



Digital Governance in Expanding Access to Public Services in Kogi State

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Abstract

Digital governance has emerged as a transformative approach to public administration, leveraging information and communication technologies (ICTs) to enhance the efficiency, accessibility, and inclusiveness of government services. This study examines how digital governance frameworks contribute to expanding access to public services and strengthening democratic representation in Kogi State. Through participatory platforms, social media interfaces, and open data initiatives, digital governance enhances transparency, accountability, and responsiveness, thereby fostering more inclusive representation. Drawing on a qualitative content analysis methodology, the study concludes that while digital governance holds significant promise for improving service delivery and democratic inclusion, its success depends on deliberate policy design, investment in digital infrastructure, and capacity-building efforts that prioritize marginalized populations. The paper recommends a multi-stakeholder approach involving governments, civil society, and the private sector to ensure that digital transformation is both inclusive and sustainable.

Key words: Digital governance, public services

Introduction

Over the past few decades, digital governance has become a fundamental driver of public sector reform, propelled by rapid developments in information and communication technologies (ICTs) and increasing expectations for transparent, efficient, and citizen-oriented governance. In Kogi State, as in many parts of Nigeria, government institutions are increasingly adopting digital innovations—such as e-government systems, mobile platforms, and data-centric technologies—into administrative processes to enhance the quality and reach of public service delivery. This evolution signals a broader departure from rigid bureaucratic structures toward more flexible, technology-driven governance models that emphasize inclusiveness, responsiveness, and accessibility (Mensah, 2025; United Nations, 2023).

Digital governance is particularly important in expanding access to public services in Kogi State by addressing longstanding physical, institutional, and socio-economic constraints that hinder citizen participation, especially among rural communities and underserved populations. Through digital service portals and national identity systems, individuals can conveniently access essential services—including healthcare, education, taxation, and social protection—without being limited by geographic or temporal barriers. Empirical studies indicate that digital platforms help simplify administrative procedures, curb corruption, and improve service efficiency, thereby reducing delays associated with traditional bureaucratic systems (World Bank, 2023; UNDP, 2023). Moreover, the adoption of emerging technologies

such as artificial intelligence and big data analytics is strengthening governance by enabling more informed decision-making and facilitating the delivery of tailored and anticipatory public services in states such as Kogi, where effective service distribution remains a major governance priority (OECD, 2024; Alrawahna et al., 2025).

In addition to improving service delivery, digital governance enhances democratic representation by promoting more active citizen engagement in governance processes within Kogi State. Digital platforms create opportunities for real-time interaction between government institutions and citizens, allowing for feedback, consultation, and collaborative policy formulation. Initiatives such as open data systems and digital participation platforms are transforming public administration into a more interactive and transparent space, thereby strengthening accountability and public trust (OECD, 2024; Meijer & Bolívar, 2015). This participatory aspect is especially significant in developing contexts such as Kogi State, where digital tools can help include marginalized populations and amplify voices that have historically been excluded from decision-making processes (Sadat, 2025).

Statement of the Problem

Despite the advantages highlighted above, the benefits of digital governance are not evenly distributed in Kogi State, and several challenges remain. The digital divide—manifested through disparities in internet access, digital literacy, and technological infrastructure—continues to marginalize vulnerable groups, particularly in rural and low-income areas. A substantial proportion of the global population still lacks reliable internet access, limiting their ability to engage with digital public services (International Telecommunication Union, 2023). Furthermore, issues related to data protection, cybersecurity, and limited institutional capacity underscore the need for comprehensive regulatory frameworks and inclusive governance strategies.

This study positions digital governance within the broader context of inclusive development and democratic consolidation, exploring its dual role in enhancing public service accessibility and citizen representation. It contends that while digital governance presents significant opportunities to close governance gaps and promote inclusivity, achieving these outcomes requires intentional policy interventions aimed at reducing structural inequalities, expanding digital infrastructure, and strengthening digital competencies.

Research Questions

1. To what extent have digital governance initiatives improved citizens' access to public services in Kogi State?
2. How has digital governance contributed to enhancing efficiency, transparency, and citizen participation in public service delivery in Kogi State?
3. What challenges hinder the effective implementation of digital governance in expanding access to public services in Kogi State, and what strategies can be adopted to address these challenges?

Objectives of the Study

The central objective of this study is to examine the role of digital governance in expanding access to public services in Kogi State. The study seeks to achieve the following specific objectives:

1. To assess the extent to which digital governance initiatives have improved citizens' access to public services in Kogi State.
2. To examine the contribution of digital governance to enhancing efficiency, transparency, and citizen participation in public service delivery in Kogi State.
3. To identify the challenges hindering the effective implementation of digital governance in expanding access to public services in Kogi State and propose strategies for improvement.

Literature Review

Digital Governance

Digital governance entails the purposeful application of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to improve governmental operations, enhance public value delivery, and promote transparent, inclusive, and accountable decision-making. Unlike traditional e-government, which focuses mainly on service digitization, digital governance adopts a broader perspective by embedding digital technologies across policy design, administrative processes, and citizen engagement (OECD, 2020). Recent scholarship highlights that digital governance is not limited to the adoption of technological tools; rather, it represents a systemic transformation toward data-driven, collaborative, and network-based governance structures that involve multiple stakeholders, including governments, citizens, and the private sector. This transformation facilitates real-time communication, open data usage, and co-creation of public value, thereby improving institutional responsiveness and transparency (Sadat, 2025).

Public Service Delivery

Public service delivery refers to the mechanisms through which governments provide essential services such as healthcare, education, water supply, and social welfare to the population. In the contemporary digital landscape, this concept has evolved to incorporate technology-enabled service provision, commonly described as digital or smart service delivery. The integration of digital technologies has significantly transformed service delivery systems by replacing traditional manual procedures with automated and online platforms. These innovations enhance efficiency, reduce opportunities for corruption, and improve access to services, particularly in developing contexts where administrative inefficiencies are prevalent (Mangai & Ayodele, 2025).

In addition, digital tools support more transparent and responsive service provision by enabling governments to incorporate citizen feedback and utilize real-time data in decision-making. This shift has led to the emergence of citizen-centred service models, where services are tailored to meet user needs rather than institutional priorities (Sukare & Abdullahi, 2025).

Citizen Participation

Citizen participation involves the active engagement of individuals in governance processes, including policy development, implementation, and evaluation. Within the

framework of digital governance, this concept has expanded into e-participation, where ICT tools facilitate broader, faster, and more interactive forms of engagement.

Digital platforms—such as online consultations, social media, e-voting systems, and participatory budgeting mechanisms—enable direct interaction between citizens and government institutions. These tools strengthen democratic governance by enhancing transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness (Nurlinah et al., 2025).

Contemporary studies suggest that digital governance enhances participation by lowering barriers to engagement and providing multiple avenues for citizens to contribute to decision-making processes. However, the effectiveness of such participation depends on factors such as access to digital technologies, digital literacy, and public trust in government systems (Sadat, 2025).

Inclusive Representation

Inclusive representation refers to the fair and equitable inclusion of diverse social groups particularly marginalized and underrepresented populations—in governance processes and decision-making structures. In the digital era, this concept is closely associated with digital inclusion and equitable access to governance platforms.

Digital governance provides new opportunities to enhance inclusivity by creating alternative channels for participation, such as open data platforms, digital forums, and online consultations. These tools enable broader civic engagement beyond traditional political systems and amplify marginalized voices (Rodríguez Bolívar, 2026).

However, achieving genuine inclusivity requires addressing structural challenges such as the digital divide, limited digital literacy, and socio-economic disparities. Without targeted policy interventions, digital governance initiatives may inadvertently reinforce existing inequalities rather than mitigate them (Djatkiko et al., 2025).

Theoretical Review

The study adopted the Public Value Theory. This theory is developed by Mark Moore, provides a robust framework for understanding the outcomes of digital governance. The theory posits that government initiatives should generate value for citizens by promoting efficiency, inclusiveness, transparency, and responsiveness.

Application of Public Value Theory

The application of Public Value Theory to this study demonstrates that digital governance systems contribute to improved public service delivery by increasing efficiency, reducing transaction costs, and expanding access to government services. The theory also highlights the role of digital tools in strengthening citizen participation and representation through mechanisms such as online consultation platforms and open data systems that encourage inclusiveness and democratic accountability. In addition, digital governance enhances transparency and accountability by enabling real-time monitoring and greater access to public information, which helps reduce corruption and strengthen public trust in government

institutions. The framework further emphasizes the importance of addressing inequality and the digital divide through policies that promote digital inclusion, capacity building, and the protection of vulnerable groups from exclusion.

Methodology

Considering the nature of the study, a qualitative content analysis methodology was utilised. This methodology primarily depended on secondary sources of data, including academic journal articles, government publications, case studies, books, and policy documents. The use of secondary data enabled the study to examine both theoretical and empirical perspectives relating to participatory democracy and institutional mechanisms.

Findings

The findings demonstrate that digital governance plays a central role in improving citizens' access to public services in Kogi State by reducing administrative bottlenecks and simplifying bureaucratic procedures. The integration of digital platforms into public administration within the state reduces delays associated with manual systems and enables faster, more reliable, and more efficient service delivery. Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, mobile applications, and interoperable data systems further enhance accessibility by allowing residents of Kogi State to access essential services, including healthcare, education, and social welfare, without being constrained by time or location. Empirical evidence supports the view that digital governance improves operational efficiency and responsiveness, particularly in contexts such as Kogi State where traditional administrative systems have often been characterized by delays and inefficiencies (Anggara et al., 2024). These developments collectively signal a gradual shift toward a more citizen-oriented model of service delivery in Kogi State that prioritizes accessibility, speed, and inclusiveness.

The study also shows that digital governance strengthens citizen representation in Kogi State by broadening opportunities for engagement in governance processes. Digital platforms enable continuous and real-time communication between citizens and government institutions, facilitating consultation, feedback, and collaborative decision-making. Through tools such as online forums, social media channels, and participatory platforms, citizens in Kogi State are increasingly able to influence public policy and governance outcomes. This shift transforms citizens from passive recipients of services into active participants in governance systems, thereby enhancing democratic inclusion and institutional responsiveness within the state (Manoharan et al., 2022).

Another key finding is that digital governance enhances transparency and accountability within public administration in Kogi State. Open data initiatives and digital monitoring systems improve the visibility of government operations and decision-making processes, thereby reducing opportunities for corruption and administrative inefficiency. In addition, real-time monitoring systems and improved data integration support evidence-based decision-making and strengthen oversight mechanisms across government institutions. These improvements contribute to increased public trust and reinforce accountability structures within the governance framework of Kogi State (Hong et al., 2025).

Despite these advantages, the implementation of digital governance in Kogi State is constrained by several challenges. A major limitation is the persistent digital divide, which reflects unequal access to internet connectivity, digital infrastructure, and technological skills, particularly between urban and rural communities. Additional challenges include inadequate ICT infrastructure, cybersecurity risks, and resistance to institutional change. Low levels of digital literacy further exclude segments of the population from benefiting fully from digital governance systems. These factors highlight the unequal distribution of digital transformation benefits within Kogi State and underscore the need for targeted interventions to promote inclusivity and equitable access (Sukare & Abdullahi, 2025).

The implications of these findings suggest that for digital governance to effectively contribute to inclusive development in Kogi State, policymakers must adopt deliberate measures that ensure equitable access to digital infrastructure and services. This includes increased investment in ICT infrastructure, particularly in rural and underserved areas of the state, as well as the implementation of digital literacy programmes to strengthen citizens' ability to engage with digital platforms. Institutional and regulatory reforms are also necessary to ensure secure, efficient, and inclusive digital systems, with particular attention to data protection, cybersecurity, and accessibility standards. A citizen-centred digital governance approach is therefore essential for Kogi State to ensure that digital transformation reduces rather than deepens inequalities, ultimately promoting social inclusion, equity, and balanced participation in governance processes (OECD, 2024; UNDP, 2024).

Conclusion & Recommendations

In summary, digital governance remains a critical pathway toward inclusive and sustainable development in Kogi State; however, its success is contingent upon strong political commitment, institutional capacity, and continuous investment in digital inclusion strategies. This study concludes that digital governance plays a significant transformative role in expanding access to public services and enhancing citizen representation in Kogi State. The integration of digital technologies into public administration systems has contributed to improved service efficiency, reduced bureaucratic delays, and expanded opportunities for citizen engagement in governance processes. The results of this study point to several critical policy directions required to fully harness the potential of digital governance in improving access to public services and strengthening democratic representation. Given that, the following recommendations are brought forward:

1. **Governments must prioritize substantial investment in ICT rural infrastructure:** The expansion of reliable broadband connectivity, interoperable digital systems, and modern e-government platforms is essential to ensure equitable access to public services across all segments of society.
2. **Strengthen digital literacy and inclusion initiatives:** Equipping citizens with adequate digital skills is fundamental to reducing exclusion and enabling meaningful engagement with digital governance platforms. Current global policy discourse recognizes digital capacity development as a central pillar of inclusive digital transformation.
3. **Reinforce regulatory and legal frameworks governing digital governance systems:** Particularly in areas such as data privacy, cybersecurity, and algorithmic transparency. Strong

institutional safeguards are necessary to build public trust and protect citizens' rights within increasingly data-driven governance environments.

4. **Promote multi-stakeholder collaboration:** Involving public institutions, private sector actors, civil society organizations, and international development partners. Such collaborative arrangements foster innovation, improve service efficiency, and ensure that digital governance systems remain inclusive, responsive, and sustainable.
5. **Design and implement citizen-centred digital platforms that prioritize accessibility, usability, and inclusiveness:** These platforms should be tailored to meet diverse user needs, ensuring that marginalized and vulnerable populations are not excluded from digital public services.

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