



ASSOCIATION OF
COMMUNICATION SCHOLARS
& PROFESSIONALS OF NIGERIA
BOOK SERIES



CANADA UNIVERSITY PRESS

MAXIMISING THE POTENTIALS OF ONLINE CIVIC FORUMS FOR E-GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

*Idowu Rasheed **Badmus**, Simon Ayodele **Okaiyeto** & Lambe Kayode **Mustapha***

To cite this article:

Idowu Rasheed Badmus, Simon Ayodele Okaiyeto & Lambe Kayode Mustapha (2020). Maximising the Potentials of Online Civic Forums for E-governance in Nigeria in Media Freedom, National Interest and Governance, ACSPN Book Series 5, pp. 124 — 134

Retrieved from <http://www.acspn.com.ng>

(Institutional or Subscribed access may be required)

Please note that this is an electronic, pre-print version of this article published by the Canada University Press, Concord Ontario, Canada for Association of Communication Scholars & Professionals of Nigeria (ACSPN).

The ACSPN Book Series is exclusive to the Association of Communication Scholars & Professionals of Nigeria.

ISBN: **978-1-989271-07-0**

Copyright © 2020

Editor and Contributors

Layout/Design: Ashroph De Grafico

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any form or any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without permission in writing from the publisher, except by reviewer who may quote brief passages in a review.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

MAXIMISING THE POTENTIALS OF ONLINE CIVIC FORUMS FOR E-GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

*Idowu Rasheed Badmus, Simon Ayodele Okaiyeto &
Lambe Kayode Mustapha*

Introduction

Democracy as a system of government hinges on a rich and all-inclusive communications environment and the Internet has been celebrated mainly as engendering pro-democracy potentials mainly in term of platform accessibility, openness and freedom which afforded citizens to debate on issues of common concerns thus crystallizing mass opinion that can influence political decision- making. With defining political issues and policies in the country generating substantial discussions, extrapolations, and inferences among Nigerians via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, online forums and others in recent time, the internet, especially social media, has undoubtedly reinvigorated political deliberations and civic engagement in the country. Nevertheless, the paper argued that these discussions, primarily characterized by trolling, bashing, and hailing of politicians and other critical-rational debate-derailing inputs, have not attained necessary sophistication to seriously meddle policy making country. Hence, considering online forum as closest manifestation of e-participation, the paper make a case for an enlarged online Civic forum facilitated by government and designed with Nigeria's contextual factors as a way of driving citizens involvement in policy making and other political processes while also stemming the tide of declining legitimacy and public trust in political institutions in the country.

Background

It is arguable that the current tone of the crisis of democracy in Nigeria is attributable to the continuous disconnection between the political office holders and the electorates. And this is no doubt a massive problem as such cleavage will engender zero synchronization between the real aspirations of the people and policies ultimately enacted by the political class. A democracy theorist argues that "unless mass views have someplace in the shaping of policy, all the talk about

democracy is nonsense” (Shapiro, 2011, p. 982). Hence, within larger near-consensus that modern day democracy is not working (Dahlgren, 2009) and that citizenry are increasingly disengaging from civic life and political participation (Blumler & Coleman, 2001), internet and its entourage, popularly group together as new media, is seen as embedding huge democracy-reanimating potentials (Boler, 2010; Coleman & Blumler, 2009; Coleman & Spiller, 2003; Dahlberg, 2001b; Kim, 2006; Loveland & Popescu, 2011; Margolis & Moreno-Riaño, 2016). Invariably, extant literatures suggest that internet comes with some sort of lifeline to the nose-diving democracy. As succinctly put by Tracy Western “to the extent that the democracy needs saving, the new generation of interactive digital communication technologies arrived just in time to help” (Western, 1998, p. 56). Specifically, by providing information leading to informed citizenry, fomenting interaction and discussion, and ultimately extending the public sphere (Dahlberg, 2001b; Dahlgren, 2001; Papacharissi, 2002) internet, especially its web 2.0 architecture is seen as fostering a rich and all-inclusive communications environment that helps provide citizens with the motivation, ability, and opportunity to participate in various democratic processes including decision making (Shapiro, 2011). A more optimistic role of internet in revitalizing democracy refers to the prospects of the Web 2.0 in virtually recreating a near-direct democracy similar to what was obtainable in ancient Greek city states.

In lights of these new frontiers of interaction between the represented and the representative, e-democracy (used interchangeably with cyber-democracy, digital democracy or internet democracy) as the concept outlining the normative and prescriptive relationship between internet and democracy (Kneuer, 2016), has become a blossoming area of study (Coleman, 2007; Gronlund, 2001; Päivärinta & Sæbø, 2006). Among its numerous strands, e-participation (of citizens in policy and government decision making) as one of the constituents of e-democracy has continued to attract increasing scholarships from researchers in social sciences (Medaglia, 2012). Largely seen as been correlated to the concepts of the public sphere (Habermas, 1991) as well as deliberative democracy (Benhabib, 1996; Bohman, 1998; Chambers, 2003; Dahlberg, 2001b; Dryzek, 2002) the normative and prescriptive deliberative potentials of internet has come under intense academic searchlight. Though the idea of deliberation as a vital component of participatory democracy is not new considering that it formed the core of the direct democracies of ancient Greece's city state, the renewed interest in it is driven by the possibility of web 2.0 architecture to facilitate large-scale discussions hitherto considered to be impractical by the early theorist of deliberative democracy.

In Nigeria, it is debatable that internet is fast blending into the media landscape of the country considering the numbers of Nigerian hopping on to this *information superhighway*. As at June 2019, 122, 292,079 Nigerian subscribed to the internet via GSM (NCC, 2019). And this vast numbers of Nigerians on the internet have summoned key players in the country's political system to the platform. Hence, websites, social media handles, blogs, online forums and other web 2.0 platforms have become veritable conduit pipes of political information, spontaneous political discussions, activism, petition, bashing, ranting and other politically consequential forms of expression. To a certain extent, the propensity of Nigerians to voice their views on issues of common concern, even under the unaccommodating government, has been complemented by the information and communication democratization architecture of the internet. Also, studies (Ayo, Mbarika, & Oni, 2015; Nwokeocha, 2010) have pointed to the positive disposition of Nigerians to e-democracy initiatives.

However, While there has been a concerted effort by the government to plan, drive and realize Nigerian e-Government Programme under a Public Private Partnership (PPP) model through the

establishment of the National e-Government Strategies (NeGSt), as a special purpose vehicle under the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), and also through the unveiling of the Nigerian e-government master plan 2020, nothing substantial has been put into e-participation strand of e-democracy by the government. And this contradict the practice and trajectories of many democracies where government are facilitating e-participation through implementation of online civic commons(Dahlberg, 2001a, 2001b). With her booming population projected to be over 400 million by 2050 (United Nations, 2017) thereby becoming the 3rd largest democracy in the world, it is very likely that the country's representative democracy will become over-stretched as the ratio of representative to represented will widen up. Hence, e-participation of citizens in policy directions and decision making through internet enable mass deliberation should rank high on the priority of government. Conversely, what is obtainable in the country is a private sector led initiative in Nigerian e-deliberations project. Hence, the rest of the paper discusses the important of deliberation to e-democracy drive in the country as well as the need for a government facilitated online civic forum to engender mass deliberation and infusion of views to the policy directions and decision making of the government.

Deliberation, e-participation and online civic forum

On the account that 'democratic participation must involve both the means to be informed and deliberative mechanism to take part in the decision making'(Elliman, Macintosh, & Irani, 2007, p. 33), deliberation has become an important constituent of the 'hybrid democracy' where processes of direct and indirect/representative democracy co-exist in a political system(Bowler & Glazer, 2008). Though deliberation has been defined differently by different scholars, it mainly revolves around 'a formal exchange of ideas and evidence related to a topic of public interest and aimed at reaching a consensus' (Wojcieszak, Baek, & Delli Carpini, 2009, p. 1081).

In the words of chambers (2003, p.309) 'deliberation is debate and discussion aimed at producing reasonable, well-informed opinions in which participants are willing to revise preferences in light of discussion, new information, and claims made by fellow participants. In essence, diversity of participants, equal and free opportunities to participate and revision of preferences in light of new information constitute the basic prerequisites for deliberation (Habermas, 1991, Bohman, 1998). Deliberation is important to democracy as it is expected to provide certain democracy enhancing outcomes such as increased democratic engagement by citizens, tolerance for opposing viewpoints, understanding and better justification of one's preferences, increased faith in democratic process, increased legitimacy for political decisions (Benhabib, 1996; Bohman, 1998; Chambers, 2003; Dahlberg, 2001b; Dryzek, 2002). Conversely, some scholars have countered the ideals of deliberation by the argument that citizens may not have the competent skills to engage in deliberation and that deliberation may be infrequent; unrepresentative, leads to opinion polarization, and may be subject to manipulations(Price, Goldthwaite, Cappella, & Romantan, 2003). Nonetheless, there is still a near-consensus among scholars that deliberation is fundamental to reinvigoration of democracy(Carpini, Cook, & Jacobs, 2004).

While the ideas that democracy should revolve around deliberations by free and equal citizens was initially being championed by advocates of deliberative democracy, the advent of web 2.0 architecture has married the arguments of deliberative democracy theorists with that of e-participation researchers. Since large-scale political discussions hitherto considered to be impractical has become plausible with the advent of the web 2.0, e-deliberation and e-participants largely become intertwined. While e-Participation is rendered as ICT-supported broad participation in processes involved in government and governance(Sæbø, Rose, & Flak, 2008), deliberation is often seen as a primary mechanism of such broad participation. Hence, Macintosh

(2008) highlighted objective of e-participation as reaching wider audience to enable broader participation while supporting participation through a range of technologies to cater for the diverse technical and communicative skills of citizens and also providing relevant information in a format that is both more accessible and more understandable to the target audience to enable more informed contributions as well as facilitate engage with a wider audience to enable deeper contributions and support deliberative debate. Explicitly, e-participation advocates a web 2.0-powered robust information provision leading to informed citizenry as well as deliberation among citizens and between citizens and administrators en-route policy directions and decision making. E-participation, therefore, has three components - e-information, e-consultation and e-decision making (Islam, 2008; Wirtz, Daiser, & Binkowska, 2018). As depicted in fig. 1, e-information as the first dimension of e-participation entails providing robust information environment that will make citizens be well informed about defining political issues of the day. In this regard, all information and data pertinent to a defining issue of the moment must be readily available. While the media are key players in this information provision, tenets of e-information suggest that users generated contents as well as government information and data (white papers, panel reports, technical reports, legislative proceedings, feasibility reports etc) are essential in creating this extremely rich information environment.

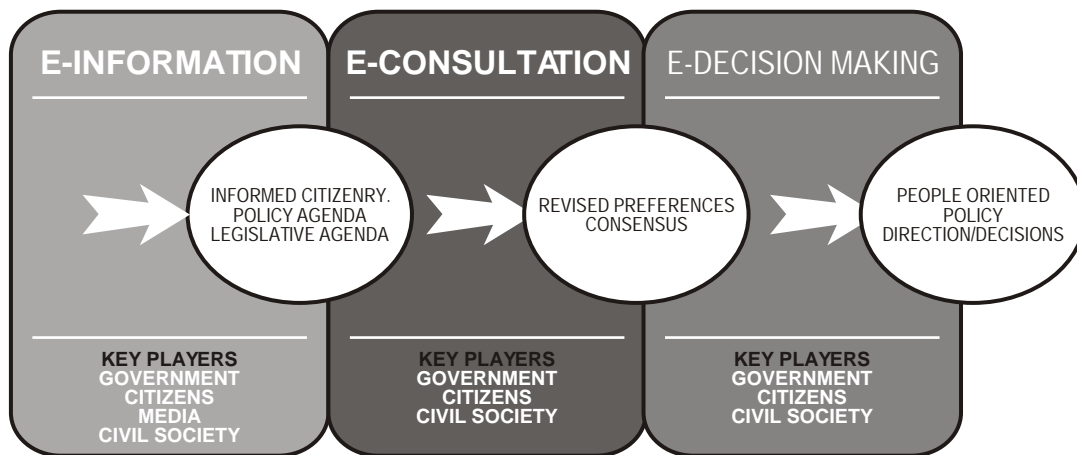


Fig. 1: Three components of E-participation (adapted from Panopoulou, Tambouris, & Tarabanis, 2009)

The essence of e-information as the first dimension of e-participation is for the citizens and government officials to be well informed as well as reasoned out their perceived policy or legislative agenda based on the issue at hand. E-consultation as the second dimension of e-participation entails deliberation by the informed citizens, government officials, and civil societies. In this stage, participants engaged in critical-rational discourse en-route crystallization of opinions, revisions of preferences or consensus on the issues of discussion. Such deliberation should be uncontrolled with guarantee that all ideas, no matter how crude or accurate they are, will be freely expressed. E-decision as the last dimension of e-participation revolves around actual input of participants in making the final decisions on the defining issue of the moment. This could be in form of online voting, liking/disliking, or thumbs-up/thumbs-down of the highlighted policy proposals or legislative agendas as distilled from the deliberations. In essence, e-participation ensures open interplay of opinion and policy as mediated by the web 2.0. it encompasses a whole gamut of 'enabling opportunities for consultation and dialogue between governments and citizens by using a range of ICT tools'(Medaglia, 2012, p. 346).

Given that deliberative e-participation is an information-intensive, interactive and dynamic process which demands consequential messages to be extracted and represented from a large assemblage of information emanating from different stakeholders often with conflicting agenda (Elliman et al., 2007), what type or genre of web 2.0 tool is best suited to facilitate these processes to the tune of the intended outcome? Among other web 2.0 tools, online discussion forum has been identified as the most common tool for realizing this citizens involvement in deliberation and decision making (Phang & Kankanhalli, 2008; Sæbø et al., 2008; Sæbø, Rose, & Molka-Danielsen, 2010; Zheng, 2017). Largely feted as the closest manifestation of participatory democracy (Freelon, 2010), online discussion forum is anchored on asynchronous message board technology, and has been posited of creating a virtual community which approximates conditions for deliberative *eParticipation*.

Online discussion forum offers a dialogic space for free and equal citizens (Janssen & Kies, 2005; Wright, 2006) to come together to share information, to debate, to discuss, or to deliberate on issue of common concern, and increasingly number of studies have shown how government and civil society around the world have been leveraging on the deliberative architecture of online discussion forums to revamp and increase participation in national and supranational politics and decision making (Blumler & Coleman, 2001; Dahlberg, 2001a, 2001b, 2004). Aside its information provision and discussion architecture, it is important that online discussion forum poised to drive citizens participation in policymaking should also include other areas such as input probing (Phang & Kankanhalli, 2008) and opinion/discussion aggregation mechanism. These two features are achievable through incorporation of online survey and Natural Language Processing (NLP) machine to online discussion forums

Inadequacy of existing deliberative e-participation in Nigeria

Over the last few years, a sizeable number of Nigerians have migrated online. Largely driven the overwhelming penetration of Global System of Mobile Communication (GSM) among Nigerians, the number of internet users in the country has gone from meagre 0.06 percent of the population as at 2000 to 42% of the population as at 2017 according to International Telecommunication Union (ITU) 2018 data. As at June 2019, 122, 292,079 Nigerians subscribed to the internet via GSM (NCC, 2019). If we estimate Nigeria's population to be 200 million, what these data suggest is that more than half of the country's population is online. However, has the vast number of Nigerians on the internet translated to deliberative e-participation of citizens in democratic tensions and policymaking? it is arguable that the internet and its various web 2.0 applications have blended into media of political communication in Nigeria as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, blogs, online discussion forum, online (mainstream) media, and others have become significant subset of media mediating democracy and its various processes in the country. With the number of politicians on the internet and incorporating various web 2.0 tools as part of their public communication media, it has also become significantly easy for the represented to contact the representatives, though the extent to which the representative reciprocates this type of communication can only be inferred through empirical studies. More so, a number of studies have shown that social media is fuelling more political participation most especially among the youths (Ajayi & Adesote, 2015; Mustapha, Gbonegun, & Mustapha, 2016; Suntai & Targema, 2017).

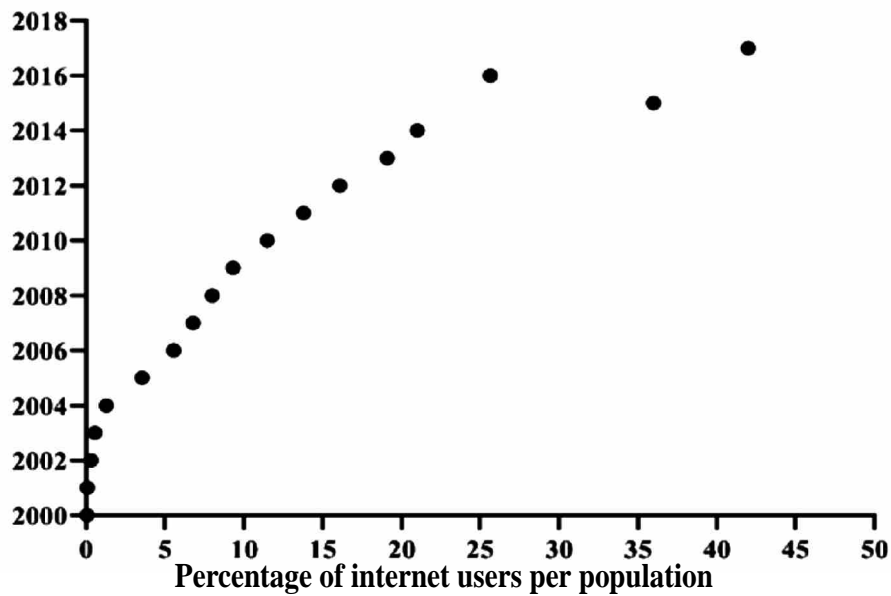


Fig 2: percentage of Internet users per population in Nigeria, 2000- 2017 (source: ITU)

In essence, internet and its entourage of web 2.0 applications have engendered a rich information environment thereby providing vast opportunity for citizens in the country to be highly informed about defining issues of the moment. More so, some sort of consultation between citizens and political elites is being facilitated by the array of social media being used by both the politicians and the citizens in the country. In recent time, a number of issues of common concerns were able to go 'viral' on the internet to the extent of forcing the attention of the policymakers in the country to such issues. However, all these do not suggest that the country is seriously hiking on the increasing popularity of internet among the populace to engender deliberative e-participation among its citizens. Calibrated against e-information, e-consultation, and e-decision-making as three dimensions of e-participation, it is arguable that while e-information provision is nearing maturity in the country, e-consultation and deliberation is still crude and in its infancy stage while e-decision making is non-existent. Though slightly marred by fake news and disinformation (Okoro, Abara, Umagba, Ajonye, & Isa, 2018), various online media in the country have helped to create a robust information environment through which citizens come to know vital issues of the day as well as armed such citizens with the motivation, ability, and opportunity to participate in various democratic tensions and decision makings.

In the same vein, these online media have also constituted a network of virtual public sphere providing Amphitheatre for articulation and circulation of discourse on defining issues of the moment. Notwithstanding, It can be asserted the bulk of those political discussions on various online media have not acquired necessary sophistication neither do they have conspicuous semblance to a critical rational discourse potent enough to meddle policy directions. Aside from widespread trolling, which often trivializes the discussion, hailing and bashing of politicians, ranting from malcontents, and peddling and injection of unrelated commercial information are also the hallmarks of political discussions on various online platforms in the country. Fragmentation of these discussions also contributes to the low power of citizens online deliberations in shaping policy directions in the country. With various defining issues attracting discussion on via Twitter Hashtag, on different Facebooks page, Instagram, Nairaland forum, online newspapers etc., such discussions are often fragmented and may not acquire that 'mass' nature needed to force the attention of policymakers.

Also, since the bulk of these e-platforms currently in use by Nigerians in discussing issues are not limited to political, economic and social change-related issues, other issues such as sport, scandals, popular entertainment, personal and private life of people, both celebrities and ordinary people often compete for attention of the people thereby short-circuiting sustain discussions on politically and economically significant issues. Relatedly, the commercial imperative of these online platforms as well as the internet-entrepreneurship drive among some of the users may also work against critical-rational discourse with consequence for policy directions. A conspicuous example here is the role of social media influencers (users with large followers) in promoting issues based on such issues commercial imperatives rather than its utilitarian value.

In essence, while the internet has democratized communication and information in the polity of the country, the existing deliberative e-participation of citizens in policymaking is inadequate. While the government has established the National e-Government Strategies (NeGSt), as a particular purpose vehicle under the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) to harness the potentials of ICTs to drive Government to Citizens (G2C), Government to Business (G2B) and Government to Government (G2G) service delivery (Ayo et al., 2015), there has been no concerted effort by the government to plan, drive and realize e-participation of its citizens in decision-making, though, the widespread offline and online protest against some of the government policies in recent time is an indicator that government should engage its citizens in different stages of policymaking as a way of churning out people's oriented policies. Summarily, deliberative e-participation in the country is still far from its basic tenets as isolated from various literature. Invariably, if it is acceptable that open interplay of opinion and policy represent the hallmark of a popular rule (Shapiro, 2011), then the existing status quo as to deliberative e-participation in the country bring to question the extent to which policy direction and decision making of the government is popular among the citizens.

Toward a government-facilitated online civic forum in Nigeria

In many countries of the world, governments have started exploiting initiatives for enhancing citizens' participation in policymaking (Phang & Kankanhalli, 2008). These e-participation initiatives of governments is being driven by a decline in the legitimacy of political decision-making as well as the growing need for government to attain more democratic governance (Phang & Kankanhalli, 2008; Sæbø et al., 2010). In their study of e-participation initiatives in Europe, Panopoulou, Tambouris and Tarabanis (2010) identified 255 initiatives from 23 European countries, all of which are using different ICT platforms to support the participation of citizens in policymaking. Other studies (Dahlberg, 2001a; Fedotova, Teixeira, & Alvelos, 2012; Phang & Kankanhalli, 2008; Sæbø et al., 2010).

In Nigeria, where there is a continuous decline in the legitimacy of political institutions, it is arguable that a government-facilitated e-participation initiative offers new possibilities and opportunities for citizens involvement in policy making and other political processes. Through its National Information and Technology Development Agency (NITDA), a special purpose vehicle for e-participation initiative could be established to plan, work out and implement a simple ICT framework which supports information provision, deliberation and aggregation of mass views for decision making as a way of bridging the cleavage between citizens and the various governmental apparatuses involved in decision making. Within the substantial number of literature which as singled out online discussion forum as the most common web 2.0 platform for government facilitated e-participation initiatives (Panopoulou, Tambouris, & Tarabanis, 2009, 2010; Sæbø et al., 2010), the country e-participation initiative could be built on online discussion

forum with its design and implementation incorporating the country's contextual factors.

Online discussion forum has been largely feted as the closest manifestation of deliberative and participatory democracy (Freelon, 2010) as well as an interactive channel for policymaking (Bekkers, 2004). Anchored on asynchronous message board technology, online discussion forum has been posited of creating a virtual world which approximates conditions for deliberative democracy. Online discussion forum offers dialogic space for free and equal citizens to come together to share information, debate, discuss, or to deliberate on issues of common concerns.

Though online discussion forum is built upon a well-established technology, *the asynchronised message board technology*, its design and management must be thoroughly planned and implemented as it has been argued that the design of the discussion forum goes in a long way in influencing the participation activities to be hosted by the platform (Aikens, 1998; Carlitz & Gunn, 2002). Sæbø et al.(2010) have identified salient issues important to the design and management decision of online discussion forum for e-participation of citizens as participants/actors, identity control, and moderation. While participants have to do with the people participating in such online discussions, identity control relates to whether the participants should be anonymous or go with their full identity to these virtual public spheres. In the same vein, moderation decision has to do with whether there should be human moderation of the discussion or not. Combining these along with other online discussion forum design decisions combed from literature (Freelon, 2010; Papacharissi, 2004; Price et al., 2003; Stromer-Galley & Wichowski, 2011; Wright & Street, 2007) and contextual factors of the current practice of online discussion in the country, we suggest how to go about in designing this enlarge online discussion forum. First, the participants should include all citizens, government officials, civil societies, and other stakeholders. Second, registration on the platform should be straightforward and fast. Registration and verification of users should be through phone numbers or e-mail. This phone-number based registration becomes imperative as over 120 million Nigerians have phone numbers, and such cannot be said about numbers of Nigerian with an e-mail address. Hence, combining phone number and e-mail as means of registration will enable more Nigerians to register on the platform. Third, identity control should be through the use of 'moniker,' thereby making users to be anonymous. While anonymity of participants could be challenging as users can hide under their monikers to engage in trolling(Taiwo, 2014), hate speech (DiMaggio, Hargittai, Neuman, & Robinson, 2001)or other rational discourse derailing actions, counter argument have suggested that anonymity of users can better the quality of debate by 'removing markers such as age, sex and race and consequently subjective interpretation of the arguments based on these markers' (Sæbø et al., 2010, p. 9). Fourth, use of moderators should be incorporated in the design of this online discussion forum as normative observation and empirical studies have shown that online discussion in the country is highly susceptible debate derailing input such as trolling, attack on other participants, hate speech and others(Taiwo, 2010, 2014). Hence, moderation becomes essential in order steer the deliberation from derailment and focus the discussion on public issues of common concerns. Fifth, the discussion itself should be rule-based and such rule should be explicitly stated to guide participants. Also, the discussion could be organized along the National discussion boards, state discussions for each of the 36 states of the federation and local government discussion boards for each of the 774 local governments in the country. This will ensure that e-participation of citizens and other stakeholders cuts across all tiers of government. Sixth, the online forum should incorporate means of aggregating discussions into simple options that can be voted for or against by participants. While this could be challenging in the time past however, the breakthrough in natural language processing via machine learning could make this achievable. Also, the forum should also incorporate means voting by participants

for policy options or direction distilled from the deliberation. This will aid e-decision making with actual input from the citizens.

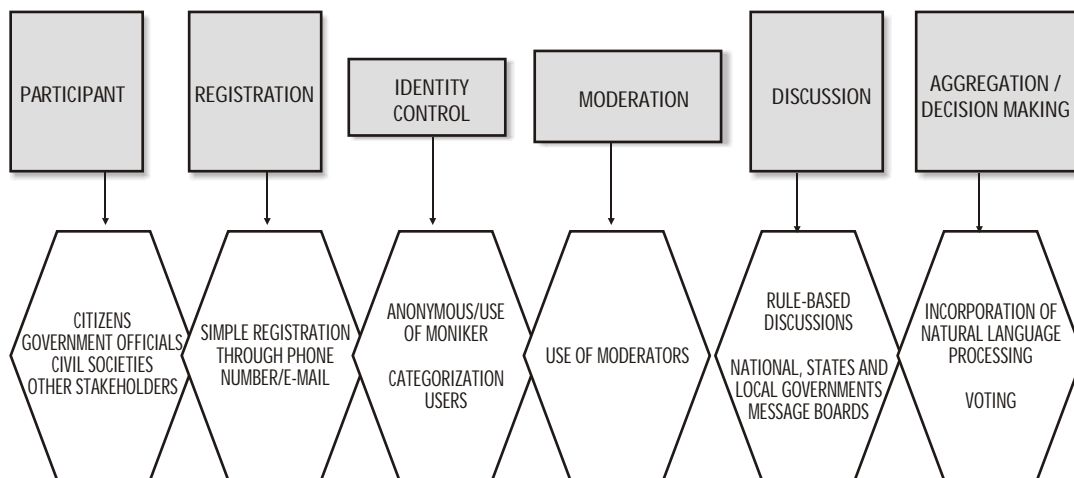


Fig 3: key design decisions in implementing online Discussion Forum

Designing e-participation initiatives through an online civic forum in the country also requires government and other stakeholders to consider and evaluate macro factors such as internet access and users' competence. This will enable the planners to work toward reducing the deficits that may be observed in order to provide equal opportunity of participation to all citizens and other stakeholders. Other success factors for designing e-participation have been identified by Panopoulou, Tambouris, and Tarabanis (2014). Among others, they identified alignment with long term goals and strategies; alignment with ICT policies and standards, political will and drive; sufficient funding; security and privacy; users needs and expectation as well as values for citizens as factors that must be considered when designing e-participation initiatives (Panopoulou, Tambouris, & Tarabanis, 2014). Building a citizen-center deliberative e-participation in the country could benefit from all these factors.

Conclusion

At this point in time, when legitimacy and public trust in political institutions in the country are declining, it is imperative that the government plan and implement e-participation initiative as a way of signposting readiness to involve citizens more in policy and decisions making. Considering that e-participation can be utilized for informing citizens, generating support among them, using their input in decision making and probing for their needs, e-participation is a one-stop initiative for efficient service delivery and excellent and all-inclusive governance. More so, the increasing popularity among and the propensity of Nigerians in expressing their views on social media suggest that any concerted efforts by the government in engendering participatory involvement of citizens in policy and decision making is likely to be accepted by the citizens. And as combed from literature, one time-tested ICT platform of achieving this e-participation is online discussion forum. While the private sector-led initiative in online deliberative democracy is a huge success as *Nairaland* has emerged as the biggest and the most vibrant online forum in Nigeria providing discursive and dialogic space to Nigerians (Chiluwa & Odeunmi, 2016; Taiwo, 2010), government-facilitated online civic forum can achieve even more success considering the resources and other wherewithal for success of such initiative available at the disposal of the government. Nonetheless, government must demonstrate sincerity of purpose to the citizens a way of driving wide acceptance of its e-participation initiatives

References

- Aikens, G. S. (1998). A personal history of Minnesota electronic democracy, . *Journal of Government Information*, 25(1), 1-9.
- Ajayi, A. I., & Adesote, S. A. (2015). The New Social Media and Consolidation Of Democracy In Nigeria: Uses, Potential and Challenges. *Journal of Good Governance and Sustainable Development in Africa*, 2(4), 47-58.
- Ayo, C. K., Mbarika, V. W., & Oni, A. A. (2015). The influence of trust and risk on intention to use e-democracy in Nigeria. *Mediterranean journal of social sciences*, 6(6S1), 477.
- Bekkers, V. (2004). Virtual policy communities and responsive governance: Redesigning on-line debates. *Information Polity*, 9(3), 193-203.
- Benhabib, S. (1996). Toward a deliberative model of democratic legitimacy. in Seyla Benhabib (ed), *Democracy and difference: Contesting the boundaries of the political*. Princeton: Princeton University Press
- Blumler, J. G., & Coleman, S. (2001). *Realising democracy online: A civic commons in cyberspace*. London: IPPR.
- Bohman, J. (1998). Survey article: The coming of age of deliberative democracy. *Journal of political philosophy*, 6(4), 400-425.
- Boler, M. (2010). *Digital media and democracy: Tactics in hard times*: Mit Press.
- Bowler, S., & Glazer, A. (2008). "Hybrid Democracy" and Its Consequences. In *Direct democracy's impact on American political institutions* (pp. 1-19): Springer.
- Carlitz, R. D., & Gunn, R. W. (2002). Online rulemaking: A step toward e-governance. *Government information quarterly*, 19(4), 389-405.
- Carpini, M. X. D., Cook, F. L., & Jacobs, L. R. (2004). Public deliberation, discursive participation, and citizen engagement: A review of the empirical literature. *Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci.*, 7, 315-344.
- Chambers, S. (2003). Deliberative democratic theory. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 6(1), 307-326.
- Chiluwa, I., & Odebunmi, A. (2016). On terrorist attacks in Nigeria: Stance and engagement in conversations on Nairaland. *Communication and the Public*, 1(1), 91-109.
- Coleman, S. (2007). E-democracy: The history and future of an idea. In *The Oxford handbook of information and communication technologies*.
- Coleman, S., & Blumler, J. G. (2009). *The Internet and democratic citizenship: Theory, practice and policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Coleman, S., & Spiller, J. (2003). Exploring new media effects on representative democracy. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 9(3), 1-16.
- Dahlberg, L. (2001a). Extending the public sphere through cyberspace: The case of Minnesota E-Democracy. *First Monday*, 6(3).
- Dahlberg, L. (2001b). The Internet and democratic discourse: Exploring the prospects of online deliberative forums extending the public sphere. *Information, Communication & Society*, 4(4), 615-633.
- Dahlberg, L. (2004). Net-public sphere research: Beyond the "first phase". *Javnost-The Public*, 11(1), 27-43.
- Dahlgren, P. (2001). The public sphere and the net: Structure, space, and communication. *Mediated politics: Communication in the future of democracy*, 33-55.
- Dahlgren, P. (2009). *Media and political engagement: Citizens, communication, and democracy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- DiMaggio, P., Hargittai, E., Neuman, W. R., & Robinson, J. P. (2001). Social implications of the Internet. *Annual review of sociology*, 27(1), 307-336.

- Dryzek, J. S. (2002). *Deliberative democracy and beyond: Liberals, critics, contestations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Elliman, T., Macintosh, A., & Irani, Z. (2007). A model building tool to support group deliberation (eDelib): a research note. *International Journal of Cases on Electronic Commerce (IJCEC)*, 3(3), 33-44.
- Fedotova, O., Teixeira, L., & Alvelos, H. (2012). E-participation in Portugal: evaluation of government electronic platforms. *Procedia Technology*, 5, 152-161.
- Freelon, D. G. (2010). Analyzing online political discussion using three models of democratic communication. *New media & society*, 12(7), 1172-1190.
- Gronlund, A. (2001). Democracy in an IT-framed society. *Communications of the ACM*, 44(1), 22-22.
- Habermas, J. (1991). *The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society*. Massachusetts: MIT press.
- Islam, M. S. (2008). Towards a sustainable e-Participation implementation model. *European Journal of ePractice*, 5(10).
- Janssen, D., & Kies, R. (2005). Online forums and deliberative democracy. *Acta política*, 40(3), 317-335.
- Kim, J.-Y. (2006). The impact of Internet use patterns on political engagement: A focus on online deliberation and virtual social capital. *Information Polity*, 11(1), 35-49.
- Kneuer, M. (2016). E-democracy: A new challenge for measuring democracy. *International Political Science Review*, 37(5), 666-678.
- Loveland, M. T., & Popescu, D. (2011). Democracy on the Web: Assessing the deliberative qualities of Internet forums. *Information, Communication & Society*, 14(5), 684-703.
- Margolis, M., & Moreno-Riaño, G. (2016). *The prospect of internet democracy*. London: Routledge.
- Medaglia, R. (2012). eParticipation research: Moving characterization forward (20062011). *Government information quarterly*, 29(3), 346-360.
- Mustapha, L. K., Gbonegun, V. O., & Mustapha, M. L. (2016). Social media use, social capital, and political participation among Nigerian university students. *Trípodos. Facultat de Comunicació i Relacions Internacionals Blanquerna*.(39), 127-143.
- Nigerian Communication Commission (2019, July 12), NCC hinges Nigeria's 122 million internet users protection on effective governance available online at <https://www.ncc.gov.ng/stakeholder/media-public/news-headlines/614-ncc-hinges-nigeria-s-122-million-internet-users-protection-on-effective-governance>
- Nwokeocha, S. (2010). *Elements of Nigeria's preparation towards advanced e-democracy*. Paper presented at the Proceedings of the International Conference on Internet Technologies and Society, Perth, Australia.
- Okoro, E., Abara, B., Umagba, A., Ajonye, A., & Isa, Z. (2018). A hybrid approach to fake news detection on social media. *Nigerian Journal of Technology*, 37(2), 454-462.
- Päivärinta, T., & Sæbø, Ø. (2006). Models of e-democracy. *Communications of the Association for Information Systems*, 17(1), 37.
- Panopoulou, E., Tambouris, E., & Tarabanis, K. (2009). eParticipation initiatives: How is Europe progressing. *European Journal of ePractice*, 7, 15-26.
- Panopoulou, E., Tambouris, E., & Tarabanis, K. (2010). *eParticipation initiatives in Europe: learning from practitioners*. Paper presented at the International conference on electronic participation.
- Panopoulou, E., Tambouris, E., & Tarabanis, K. (2014). Success factors in designing eParticipation initiatives. *Information and Organization*, 24(4), 195-213.