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**ANALYSIS OF APPROACHES TO THE EVALUATION OF QUALITY AND AVAILABILITY  
OF MUNICIPAL SERVICES**

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**Abstract**

The relevance of the work is determined by the need to develop conceptual approaches and methodological provisions for improving the organization of the provision of municipal services as one of the most important elements of the municipal economy, as well as by an increase in requirements for the quality and accessibility of these services both for the society as a whole and for individual customers. Currently, there is no comprehensive list of municipal services or system of quantitatively measurable characteristics of their quality, which complicates the overall objective assessment of the activities of local authorities in this direction. In municipalities, the results of the provision of municipal services are not systematically monitored and no analysis is made of the ratio of the costs of their provision with recoverable income and recipient satisfaction.

**Keywords**

Income – Management – Municipal services – Quality of services



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## Introduction

Significant attention to the development of municipal services is given in the Concept of Administrative Reform in the Russian Federation for 2006-2008, as well as in the Federal Law "On the Organization of the Provision of State and Municipal Services" adopted in 2010. However, some aspects of the organization of the provision of municipal services remain underdeveloped. In particular, the activities of the created multifunctional centers for the provision of services at the federal level are still planned in units, and not in terms of the citizens' satisfaction with the number and quality of services received. At the municipal level, the system of regulatory documents governing the provision of municipal services is developed independently by local authorities, which greatly complicates the management of these processes by the state agencies<sup>1</sup>.

## Methods

Despite the significant contribution of these researchers to the development of the theory of the service sector and the municipal economy, the organization of the provision of municipal services in general and budget-financed institutions of various forms of ownership in particular, insufficient attention is paid to scientific publications, which necessitates theoretical and methodological research in this field.

Our work is based on a systematic approach, as well as techniques and tools of statistical, economic and logical analysis. These tools were used in various combinations at different stages of the study, which made it possible to ensure the scientific reliability of the final results, conclusions and recommendations.

## Results and discussion

Analysis of existing scientific sources shows that the *quality of services can be evaluated from the following positions*:

- 1) as the degree of satisfaction of customer expectations; in this sense, the term has been codified in the ISO 9000 1994 international standard;
- 2) as the degree of compliance with the prescribed requirements and standards;
- 3) from the standpoint of compliance of the provided services with their value;
- 4) as a general set of technical, technological and operational characteristics through which the service will meet the needs of the customer.

We consider that as a whole the quality of municipal services can be represented by 1) the quality of the content of its final result; 2) the quality of the receipt of services related to comfort and affordability<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> A. Z. Bobyleva, "K razrabotke kontseptsii perekhoda gosudarstvennykh organizatsii na "upravlenie po rezultatam", Gosudarstvennoe upravlenie. Elektronnyi vestnik FGU MGU, num 9 (2016). Available at: [http://www.e-journal.spa.msu.ru/9\\_2006Bobyleva.html](http://www.e-journal.spa.msu.ru/9_2006Bobyleva.html)

<sup>2</sup> A. N. Averin; A. M. Babich y L. I. Berestova, Sotsialnaya politika: Entsiklopediya (Moscow: Alfa-press, 2016).

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The quality of the final result of a service refers to the requirements for the final result of a service in terms of conformity of a service to the standards and regulations in terms of completeness and timeliness of its delivery (for example, that a customer receives a complete set of documents correctly drawn up and filled in accordance with the standard, a correctly calculated amount of social benefits, etc.).

Moreover, in our opinion, a high-quality municipal service should create an opportunity for the customer to obtain the maximal final effect. The fact is that the result of municipal services often does not have an independent value, but serves as the basis for receiving other benefits (such as subsidies, a land plot, etc.). In this case, the customer is interested not only in the minimum expenditure of resources (for example, to obtain the aforementioned set of documents) but also in the fact that the received set of documents requires minimal corrections and additions, and remains valid for the maximum time for obtaining the desired final effect<sup>3</sup>.

An analysis of Russian and foreign experience in providing municipal services (for example, a World Bank study, a study by the ZIRCON group commissioned by the Institute of Urban Economics, etc.) allows us to talk about a *group of requirements that determine customers' perception of the quality of the final result and service conditions for the provision of municipal services*, including informational, functional and emotional requirements (Figure 1).

According to some experts, in particular, the ex-deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, the factors affecting the quality of public services include:

- 1) standardization and regulation of the process of providing public services;
- 2) creation of mechanisms that would help executive authorities to improve the quality of public services and services provided;
- 3) compliance with high ethical standards in the provision of public services;

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<sup>3</sup> A. Z. Bobyleva; "K razrabotke kontseptsii perekhoda gosudarstvennykh organizatsii na "upravlenie po rezultatam", Gosudarstvennoe upravlenie. Elektronnyi vestnik FGU MGU, num 9 (2016). Available at: [http://www.e-journal.spa.msu.ru/9\\_2006Bobyleva.html](http://www.e-journal.spa.msu.ru/9_2006Bobyleva.html)

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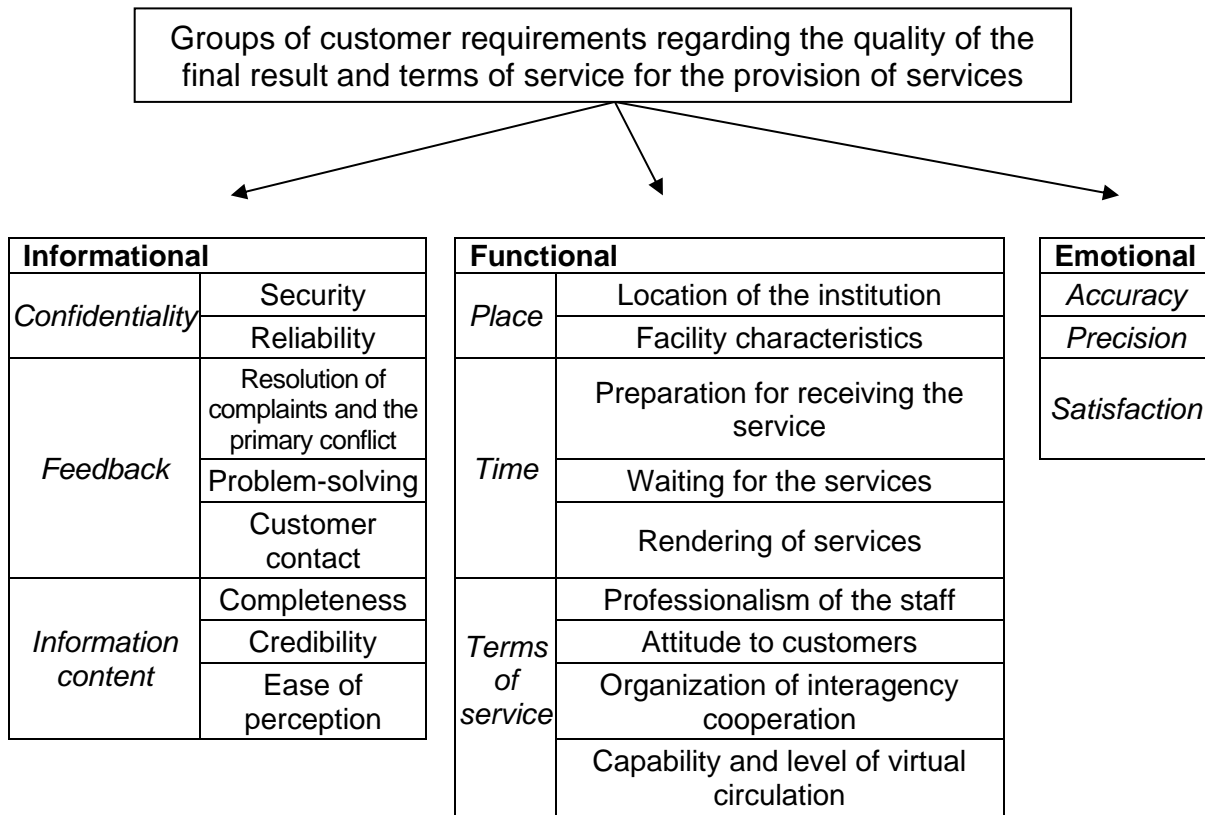


Figure 1

Groups of indicators describing customers' perception of the quality of the final result and the conditions of service in the provision of municipal services<sup>4</sup>.

- 4) increasing the level of informational publicity and transparency of the procedures of executive authorities, as well as communication with the customer;
- 5) rational specialization of executive authorities in the provision of certain public services by the powers established by the state;
- 6) optimization of budget expenditures for public services and their rational distribution following the priorities of state agency customers, and the society as a whole;
- 7) determination of criteria for paying for public services;
- 8) increasing the responsibility of authorities for the exercise of their powers;
- 9) organizational structure of the authorities responsible for implementation;
- 10) physical support for interaction, in particular: how well equipped are the offices of government agencies, how well are they equipped with modern technical facilities, what is the frequency of the geographical network of government agencies, etc.

<sup>4</sup> I. A. Duborkina; E. V. Bokareva; E. V. Yudina; A. G. Panova; A. P. Sokolova y A. A. Levshenkova, "Prakticheskoe primeneniye marketinga na predpriyatii zhilishchno-kommunal'nogo khozyaistva", *Ekonomika i predprinimatelstvo*, num 12 Vol: 101 (2018): 716-719.

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Given the proximity of concepts, the focus and basic conditions in the organization of the provision of state and municipal services, we consider it legitimate to extend this list to municipal services<sup>5</sup>.

Then, based on the analysis of secondary sources of information, data from expert and mass surveys, it is possible to determine a group of reasons that negatively affect the quality and accessibility of municipal services.

These include<sup>6</sup>:

- lack of systematic and regular monitoring of the quality of service and management processes for the provision of municipal services;
- lack of quality standards for services;
- lack or poor development of administrative regulations for the provision of services;
- insufficient public awareness of the possibilities and conditions for receiving services;
- poor use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in the organization of service processes;
- low level of professionalism and customer-oriented approach demonstrated by the staff;
- interdepartmental inconsistency (the absence of a “single window” system in most cases).

It is necessary to review in more detail some of the reasons that harm the quality and accessibility of municipal services (Figure 2).

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<sup>5</sup> A. G. Panova, Sovershenstvovanie organizatsii predostavleniya munitsipal'nykh uslug byudzhethnymi uchrezhdeniyami. Ph.D. Thesis. Russian State University of Tourism and Services Studies. Moscow. 2012.

<sup>6</sup> N. A. Platonova y T. I. Zvorykina, Tekhnicheskoe regulirovanie: sfera uslug. Grif UMO VUZov Rossii (Moscow: Alfa, 2008).

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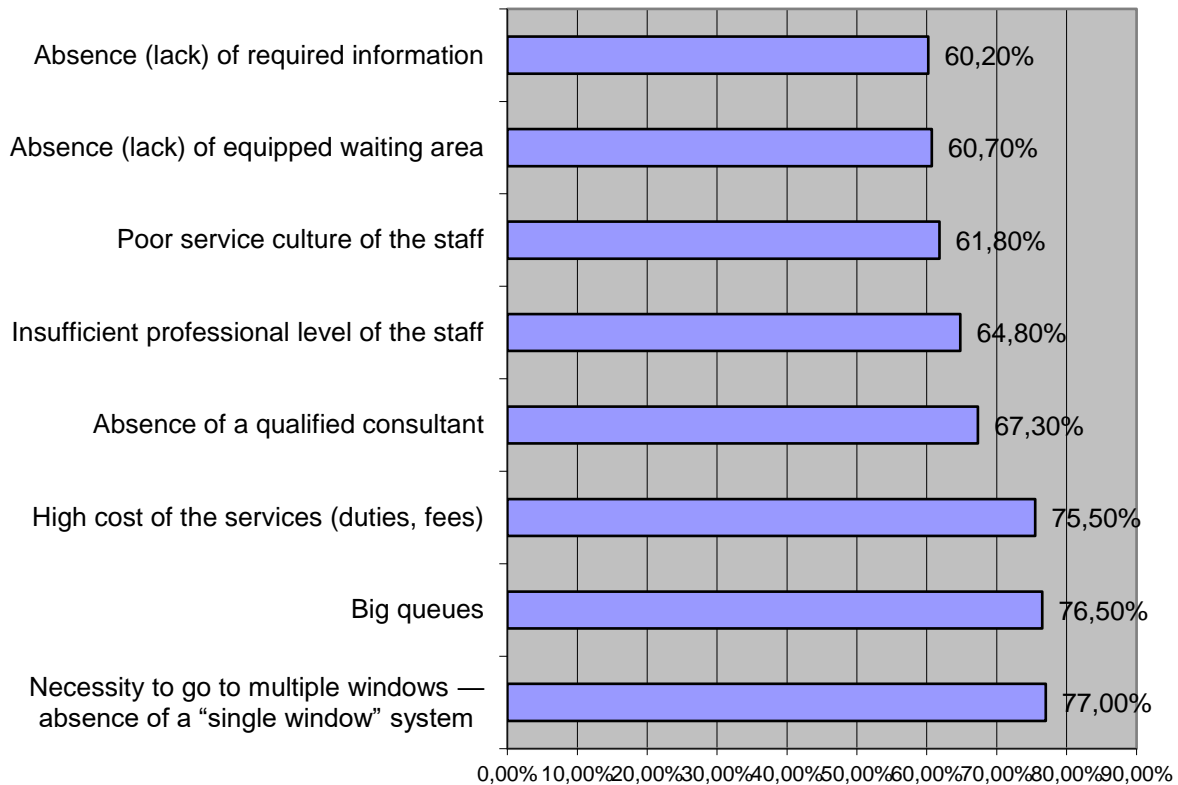


Figure 2  
The main complaints about the quality of received municipal services according to a mass survey (Moscow Region, 2018).

Lack or underdevelopment of administrative regulations for the provision of municipal services. The administrative regulations for the provision of municipal services provide a clear and transparent description of the process that leads to the intended result.

The regulation reveals the details of the process of providing a separate municipal service and thereby creates the conditions for external control by various stakeholders and ensures that the administrative procedures are open and transparent. At the same time, administrative regulations for the provision of municipal services contribute to the organization and detailed definition of the obligations of executive authorities to society and the improvement of the quality of municipal services.

The positive results of the introduction of administrative regulations are: organizing relations between customers of municipal services and authorities; restriction of arbitrariness in the actions of officials; increasing the transparency of the interaction between business and government; introducing clear and understandable decision-making procedures by government authorities with the participation of business.

Lack of quality standards for municipal services leads to a decrease in the socio-economic efficiency of municipal services (determined by the ratio of the total costs of its provision and the benefits of consumption: if the benefits are greater than the costs, this service can and should be provided to its customers. Otherwise, the service is either a

consequence of the existence of excessive regulation (i.e. is imposed on the customer) or represents (by the specific technology of its provision) an administrative barrier. The presence of this standard makes it possible to assess the quality of municipal services by various indicators and criteria and characterize them for socio-economic justification for the provision of certain services by the executive authority to citizens and organizations.

Lack of comfort standards for municipal services entails several negative aspects since the comfort standard includes many requirements that play a large and significant role in the process of providing municipal services. An important point is that service standards are aimed at preventing discrimination of certain categories of citizens on the grounds of physical disability, language, race, religion, ethnicity. The standard allows the system to stimulate internal reserves of efficiency.

Lack of a systematic and regular assessment of the quality of municipal services at the time of the introduction of administrative regulations may become a critical factor, leading to further ignoring of their provisions. Therefore, the need for such an assessment becomes apparent.

If successfully implemented, the evaluation system will be able to become an institutional source of continuous improvement in the financing of public services, as well as improving their quality and accessibility to the population. The results of the assessment will help ensure that municipal services become more transparent, efficient and affordable for every citizen of the country. Besides, involving civil society in governing the country will guarantee the legitimacy and coherence of systematic reform efforts.

Inclusion of the results of the assessment in the management system for the provision of municipal services (in the planning and motivation system). Evaluation results contribute to more effective decision-making in the planning and motivation system while setting the vector of certainty, clarity and greater structure. Moreover, the assessment is a necessary element in the administration process, as it allows us to determine both the effectiveness of the system for the provision of municipal services and the overall quality of political governance in the territory. Multiple inter-agency collaboration (lack of a "single window" system). One of the most effective ways to consider citizens' complaints is to conduct procedures based on the "single window" principle. In this case, one state body or employee has the right to request, receive and "enlarge" information from other bodies that are required to provide it. In this case, documents and decisions are concentrated in one organization and transferred to one employee in response to a citizen's application. Multiple inter-agency collaboration seems less effective and efficient. This fact is supported by the fact that the "single window" system integrates the control process, centralizing several functions and thus eliminating their duplication. As a result, on the one hand, this system creates the prerequisites for reducing administrative costs and, on the other, it expands citizens' access to participation in programs operating in the territory. The basic principle of the "single window" system is a one-time application and the efficiency of decision-making by an official. Application to the "single window" system is not mandatory and is carried out by the voluntary decision of the applicant<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> A. G. Gaponenko, *Strategiya sotsialno-ekonomicheskogo razvitiya: strana, region, gorod: uchebnoe posobie* (Moscow: Izd-vo RAGS, 2001).

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Lack of public awareness leads to ignorance of even the main points of the administrative reform as a whole, and in particular, of important issues concerning them. At the same time, failure to cover the main directions of the process of rendering public services can lead to misinformation and misinterpretation. Thus, uninformed citizens are deprived of the opportunity to receive municipal services in the best and most convenient way for them, which leads to the least availability of municipal services.

As the results of the study show, service recipients continue to receive information through informal channels that are not related to the activities of the agency providing the service (from friends, colleagues, etc.), as well as focusing on their own experience. However, an important role, as follows from the wishes of the survey participants, is the informational openness of direct employees of institutions/organizations, the possibility of obtaining oral consultations, clarifications, and detailed explanations. The responses of the participants suggest that the most convenient information channels that are perceived as having the most impact on the accessibility of the service itself are those that involve not one-way counseling, but feedback from the recipient and the agency representative. Their widespread availability will be a significant factor in removing barriers to access to services.

The research data concerning the information support of the provision of services and their information availability show that one of the mechanisms for improving information flows to increase the satisfaction of recipients of municipal services may be the formation of so-called information regulations that clearly define what information should be provided to applicants and recipients at different stages of service provision. Perhaps, for some services, it makes sense to differentiate the information itself and the forms of its provision for various groups of recipients.

Inadequate funding (provision of regulations and standards or assessment system). Funding from the authorities is necessary for the successful implementation and maintenance of regulations, standards and an assessment system. Insufficient funding for regulatory and standardization processes will reduce their intensity and effectiveness and lead to their inhibition. Moreover, due to underfunding, the planned dates will shift and the intended goals and objectives will not be achieved and, therefore, the results will not be as positive as possible.

Lack of professionalism and customer-based approach demonstrated by the staff. Effective municipal services require experienced and competent professionals. The level of professionalism of the civil servants and their level of awareness of the content of the reforms of local self-government is reflected in a certain way in their activities, working conditions, career prospects, etc. The attitude to the reform process itself and its conceptual tasks can be determined both by the completeness of the information and by the events taking place directly in the civil service. This attitude is important to understand, since the adequacy and speed of reforms, the degree of their support or resistance at various levels of government depend on it in many respects<sup>8</sup>.

Poor use of ICT. The availability of modern ICT for authorities is a necessary technical prerequisite for the use of ICT by authorities for the implementation of

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<sup>8</sup> A. N. Averin; A. M. Babich y L. I. Berestova, *Sotsialnaya politika: Entsiklopediya* (Moscow: Alfa-press, 2016).



managerial functions and the provision of e-government services. The current level of technological development provides a significant contribution from information technology to improving the efficiency of both corporate and public administration. The role of information support has gradually transformed from a providing element performing auxiliary functions, to one of the main components of the activity. The rapid development of equipment and technologies in the information field allows to actively use the resources of society as the most important strategic factor in its development.

Considering the various parameters of the organization of the provision of municipal services from different standpoints, we can conclude that the so-called "infrastructure" parameters are more important for customers. That includes the location of the places where the service can be provided, the organization of the reception of applicants and recipients, the suitability of the premises to these functions, the principle of queuing and the time one spends in a queue<sup>9</sup>.

The efficiency of work on the provision of the service and the time spent on receiving the service is also essential. These problems require a complex solution: for example, an improved queuing mechanism (for instance, using an automated ticket system) will give a much greater result in terms of recipient satisfaction if it is implemented simultaneously with the re-equipment of the premises for receiving applicants and the introduction of a constantly operating information and feedback channel.

By the quality of the service, we mean the assessment (objective in the form of compliance with the accepted standard and subjective in the form of a customer's assessment) of the conditions in which the service is provided and the resources spent by the customer on receiving the service<sup>10</sup>. The criteria for the quality of the final result and the conditions of service in the provision of municipal services are a combination of quantitative and qualitative parameters that allow to measure, take into account, control and evaluate the result of the provision of these services<sup>11</sup>. The criteria used to determine the composition of indicators characterizing the quality of the final result and the conditions of service in the provision of municipal services must comply with the relevance requirement<sup>12</sup>. This means that the indicator system should be aimed at solving the most significant problems and difficulties for customers that they encounter in the process of interaction with authorized bodies and institutions.

Based on our system of customer requirements regarding the quality of the final result and service conditions when providing services and the reasons that have a negative impact on these parameters, we offer a system of criteria for assessing the quality of municipal services, which includes an assessment of the final result and

<sup>9</sup> A. N. Averin; A. M. Babich y L. I. Berestova, *Sotsialnaya politika...*

<sup>10</sup> L. S. Morozova; V. Y. Morozov; N. V. Khavanova; T. N. Lustina y A. G. Panova, "Approach to evaluating personnel loyalty in the context of streamlining the company's human resources policy", *Indian Journal of Science and Technology*, num 9 Vol: 12 (2016): 89526.

<sup>11</sup> N. T. Pirozhenko; E. V. Bokareva; E. V. Yudina; E. N. Podsevalova; I. A. Duborkina y A. P. Sokolova "Upravlenie asimmetrichnoi informatsiei i ee rol v vybore struktury kapitala", *Ekonomika i predprinimatelstvo*, num 9 Vol: 98 (2018): 86-90.

<sup>12</sup> V. K. Romanovich, *Loyalnost potrebiteliei kak faktor rynochnogo razvitiya torgovykh predpriyatii*. V sbornike: *Innovatsii i sovremennye tekhnologii v kooperativnom sektore ekonomiki. Materialy mezhdunarodnoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii v ramkakh ezhegodnykh Chayanovskikh chtenii*. Russian Cooperation University, 2014, 346-350.

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conditions of service for the service provision (Figure 3). These criteria are selected based on the most important problems faced by the customers of municipal service centers. Also, according to the surveys, a significant part of entrepreneurs, the public and public servants noted the low quality of documents regulating various aspects of the provision of municipal services. Moreover, this problem is one of the main ones.

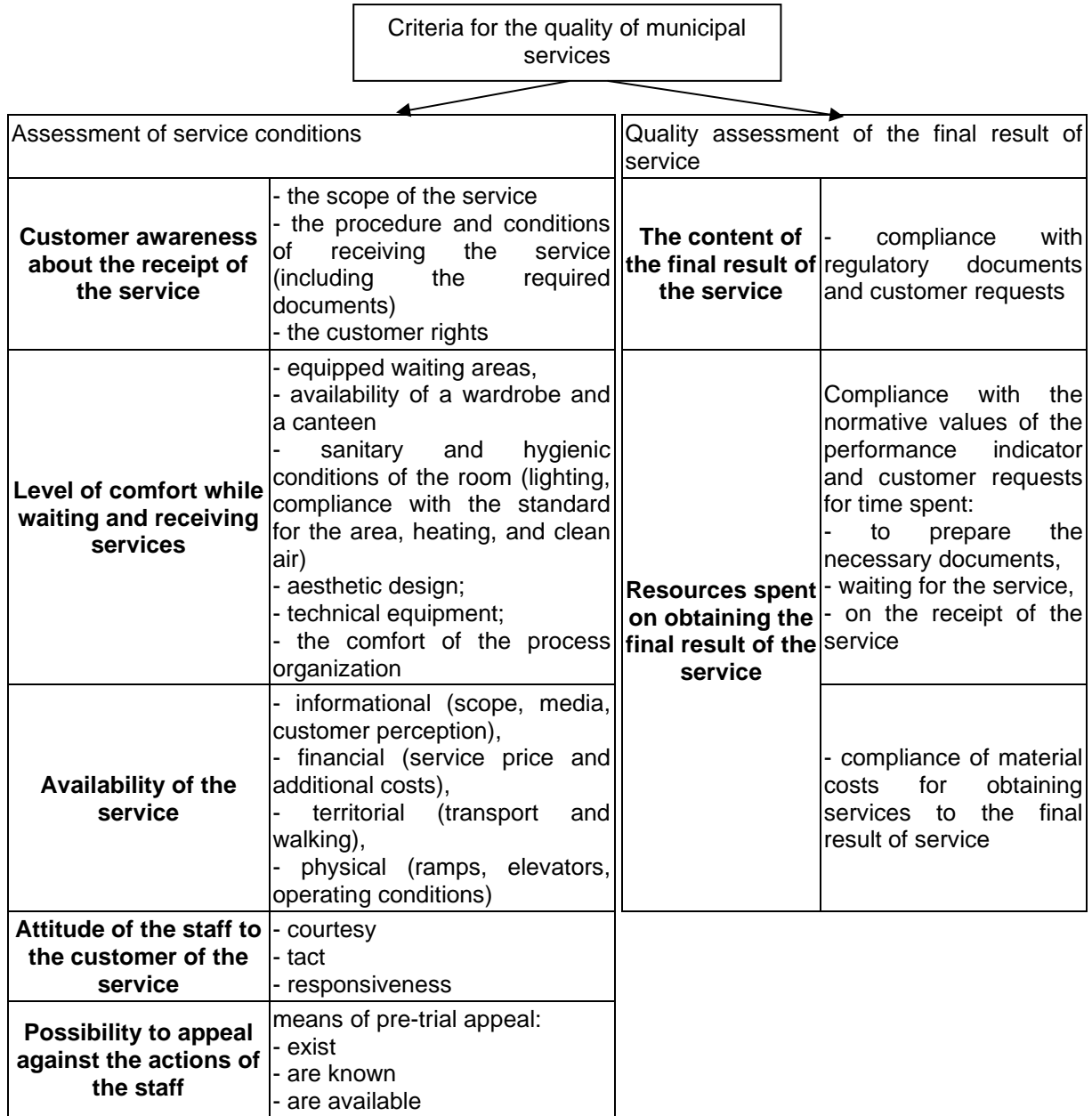


Figure 3  
Quality criteria system for municipal services<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> E. V. Bokareva; A. A. Silaeva; O. N. Borisova; I. G. Doronkina y A. P. Sokolova, "Analysis of the world and Russian e-commerce market: development trends and challenges", International Journal of Engineering and Technology (UAE), num 7(4.38) (2018): 387-392.

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These criteria can be used as indicators for calculating private satisfaction indices for provided municipal services. The methods for calculating indices of satisfaction with services of organizations are currently undergoing active development in research and analytical practice of research centers studying the quality of services.

Analyzing Russian and foreign experience, we can distinguish the use of such methods of calculating indices as:

- calculation of the ratio of the expected and perceived by the customer level of certain aspects of the quality and accessibility of the provided service as a set of specific indices of criteria characterizing the quality of the service with the subsequent construction of a complex index as the average of specific indices;
- building an index as the difference between the sum of positive and average ratings and the sum of negative ratings of the quality and accessibility of the service provided;
- calculation of national indices<sup>14</sup>.

The Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) is calculated based on a comprehensive assessment of the quality of goods and services by a customer. In other words, a product or service is valued by those who purchase or receive it. The CSI methodology allows us to calculate not only the absolute values of the factors (criteria) affecting the final Index, as well as the magnitude of this influence, i.e. the importance of a factor (criterion) for the customer in terms of satisfaction. If you ask the customer what the most important factor for them is, then all factors (criteria) will receive approximately the same estimates. The CSI methodology shows real, not declared, differences between factors or criteria (some have a serious impact, while others have little or no effect) on satisfaction. This allows us to prioritize efforts to increase customer satisfaction<sup>15</sup>. Besides, certain so-called application rules govern the relationship between providers and recipients in the process of providing services. Thus, for example, the employees of the "Social Policy" branch of the "Institute of Urban Economics" Foundation created a code of best practice for the provision of social services, which includes the following sections: informing and recruiting customers, accounting for customer needs, customer feedback, providing paid services to customers, customer responsibility, managing the quality of services, relations between customers and suppliers, the reputation of the supplier, relations between suppliers<sup>16</sup>. This code is addressed to customers and social service providers and serves as the basis for initiating and maintaining a dialogue between them, aimed at a joint search for new ways to adapt best practices for providing services to specific conditions and circumstances.

## Conclusion

According to the authors, a high-quality municipal service should create an opportunity for the customer to get the maximum final effect, since the result of a municipal

<sup>14</sup> E. V. Bokareva; A. A. Silaeva; V. A. Danilova; V. K. Romanovich; V. I. Boboshko y N. M. Boboshko, "Development of a business strategy based on project management", International Journal of Engineering and Advanced Technology, Vol: 8 num 5 (2019): 1020-1024.

<sup>15</sup> A. G. Abadzhide; V. Yu. Morozov; S. V. Shestakova y V. A. Shestakov, Monitoring v sisteme okazaniya gosudarstvennykh i munitsipalnykh uslug. Moscow. 2010.

<sup>16</sup> A. G. Abadzhide, V. Yu. Morozov, S. V. Shestakova, V. A. Shestakov. Monitoring v sisteme...

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service often does not have an independent value. It serves as the basis for receiving other benefits (subsidies, a land plot, etc.). In this case, the customer is interested not only in the minimum expenditure of resources (for example, to obtain the aforementioned set of documents) but also in the fact that the received set of documents requires minimal corrections and additions, and remains valid for the maximum time for obtaining the desired final effect.

With this approach, we can talk about the existence of a system of requirements for service recipients that determine the customer's idea of the quality of the final result and the conditions of service for the provision of municipal services. This system can include requirements of an informational (confidentiality, feedback, information content), functional (place, time, conditions of rendering) and emotional nature (accuracy, precision, satisfaction). Such a system of requirements makes it possible to form a system of criteria for assessing the quality and accessibility of municipal services from the customer point of view.

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