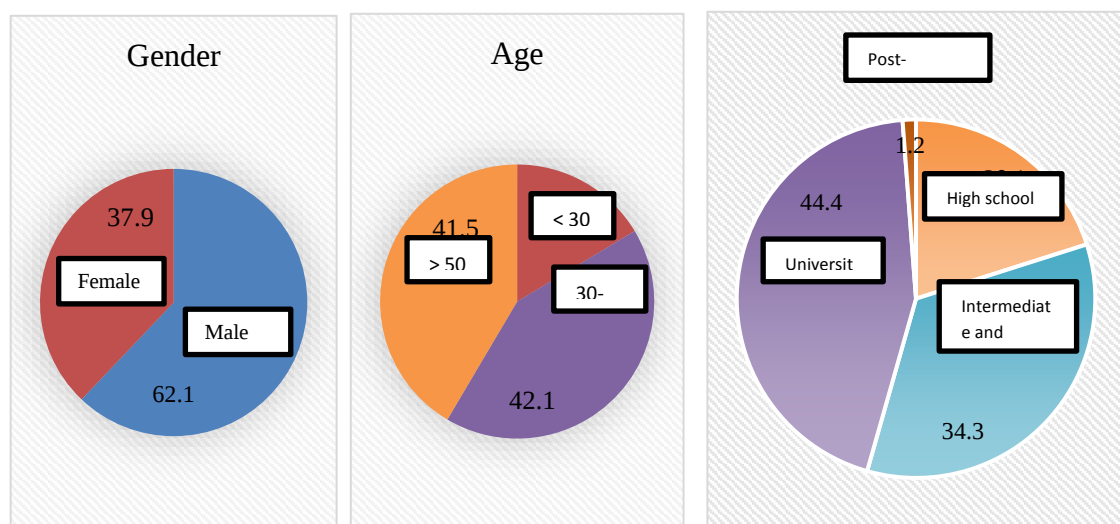


Figure 2. Sample characteristics

3. Findings and discussion

3.1. Reliability and validity test

Table 1 indicated the results of Cronbach's alpha and exploratory factor analysis of the measurement model. The results showed that the latent variable "Citizen satisfaction" has the lowest Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.773, while the latent variable "Perceived value" has the highest of 0.832. Compared with standard 0.6, all observed items are internally consistent. The corrected item-total correlation coefficient was higher than 0.3. All scales achieve two reliability and discriminant validity. Hence, the scale was good and meets the reliability requirement for exploratory factor analysis [24]. The EFA obtained results with the coefficient KMO of 0.806. The Bartlett Test was statistically significant with Sig. of 0.000 (< 0.05), and eight factors were extracted with Eigenvalue = 1.324; Sums of Squared Loadings = 81.05 percent (higher than 50 percent). The eight factors explained about 81.05 percent of the data variation and 18.95 percent of the observed variables can not explain the data. Thus, the results extracted eight factors in the research model with 38 observed items to meet the requirements of convergent and discriminant validity [25].

Table 1. Survey items and reliability

Sign	Source	Factors loadings	Sign	Source	Factors loadings
Service access: Cronbach's Alpha = 0.810, CR = 0.811, AVE = 0.532			Receive and solve request: Cronbach's Alpha = 0.821, CR = 0.833, AVE = 0.611		
SA4	[22]	0.898	RS3	[22]	0.879
SA1	[22]	0.886	RS2	[22]	0.873
SA2	[22]	0.883	RS1	[22]	0.871
SA3	[22]	0.870	RS4	[22]	0.869
Administrative procedures: Cronbach's Alpha = 0.824, CR = 0.783, AVE = 0.612			Perceived value: Cronbach's Alpha = 0.832, CR = 0.800, AVE = 0.566		
AP2	[22]	0.894	PV3		0.872
AP4	[22]	0.890	PV1		0.864
AP1	[22]	0.882	PV2	Self-developed[22]	0.855
AP3	[22]	0.877	PV5		0.852
AP5	[22]	0.875	PV4		0.850
Public servants: Cronbach's Alpha = 0.802, CR = 0.817, AVE = 0.606			Citizen satisfaction: Cronbach's Alpha = 0.773, CR = 0.805, AVE = 0.600		
PS2	[22]	0.892	CS1		0.866
PS1	[22]	0.880	CS2		0.859
PS4	[22]	0.876	CS5	Self-developed	0.853
PS6	[22]	0.870	CS3		0.848
PS3	[22]	0.868	CS6		0.840
PS5	[22]	0.864	CS4		0.839
Service results: Cronbach's Alpha = 0.808, CR = 0.856, AVE = 0.551			Citizen credibility: Cronbach's Alpha = 0.812, CR = 0.848, AVE = 0.555		
SR1	[22]	0.881	CC1		0.863
SR2	[22]	0.872	CC4		0.851
SR3	[22]	0.857	CC5	Self-developed	0.843
			CC3		0.838
			CC2		0.835

3.2. Structural Equation Model

The results of the CFA of the measurement model showed that the model has 1421 degrees of freedom, the test value CMIN = 521.731 with the probability value = 0.000; the CMIN/df = 2.133 < 3 [26] and the GFI = 0.900, TLI = 0.903, CFI = 0.907 were higher than 0.9 [27]; RMSEA = 0.049 was lower than 0.08 **Error! Reference source not found.** So, the research model was consistent with the research data.

Based on the outcomes of the confirmatory factor analysis of the measurement model, the results of the structural equation modelling were consistent with the research data. The CMIN/df

value of $2.314 < 3$ [26] indicated this, while the GFI = 0.902, TLI = 0.908, and CFI = 0.912 exceeded 0.9 [27], and the RMSEA = 0.051 remained below 0.08 **Error! Reference source not found.**

In addition, based on the results, the probability value of the impact relationships between the factors was lower than 0.05. Hence, the relationship between the constructs in the research model was statistically significant in the structural equation modeling (Table 2).

Table 2. The results of regression weights

Correlation			Estimate	S.E	C.R	P
Citizen Satisfaction	←	Public administration service quality	0.424	0.045	1.124	0.000
Citizen Satisfaction	←	Perceived value	0.404	0.024	2.476	0.000
Citizen Credibility	←	Citizen Satisfaction	0.431	0.017	1.892	0.000
Public administration service quality	←	Service access	0.321	0.076	2.132	0.000
Public administration service quality	←	Administrative procedures	0.389	0.102	0.872	0.000
Public administration service quality	←	Public Servants	0.355	0.067	1.453	0.000
Public administration service quality	←	Service results	0.344	0.082	0.761	0.000
Public administration service quality	←	Receive and solve request	0.311	0.119	1.246	0.000

(Source: Results of data processing by the author)

This study aims to better explain the relationship between public administration service quality and perceived value with citizen credibility through citizen satisfaction using public administration service at the State administrative agencies on the SCC. The results showed the acceptance of the hypotheses proposed in the research model, which has brought practical implications to many different subjects. In particular, the subjects such as State administrative agencies on the SCC or researchers on public administration topics.

The results of regression weights in Table 2 indicated that the public administration service quality and perceived value positively impact citizen satisfaction with 95 percent confidence and standardized estimates of 0.424 and 0.404. Moreover, citizen satisfaction positively correlates with citizen credibility and a standardized estimate of 0.431. If citizens are satisfied with the service of state administrative agencies, they will have credibility with the government and the state administrative agencies on the SCC. The results are similar to those presented in [8], [18], and [21]. Thus, hypotheses H1, H2, H3 are accepted.

In closing, public administration service quality and perceived value with citizen credibility through citizen satisfaction. That is the difference from the earlier studies ([8], [9]). While previous studies in the literature did not measure citizen satisfaction and credibility based on perceived value, this study addressed that gap and provides such findings. State administrative agencies should focus on creating value for people, but they pay little attention to the antecedents and consequences of people's perceptions of those values. Hence, this study could fabricate a paradigm for future studies on confirming the relationship between public administration service quality and perceived value with citizen credibility through citizen satisfaction.

4. Conclusion

This study showed a direct impact of public administration service quality and perceived value on citizen satisfaction and an indirect influence on citizen credibility using public

administration service at the State administrative agencies on the SCC. Ultimately, this study offers several managerial implications, both theoretical and practical.

Theoretically, by assessing the impact of public administration service quality and perceived value on citizen satisfaction and credibility, this research contributed to the existing body of literature on public administration service quality.

Practically, to the best of our knowledge, this is among the first studies exploring the relationship between public administration service quality and perceived value with citizen satisfaction and credibility using public administration service at the State administrative agencies on the SCC. Therefore, this study provides some worthwhile information for the State administrative agencies on the SCC to enhance citizen satisfaction and credibility as follows:

To begin with public administration service quality, the State administrative agencies on the SCC should enhance service quality by handling administrative procedures with a one-stop shop mechanism to ensure that citizens can be processed quickly. In particular, State administrative agencies need to train public servants in polite behavior and listening skills, limiting attitudes that make it difficult or troublesome to provide public services.

Next, the State administrative agencies on the SCC should improve transparency, efficiency, and accountability and on public administration services' promotion of democratic participation and social equality to improve perceived value. Additionally, the State administrative agencies should provide citizens with precise and prompt information.

This study is limited to individual citizens, who are the primary users of public administration service. However, business organizations, nonprofit organizations, and public organizations are also significant target groups for such services. Therefore, future researchers can apply this study's research model to investigate the satisfaction and credibility of these diverse groups.

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