

iQuestion.online

The digital platform for civic engagement

iQuestion.online: The digital platform for civic engagement

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Abstract

Digitalization is increasingly transforming societal, political, and economic interactions. The digital platform iQuestion.online is proposed as a solution to the democratic deficit; the decrease in government and institution transparency and accountability, and diminishing citizen engagement in representative democracies. This MaRBL provides findings based on a qualitative meta-synthesis. The team makes recommendations on the iQuestion.online platform; its functionalities, its design, and infrastructural elements, and the iQuestion.online organization, an implementation analysis, a financial needs assessment, and a revenue model. Practical implementations have been initiated on the digital platform and are subject to further realization.

Keywords: Digital transformations, Innovative society, civic engagement, transparency, accountability

The Authors

Emma is from Brussels, Belgium. At the time of writing this project, Emma is a third-year student at UCM. She mainly focuses her studies on entrepreneurship, organization theory, digital media, and psychology. What really passionate her is the innovation of education and personal development. She hopes to create a project in the future, enabling higher education institutions to innovate and truly bring skills of personal development and interpersonal skills within the university curricula. She participated in this MaRBLe because she wanted to gain knowledge and experience on how to create a digital platform for societal change.

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Marie was born and raised in Frankfurt, Germany. She is currently studying in her third year at University College Maastricht, with a focus in business, marketing and psychology courses, after having completed a semester abroad at the University of California, Berkeley in 2019. Her motivation to participate in this MaRBLe project is her interest in technology, digitalisation, innovative businesses and psychology. That is why she researched and developed the user experience and user engagement aspects of iQuestion.online.

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Paris was born in Cyprus and identifies as a global citizen. He is a second-year student at UCM, studying public policy, sustainable entrepreneurship, and innovation systems for sustainable transitions. Paris has been a climate and human rights activist for over ten years. He has established three non-profit organizations in Cyprus and in the Netherlands. Moreover, he held various positions in international, European and national non-governmental organizations focusing on climate action, environmentalism, active citizenship and volunteerism.

He was one of the innovators of the concept of iQuestion.online. His main interests are community-based innovations for sustainable transitions, the unification of forces towards sustainable communities and the development of collaboration platforms and tools towards those ends. The inspiration for iQuestion.online came upon realization of the disconnection that citizens felt with policies that affected their lives and the inexistence of centralized solutions to provide

citizen engagement. Through this MaRBLe project, Paris has developed the process of citizen participation and an implementation plan to successfully enable the mission of iQuestion.online. You can connect with Paris Cosma here: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/pariscosma/>

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	6
1.1 Introductory Remarks.....	6
1.2 Methodology	7
1.3 Problem presentation.....	9
1.4 Solution presentation.....	12
2. iQuestion.online - the platform.....	16
2.1 Process Analysis By Paris Cosma.....	16
2.1.1 iQuestion.online Process Overview	18
2.1.2 iQuestion.online Community Forum	19
2.1.3 iQuestion.online Features Overview	20
2.1.4 The use of social media as an effectiveness amplifier of iQuestion.online	22
2.2 User Experience and Engagement.....	24
2.2.1 Introduction	24
2.2.2 Theoretical Framework.....	25
2.2.3 Application to iQuestion.online.....	28
3. iQuestion.online - the INGO.....	42
3.1 Implementation analysis.....	42
3.1.1 Phases and Activities overview	42
3.1.2 Detailed activities	43
3.1.4 Privacy policy of iQuestion.online	48
3.2: Finances of iQuestion.online.....	51
4. Discussion & Future Outlook	71
4.1 Conclusion.....	71
4.2 Limitations	71
4.3 Future Outlook	72
Reference List	73

1. Introduction

1.1 Introductory Remarks

The defining characteristic of democracy is the integration of the population (greek: “demos”) in the political discourse and decision-making. Thus, it is a form of government which gives power (greek: “kratos”) and authority to the people, putting citizen engagement at its centre (Council of Europe, n.d.). In a representative democracy, elected officials are tasked to act upon citizens’ interests, empowered by a mandate (Schmidt & Wood, 2019). Thus, adequate representation is based on an active dialogue between the population and officials (Borrás, 2012). Today, however, a decline in civil participation is visible and citizens express an increased feeling that the government operates detached from the population. In this context, the diffusion of transparency and accountability of political actors is often pointed out (Borrás, 2012; Schmidt & Wood, 2019). Thus, the foundations of a representative democracy are being challenged by a widening gap between citizens and political entities, which creates a ‘democratic deficit’ (Merkel, Fotou, Alonso, & Keane, 2011; Schmidt & Wood, 2019).

Concurrently, digitalisation is transforming the societal, political and economic spheres and is contributing to innovative digital solutions in these sectors (Bennett, 2008). The novel project iQuestion.online is a digital platform which aims to provide a channel for a better democratic dialogue between citizens, institutions and organizations to reintegrate citizens into the political process. On the platform, citizens can publicly address questions to political and economic entities, such as the government, public institutions, academic institutions, corporations and non-governmental organizations, to nudge them to conduct changes on their practices.

The purpose of this MaRBL is to provide the iQuestion.online team with academic research, give practical recommendations for the development of the digital platform and implement the findings into the iQuestion.online platform. Thus, the overarching research question of this MaRBL is: *“How can the digital platform iQuestion.online be developed in order to help breach the democratic deficit; to reintegrate citizens into the political dialogue and to increase institution transparency and accountability?”* In order to answer this question, the research team uses the methodology of qualitative metasynthesis. The first chapter of this MaRBL elaborates on the methodology, the problem and the solution iQuestion.online attempts to address. The

second chapter presents the iQuestion.online platform and its process analysis. This chapter also discusses how to improve user experience and user engagement and gives specific design and infrastructure recommendations. Chapter three addresses the implementation analysis of the organization iQuestion.online and provides a financial analysis and financial plan of its operations. The final chapter four adds a conclusion and future outlook for iQuestion.online.

1.2 Methodology

By Emma Olyff

The idea for iQuestion.online started during a meeting between activist groups, the climate action network (CAN), and Dr. Serdar Türkeli. The group realized that, despite the high participation in climate marches and protests, channels were missing for citizens to communicate their questions and demands with institutions. Subsequent meetings discussed different possibilities for developing a solution in which these could be collected and addressed to relevant entities. The idea of the platform iQuestion.online was taking shape. However, the team faced significant constraints in further developing the idea and implementing it due to a lack of knowledge and research in the domain. Thus, Dr. Türkeli initiated a MaRBLLe project to research and develop the idea.

A widely used framework for entrepreneurs and project managers is the design thinking model for innovation (Brown & Katz, 2019). Design thinking is a dynamic model for developing a project; from understanding the problem to solve, exploring a solution, to materializing the solution (Brown & Katz, 2019).

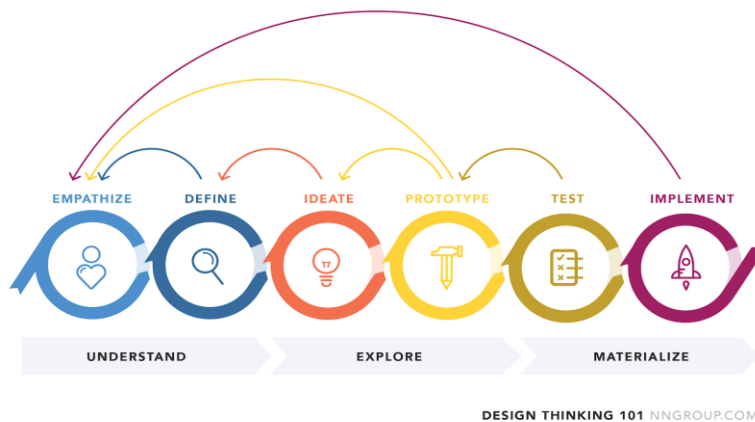


Figure 1: The design thinking model. (Brown & Katz, 2019)

According to design thinking, project teams must, before anything else, fundamentally understand the problem they are trying to address. The model explains that the project team can realize this by empathizing with all relevant stakeholders and developing a precise problem definition. Secondly, the design thinking explains that project teams should explore a potential solution by ideating and prototyping it. Finally, the model suggests that the project can be materialized by testing the solution, modifying it if necessary, and finally implementing it. Importantly, this process is dynamic, and each step influences the others. For example, while the definition of the problem shapes the ideation of the solution and thus, the prototyping and testing phases, the testing phase provides feedback to reinform the prototype, and therefore changes the solution again (Brown & Katz, 2019).

The iQuestion.online founding team, arguably, worked on the first steps of this model, by trying to understand and define the problem and starting to think about possible solutions. Then the team realized the need for additional research in the ideation phase, and consulted the research team to provide the project with academic and practical recommendations. The MaRBLLe, therefore, was guided by the need to inform a real-life project, using academic resources, informing 'exploring' and 'materializing' design thinking phases .

In order to achieve this goal, the MaRBLLe team decided to use the methodology of qualitative meta-synthesis; a method that synthesizes qualitative literature, gathering information from multiple relevant academic sources and databases. The overarching research question that led this MaRBLLe was, 'How can the digital platform iQuestion.online be developed to breach the democratic deficit; to reintegrate citizens into the political dialogue, and increase institution transparency and accountability?' Regardless, each student of the research team worked on different aspects of the project, depending on their academic concentration. The first main topic addressed by the MaRBLLe report and written by Emma, was guided by the research question: 'What is the necessity and potential of iQuestion.online?'. The second and third main topics written by Paris aimed to answer the research question: 'How can iQuestion.online platform be practically developed as a tool to breach the democratic deficit?' as well as 'What is the type of organization iQuestion.online should establish, and how can this be accomplished?'. The fourth topic, written by Marie, addressed the research question: 'How can iQuestion.online be designed to improve user experience and user engagement?'. Finally, the last topic, written by Emma, was guided by the research question: 'How can iQuestion be financially viable?'. Hence, for each of these research

questions, the research team attempted to find existing qualitative literature information and link it to the real-life project and implementation of iQuestion.online. The qualitative meta-synthesis was performed by using the keywords of each research question, on the relevant databases (eg. EBSCO host for the financial section, Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly for the implementation section). While the research team primarily focused on academic literature, they also extensively participated in creating the real-life project. Thus, the methodology of the MaRBL also heavily relied on prototyping and implementing academic recommendations.

1.3 Problem presentation

By Emma Olyff

Representative democracies are political models in which citizens elect representatives to govern and represent their interests for a specific time. Representative democracies are also characterized by mechanisms that allow the representatives to respond to the people's will and needs (Merkel, et al., 2011). Therefore, the functioning of this system is firmly rooted in people's sovereignty over who represents them and the accountability of these representatives in political decision-making (Merkel et al., 2011). Today, however, the ideal of representative democracy is not fulfilled in these two specific aspects. Firstly, people are not sufficiently engaged in the decision-making processes (Borrás, 2012), and secondly, elected representatives fail to be transparent and accountable for the decisions they make (Schmidt & Wood, 2019). Scholars refer to these issues as the democratic deficit. (Merkel et al., 2011; Schmidt & Wood, 2019).

The democracy deficit - Lack of citizens participation:

According to Borrás (2012), the current models of representative democracy do not ensure sufficient citizen participation in decision-making on common issues. Borrás (2012) explains that in all democratic models, for the government to address collective issues, experts and citizens should be in dialogue. On the one hand, experts should provide specific and informed knowledge on the issues. On the other hand, citizens should get involved in political decision-making and express their political opinions (Merkel et al., 2011). In the past, the consulted experts represented mainly the elected government. Nowadays, however, many more entities such as non-elected public institutions (Majone, 2010), but also public and private external actors (Sørensen, 2006),

are consulted during decision-making processes. This is referred to as the multi-level governance (Merkel et al., 2011). Problematically, today, representative democratic countries have placed more emphasis on the empowerment of these experts than on citizens (Borrás, 2012). Authors explain that this is because public consultation is costly, laborious, and oversimplifies complex matters, often resulting in prolonged and under-informed decision-making (Walters, Aydelotte, & Miller, 2000). Experts over-empowerment has significant consequences for representative democracies because it reduces citizens' involvement in politics, diffuses the responsibility of each decision across numerous unelected actors, and consequently lessens the legitimacy of each decision made by the representatives (Borrás, 2012). Therefore, these dynamics threaten the very foundations of representative democracy. Hence, it is essential to draw attention to these issues and restore citizens' participation in line with representative democracy ideals.

Democracy deficit - Lack of transparency and accountability

While the extent to which citizens should be involved in decision-making may depend on the position one holds towards democracy (Borrás, 2012), for representative democracy to work, elected representatives must unquestionably be transparent and accountable for their actions (Schmidt & Wood, 2019). Political transparency occurs when governing actors openly provide citizens with information on their decision-making processes and practices. Transparency is essential in democracies because it assures citizens that governance is ethical and that it is doing what it claims to be doing (Schmidt & Wood, 2019). In this sense, transparency is the antecedent for governance to be possibly held accountable for their actions (Schmidt & Wood, 2019). Political accountability, occurs when political actors not only share information on their conduct but are also scrutinized on them and finally rewarded or sanctioned depending on their behavior (Schmidt & Wood, 2019). Political accountability is crucial in representative democracies because it ensures citizens that they are rightly represented (Schmidt & Wood, 2019).

However, nowadays, representative democracies increasingly lack political transparency and accountability (Schmidt & Wood, 2019). Political transparency is hindered firstly because governing actors are often reluctant to be transparent about their practices; sometimes, to safeguard their practices secrecy, and often, because of the negative spillovers that sharing information might have. Institutions such as the European Stability Mechanism, for example, intentionally lack transparency. The European Stability Mechanism was created in order to manage European

finances in times of economic crises. In such cases, being transparent about their activities is problematic, because the information they possess on the markets and the fluctuations they might attempt to make, could risk influencing actors in the markets in ways that would be counterproductive to overall economic survival (Schmidt & Wood, 2019). Secondly, political transparency is often complicated to achieve in nature. Even if governing actors are transparent and provide information on their practices, citizens often do not have the expertise to understand and manage the amount and complexity of information (Schmidt & Wood, 2019).

Furthermore, representative democracies today, lack accountability because the diffusion of responsibility across the multi-level governance actors makes it difficult to hold individual actors accountable for the collective decision making (Schmidt & Wood, 2019). An illustration of this problem is the current climate inaction crisis across liberal representative democracies. In this case, the complexity of the multi-level governance in each country diffuses responsibility for climate action, resulting in political inaction (Den Uyl & Russel, 2018). Moreover, nowadays, representative democracies lack accountability because some institutions receive only little scrutiny, which hinders pinpointing unethical or unrepresentative practices. The European Council, for example, is one of these institutions, holding much decision-making power but being unchecked by European forums on the decisions they make (Schmidt & Wood, 2019).

The relevance of solving the democracy deficit

Nowadays, however, representative democracies are pressurized to address the democratic deficit (Roy, 2006). Bennett (2008) argues that the spread of digitalization in the past decades enabled massive amounts of information exchange, repositioning citizens to not only consumers but also producers of information. Digital technologies, thus have enabled citizens to be involved in gathering political information, sharing their political opinions, and creating virtual forums and groups faster and more widely than ever, shifting mindsets and practices to more participatory ones (Bennett, 2008). Additionally, today, whenever something happens, online social networks immediately cover it, providing evidence for information transmission possibility. Open-source software and blogging practices further display the possibility for information sharing (Clift, 2004). Consequently, while institutions have been modeled around traditional and hierarchical structure, individuals' expectations have increasingly shifted towards a more open and online society (Roy, 2006). Such discrepancies have heightened the skepticism around institutional and

organizational secrecy and foster demand for greater transparency and available information for scrutiny (Roy, 2006). Thus, due to digitalization, individuals' mindsets and practices are more strongly in favor of civic participation and institutions transparency, rendering the democratic deficit more salient.

1.4 Solution presentation

By Emma Olyff

What could the solution be?

Certain scholars argue that in order to breach the democratic deficit, countries should increasingly adopt participatory governance practices (Borrás, 2012). Heinelt (2010) explains that participatory governance practices place more emphasis on the empowerment of citizens by allowing each individual to be part of the ideation, debate, planning, and implementation of the decisions that will affect collective life. Therefore, these practices aim to invite citizens back in the political discourse (Heinelt, 2010). Such democratic shifts occurred, for example, in the form of forums for citizens consultation or through close relationship building between local citizens and elected regional representatives (Heinelt, 2010).

However, experts argue that these efforts to breach the democratic deficit are restrained to local and short-time impact and often did not fit the system of representative democracy, shifting towards an ideal of participatory democracy, which some scholars argue, is not the solution either (Hertting & Kugelberg, 2018). Therefore, a solution to breach the problem might find inspiration in participatory practices but should also understand how to make such a system function within the realm of representative democracy and how to have a sustained impact in time and a scalable impact in scope.

While embedding participatory practices in representative governance might not be sufficient for bridging the democratic deficit, modern digital technologies could be more effective. In recent years, traditional political participation has declined in all representative democracies; however, online forms of participation have increased (Bakker & De Vreese, 2011). Fuchs (2014) explains that digital technologies shifted users' practices towards what he calls a participatory culture. According to Fuchs (2014), social media has made it more accessible to people to become

members of different groups, collaborate, produce, and share information and activities with others. In a democratic model that needs more civic engagement, digital tools could be a solution.

Several institutions and organizations have already taken advantage of this potential. The Digital Democracy Lab (DDL) in the Netherlands, for example, is one of them. The DDL aims to increase inhabitants' participation in local policies by enabling citizens and municipalities to learn and work cooperatively on the potential of open-source tools (Proeftuin Digitale Democratie, n.d.). Another example of an institution using such practices was the Obama administration in 2009 (Wachhaus, 2017). The Obama administration launched an Open Government Initiative to make government data, policies, and processes more inclusive. The platform attempted to reach this aim by allowing citizens to define governmental problems and propose solutions (Wachhaus, 2017).

Unfortunately, these initiatives are often slow to yield results because, ultimately, their success depends on the institutions' willingness to incorporate citizens' suggestions into their decision-making processes. Since it is currently mainly the institutions themselves that facilitate these initiatives, it is difficult to pressure them to act or sanction them for their inaction (Freeman & Quirke, 2013). Therefore, a solution to the democratic deficit created within a digital platform could be useful as long as it tries to generate external pressure on institutions to be accountable and responsive to the inputs they receive.

What solution do we offer?

iQuestion.online short introduction:

To address the democratic deficit explained in the previous chapter, the Climate Innovation Hub, in collaboration with the research team of this project, created a solution; iQuestion.online. iQuestion.online is an online platform offering tools to facilitate dialogue between citizens, institutions, and organizations. While the democratic deficit stems from governments and governing entities, iQuestion.online also incorporates private organizations in the project, because of their direct influence on society. The platform invites citizens to think about the societal issues that bother them and raise their questions and suggestions to specific organizations and institutions. In turn, iQuestion.online redirects the questions to the relevant entities, offering them the possibility to answer back and interact with the citizens. In this sense, iQuestion.online attempts to provide the missing channel to reintegrate citizens into the political discourse. Furthermore,

iQuestion.online was designed to incentivize organizations and institutions' transparency and accountability. The platform tackles this challenge by openly exposing citizens' concerns about the entities' practices and rewarding the entities that are most accountable and transparent.

iQuestion.online mission & vision:

The last section of this chapter will explain what the research team suggests for iQuestion.online's mission and vision and how, based on these, the future iQuestion.online team will be able to measure the success of the platform.

iQuestion.online Mission statement:

iQuestion.online is an international non-profit platform that aims to provide channels for a better democratic dialogue between institutions, organizations, and citizens. Specifically, iQuestion.online's mission is to direct citizens' questions and concerns to the relevant institutions and organizations and encourage them to provide information and practical solutions in return.

iQuestion.online vision statement:

iQuestion.online's vision is to help breach the democratic deficit, by reintegrating citizens into the political discourse, improve institution and organization transparency and holding them accountable for their practices.

Measurement of iQuestion.online's impact:

This last section will explain how, by employing a logic model framework, future project managers can measure the platform's success in meeting its mission and achieving its vision. The logic model framework is a model used by organizations to measure their impact (So & Staskevicius, 2015). The model has mainly four components; inputs, outputs, outcomes, and impacts (So & Staskevicius, 2015). The specific definition of each of these components, as well as their implications for iQuestion.online, are depicted in table 1. The framework is useful because it helps organizations divide their project into steps, to measure each of them, and, therefore, helps to possibly understand how to improve their practices. iQuestion.online research team suggests that

the future project team makes this table more specific after the end of the pilot project, setting exact ideal measuring indicators. Employing this framework, the team will be able to see where their current impact is situated.

	Inputs	Outputs	Outcomes	Impact
Definition	Resources, capital invested in the activity	Tangible products from the activities the organization undertakes	Changes resulting from the activity	Broader change occurring in communities or systems resulting from the activity
Application for iQuestion online	The resources and capital invested information are described in the sections “needs assessments & cost assessment” of this research. These will mainly entail personnel (data scientist), technologies & marketing.	In the case of iQuestion.online, this might be understood as the extent to which the platform is successfully used.	The outcomes for iQuestion.online might be regarded as a tendency towards the vision, but at the local level at first. Therefore, outcomes might be how much citizens are more involved in the political discourse and how much local entities are held accountable.	In the case of iQuestion.online, the impact can be equated to the vision of the project, in this sense, the ideal goal of iQuestion.online; to help breach the democratic deficit, by reintegrating citizens into the political discourse and holding organizations and institutions accountable for their practices in all representative democracies.
Measuring indicators	The measuring indicators for resources investment could be (a) the number of people needed and their job function on the project (b) the number of hours needed for each of these persons (c) the initial costs of the platform	The measuring indicators could be (a) the amount of questions asked, (b) the number of questions answered by the institutions and organizations, (c) the number of answers that received rewards and points for their quality, (d) the amount of organization rewarded of the “transparency and accountability badge”.	The measurement indicators could be (a) users satisfaction of entities’ answers, (b) positive social change	The measurement indicators for the impact might be (a) feelings of political inclusion from iQuestion.online users (b) level of transparency/quality of information shared by organizations and institutions, (c) amounts of real-life entities sanctions resulting from iQuestion.online information sharing for example.

Table 1: iQuestion.online logic model framework

2. iQuestion.online - the platform

2.1 Process Analysis

By Paris Cosma

The *iQuestion.online* process

The aim of iQuestion.online is to provide citizens with a powerful tool to hold institutions accountable. The inspiration for the development of iQuestion.online stems from techniques of political laboratories, dialogue platforms and social media engagement. The research team recommends that iQuestion.online develops a mobilization-driven relationship-building model. Such a model is a framework that generates and mobilizes network support for organizations (Guo & Saxton, 2013). This section provides the reader with a technical definition of iQuestion.online, an overview of the iQuestion.online process and analyses recommended actions to maximize effectiveness and efficiency. Table 2 then presents the detailed process of iQuestion.online and Table 3 an overview of the main functionalities on the Community Forum.

iQuestion.online is a tool that enables open-source civic participation in institutional, organizational, and corporate conducts and policies. The concept of open-source was initially developed for the field of computer software (Husted & Plesner, 2017), and it is commonly referred to as ‘something that can be modified because its design is publicly available’ (Opensource.com, n.d.). In the span of the last decade, the domains of science, journalism and law enforcement also adopted hubs based on open-source collaboration (Koepsell, 2010, Lewis & Usher, 2013, Trottier, 2015). More recently, the concept is slowly being adopted by politics and activist groups. Adjusting the open-source concept in the context of politics and civic participation can offer citizens a position and a stake to contribute and influence future policies through their participation and insights (Sifry, 2004). According to Husted & Plesner (2017), open-source politics reverse the supply chain of politics thus positioning the citizen as a supplier rather than a consumer of policies.

iQuestion.online aims to foster citizen participation, by positioning the citizens as the suppliers of ideas and scrutiny to organisations, governments, corporations, and other legal entities. The online platform offers citizens the possibility to ask questions to any entity in

countries where iQuestion.online is activated, providing the public with a centralized dialogue and participation tool. Their question is then published as a topic under the Community Forum of iQuestion.online. At the Community Forum, other citizens can further discuss the question, upvote or downvote, and provide insights or recommendations.

Upon the publication of the question, a word processing algorithm labels the question in the databases of the platform, and forwards (i) the question and (ii) an invitation to join the community forum to the entity addressed by the question. By employing the word processing algorithm, iQuestion.online creates a new channel for interlinked communication between citizens and entities. An entity is then able to either respond by means of an email to iQuestion.online or join the Community Forum^[PC2] and respond directly. Entities are then assessed based on their response rate and using the iQuestion.online indicators. Citizens that participated in the discussion of a question, can then further comment on the response from an entity. In instances where the response is insufficient or the entity did not engage with citizens, users can organize collective actions against the entity in question such as collective legal actions or protests.

iQuestion.online pressurizes entities to be transparent and allow for citizen participation by using a three-folded model. Firstly, by using a gamification strategy rewarding entities that are responsive and transparent; the scoring earned through this gamification strategy of iQuestion.online will also determine whether the entity is entitled to receive the iQuestion.online certification. Entities are given the incentive to interact with citizens to keep a high level of accountability and avoid negative reputation in the iQuestion.online community. The gamification strategy is further elaborated later in this report (see the section *gamification* on iQuestion.online) and the iQuestion.online certification in the section of certification sales. Secondly, by providing an easily accessible online platform where citizens can unite their power against the misconducts of entities and collectively require a positive change, entities are incentivized to adjust their policies accordingly. Consequently, iQuestion.online reverses the supply chain of corporate, institutional, and political conduct, positioning citizens as the suppliers rather the consumers. Thirdly, by employing the power of social media, the iQuestion.online launches collective social media campaigns targeting entities that have not reacted to a citizen question.

2.1.1 iQuestion.online Process Overview

	Description
1. You ask	<p>1. Once on the platform, users of iQuestion.online can ask a question directed towards an entity by simply filling in an online form at www.iquestion.online/ask. No registration is required.</p> <p>(a) <u>Censoring of Hate Speech</u> The iQuestion.online platform is equipped with a censoring algorithm which notifies the administrative team in case a question promotes the rhetoric of hate, discrimination, and polarization of society. The policy of hate speech censoring uses as a point of reference the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Any violation of the declaration is censored. In cases where the algorithm suggests that such a violation occurs, the administration team reviews the question. In other instances, the question appears in the Community Forum for discussion.</p> <p>(b) <u>Sorting of Question</u> Using keyword-based word processing algorithms the question is analyzed to automatically attach a <i>Topic</i> and <i>Location</i> label. The starting categories are (i) Environment, (ii) Corruption, (iii) Education, (iv) Corporate Social Responsibility, and (v) Human Rights. In case a question does not fit any of the starting categories the administrators of the platform are required to create a new category. This algorithm reduces the required human resource but does not replace it as all of its results will require a verification from the administrative team. However, it is expected that in the span of the first ten-thousand questions analyzed the algorithm will be able to reach a 99% accuracy rate.</p> <p>(c) <u>Transfer of the questions to the Entities</u> The entity in question receives an email notification informing them about the question citizens have raised. The entity is invited to join the <i>Community Forum</i> to respond to the question. Entities receive a unique identification code to enable their registration as legal entities. iQuestion.online also offers an alternative to respond to the question: by replying to the email. In case an entity responds by email the response is published within one working day by the administrative team, by attaching the response email in the Community Forum.</p>
2. You vote	<p>2. Even before the entities provide an answer, questions that successfully pass the censoring algorithm or the human review are then published as questions in the <i>Community Forum</i>.</p> <p>(a) <u>Engagement, Discussion and Brainstorming</u> Citizens can comment under a question and start a discussion with the aim to provide evidence and/or brainstorm for solutions. Moreover, the administrative team verifies the categorization of similar questions or questions addressed to the same entity under a common <i>Topic</i>. Topics can then be discussed publicly or privately on the Community Forum.</p> <p>(b) <u>Voting</u> Registered users have the possibility to upvote or downvote the questions. Each week, the five most up-voted questions are given the label <i>Active Question</i> (see step 3. (b)).</p>

3. iQuestion.online and/or its community are then initiating a series of actions:

(a) **Active Questions**

The team of experts of iQuestion.online collects the five most upvoted questions per week and attach the status *Active Questions* to them, per country where the platform is activated. Then the team of experts investigates possible collective legal actions towards the entity in question. In case a collective legal action is possible, users that have upvoted the question are asked to support the action the team of experts prepare.

(b) **Transparency and Accountability Indicator**

iQuestion.online creates a unique *Transparency and Accountability Indicator* for each entity in question. Entities then have thirty days to engage in a public discussion or provide a public answer. In case they fail to do so the entity's Accountability level is being downgraded from Green to Orange. Entities are notified about the change in their level of Accountability and are being provided additional fifteen days to engage in a discussion with citizens or provide iQuestion.online with an open response. In instances where entities did not interact after forty-five days, their Accountability level drops to Red. Table 13 further explains this indicator.

(c) **Together we act**

Users that are labelled as citizens or non-profit organizations can initiate actions against entities that do not respond to questions or their response is not adequate, using the feature *Organize an action* or *iDemand* through the iQuestion.online *Community Forum*. (Table 3: provides a more elaborated description of the functionalities).

Table 2: iQuestion.online Process Overview

2.1.2 iQuestion.online Community Forum

The user engagement and interactions of citizens with entities occurs in the Community Forum of iQuestion.online. In the Community Forum, users can discuss questions, recommend solutions, engage with each other and create concrete demands which. Moreover, registered users are offered with various features that allow them to become friends with each other, organize actions, have public or private interactions, create groups, and further enhance the effectiveness of the platform. The Community Forum is a centralized interactive point of reference for all functionalities. Table 3 outlines all the functions currently available at the Community Forum of iQuestion.online

Moreover, through the Community Forum, iQuestion.online employs a nudging mechanism to steer citizen engagement and action. Nudging is a psychological steering strategy that is often employed in politics and public policy making (Bornemann & Burger, 2019). It attempts to influence individuals' behavior in a subconscious way, without forcing or convincing

them to change anything. It is used to solve societal, political and economic problems that are grounded on individual or group behavior, and is considered highly effective (Lepenies & Malecka, 2015). Most often, nudging is employed by governmental and non-governmental institutions to tackle unsustainable or other undesired behavior (Bornemann & Burger, 2019). In the case of iQuestion.online, the platform wants to enable citizens to nudge institutions to change their behavior when they are not answering to a question or refuse to adapt their practices to citizens’ demands. The specific design of such a nudging strategy on iQuestion.online is going to be addressed in the gamification section.

2.1.3 iQuestion.online Features Overview

	Description
Forum	<p>The iQuestion.online Community Forum offers an online environment where citizens can discuss, up-vote and down-vote questions towards entities. The main features provided by the community forum are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Interaction between citizens with the same interests and questions. Discussion facilitation, voting and engagement with the questions raised, ensure a participatory civic community. (b) Not for-profit, social and activist organizations are provided with the possibility to engage in discussions with their members and citizens of their area, publicly or privately through the platform. (c) Entities that are registered in the forum can receive questions directly and engage with users. (d) Free and independent access to everyone without any monetary obligations promotes an inclusive active citizenship.
Groups	<p>Through iQuestion.online registered users are offered with the functionality to create groups based on specific questions or topics of interest. Groups offer the following functionalities to users:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Creation of unlimited number of groups as long as there is a question or a demand relevant to the mission of the group. (b) Create polls and surveys. (c) Interact with each other. (d) Brainstorm and develop strategies for possible solutions.

	<p>(e) To request friendship with other users. Friends can exchange private messages with each other and create private groups.</p>
<p>iDemand</p>	<p>A main pillar of the iQuestion.online is the <i>iDemand</i>. <i>iQuestions</i> can become <i>iDemands</i>.</p> <p>(a) Description of iDemand: <i>iDemands</i> are created with the aim to nudge entities to become more socially responsible. <i>iDemands</i> are similar to <i>Active Questions</i> because the legal team of iQuestion.online is investigating collective legal actions against the entity in question.</p> <p>(b) The following criteria must be met to enable the functionality of iDemand:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. A question has been asked to an entity through iQuestion.online. ii. The institution has not responded to a question for more than 30 days OR the institution responded to the question in a non-informative or non-satisfactory manner. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Users of the platform hold the sole power to indicate whether an answer is sufficient or not. This is achieved through a voting process in the Community Forum. The response is displayed below the question and citizens can upvote or downvote a response. This criterion is met when the downvotes are higher than the upvotes. <p>(c) The iDemand Process</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. In cases where the criteria are met, the users can reform a question to an <i>iDemand</i>. For questions that were not answered from the entity a button is appeared next to the question automatically after 30 days of publishing the question on the platform. For questions that received a non-satisfactory answer users must request from iQuestion.online the reformulation of a question to a demand; iQuestion.online will reformulate all requests that meet the above criteria. ii. All <i>iDemands</i> are displayed at www.iquestion.online/demand iii. The legal team of iQuestion.online investigates all possibilities to hold an entity responsible and accountable to the specific <i>iDemands</i>. iv. iQuestion.online creates a group for each <i>iDemand</i> on the Community Platform. Non-profit organizations that are relevant to the topic of the demand and citizens that have interacted with a relevant question are invited to join the group. Through the group users have the possibility to discuss, brainstorm and create solutions on how to hold the entity accountable.

Organize an Action	<p>Users are offered the possibility to organize an action against entities. Through the Community Forum. Actions can be protests, social media campaigns, events or any other peaceful and legal action users consider appropriate. Users can only use this functionality for <i>Active Questions</i> and/ or <i>iDemands</i>. To organize an action users must follow these steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Create an <i>Action Group</i> in the Community Forum. (b) Invite at least 10 other users in the group. (c) Collaborate with local initiatives and non-profit organizations to facilitate the action. (d) For social media actions use the official action hashtag. The social media use and the creation of hashtags is elaborated in the following section.
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Table 3: iQuestion Community - Features Overview

2.1.4 The use of social media as an effectiveness amplifier of iQuestion.online

It is rare for citizens that are connected to the world wide web to refrain from the use of social media. In April 2020, more than 3.81 billion of the human population were active on at least one social media network (Statista, 2020). Wattam, 2009 considered social media as the “voice of the people”, while Murthy, 2011 regarded them as the “microphone of the masses”. Social media, offer to non-profit organizations an alternative medium to traditional media to spread their voice, enabling them to engage, mobilize and build relationships with their audiences at a low financial cost (Guo & Saxton, 2018). Guo & Saxton, 2018 identified that user attention towards the social media activity of non-profit organizations is strongly associated with the size of the organizations’ social media network, its frequency of speech/posting and the number of the conversations it joins. This section provides a practical recommendation on employing social media as a medium to pressurize entities to respond to citizens’ questions with the goal of promoting citizen involvement in institutional and corporate conducts.

The research team recommends the creation of a Facebook Page, a Twitter Account, an Instagram Profile, a page and a group on LinkedIn and the generation of TikTok challenges. In this paragraph argue why each of the above mediums should be used for example their popularity, age demographics etcetera.

Literature on policy-agendas suggests that the attentional capacity of the authorities, citizens and the media are limited to a number of issues at a time (Baumgartner & Jones, 2010). As noted in the previous section, *The iQuestion.online Process*, citizens can vote the five most popular questions on the platform on a weekly basis. To ensure that the social media network of iQuestion.online is not overcrowded with too much information and that their attention levels remain high, the research team recommends that only the five most up-voted questions are communicated through its networks. We recommend that the five questions are posted on social media networks using two hashtags. First, a common hashtag namely #iQuestion to enable users to find all activity at a central point. Secondly, a hashtag unique to each entity. For example, if the entity in question is Maastricht University then a hashtag like #MaastrichtUniversityWeAsk is recommended. The second hashtag must follow the aforementioned structure for all entities meaning that #EntityNameWeAsk format is employed in all instances.

The characteristics of the organization's social media networks, particularly its size is of crucial importance in ensuring that its message reaches its audience (Guo & Saxton, 2018). To keep the starting budget at a minimum cost we do not recommend the extensive use of advertising on social media platforms. Rather we propose that iQuestion.online grow its network with relationally embedded network ties. Eng, Liu, and Sekhon (2012), propose that such informal and personal ties are strongly related to support of an organization's message by social media users. In practice, relationally embedded network ties can be created by collaborating with various initiatives that support the aim or the rationale of a question. To illustrate this, let's use a mock question to Maastricht University, namely "Maastricht University, why do you invest your employees' pension funds in fossil fuels? Divest now!". The aim of the question is to understand why the university invests in fossil fuels and pressurize it to divest. A local organization in Maastricht, Fossil Free Maastricht has the mission to pressurize the university to divest from fossil fuels. Consequently, upon publication of the question on the social media and the platform of iQuestion.online, we recommend that the administrative team informs Fossil Free Maastricht about the question raised and asks for its support by sharing the social media post with its own network.

Moreover, the content of the posts in social media networks is of crucial importance. Literature recommends that the message is communicated with short text rather than extensive information and that the textual content matters more than the visual (Guo & Saxton, 2018). The

research team recommend that all social media posting is restricted to a maximum of 100 words and that for each question a visual banner is provided which will include the unique hashtag of each entity. Each post must follow this structure to facilitate the upmost user attention: #EntityNameWeAsk, the question, #iQuestion and then a link directing to the Community Forum.

It is expected that citizens will ask questions that are generalizable over a wide array of institutions on a national, regional, or global level. As an illustration let us use a question relevant to the climate crisis: “Netherlands, why do you keep destroying our future? Stop subsidizing the world polluters now.”. Such questions can receive the attendance of a nation (The Netherlands) or the globe, since it is relatable at such scales. The research teams recommend the cultivation of social media challenges in the networks of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and TikTok where users participate by creating their own content and uploading it in their personal media with a common hashtag. An example using the mock question above, would be that a challenge of sharing short videos where the user is dancing to Michael Jackson song “Earth Song” main chorus for 15 seconds. The user then posts the video on their social media using common hashtags.

2.2 User Experience and Engagement

By Marie Rasche

2.2.1 Introduction

The success of an online platform is not only determined by having website visitors, but also by having engaged users (Lehmann, Lalmas, Yom-Tov, & Dupret, 2012). iQuestion.online is a digital platform that has a strong focus on its users, as the functioning of the platform majorly relies on user-generated content. Without citizens posing questions and institutions answering them, the platform iQuestion.online loses its reason for existence and will not be able to function according to plan. The digital platform is the facilitator of the questions, following the analogy of a host, as it accepts questions from citizens and transfers them to the institutions. The importance of users is also reflected in the name of the digital platform. iQuestion.online implies that there is an individual (an I) questioning something online.

When iQuestion.online manages to motivate and enable visitors to become users of the platform, it achieves a crucial part of its mission to facilitate the dialogue between citizens and institutions. When a recipient of a question chooses to not respond, societal pressure needs to be

applied by the community forum, in the form of public shaming. The questions that are not answered can become topics of protests for citizens. The mechanism of nudging, as elaborated upon in the iDemand section of the previous process analysis, can be applied in this context (Bornemann & Burger, 2019). Overall, the success of iQuestion.online can practically be measured by the number of platform visitors and participants. More specifically, the website visits and clicks signal the ability of iQuestion.online to attract users and retain them. Therefore, it is central to establish recommendations on user experience and engagement to the platform development team.

This chapter aims to answer the following research question: “How can iQuestion.online be designed to improve user experience and user engagement?” First, the theoretical framework with literature on attention, motivation, and brand building mechanisms will be provided. Based on that, practical recommendations on the iQuestion.online platform design and infrastructure are going to be given. Specifically, design instructions will be made for the website color scheme, the images, and the logo. The infrastructure recommendations are about integrating gamification elements into the website to motivate users to participate (Kankanhalli, Taher, Cavusoglu, & Kim, 2012) .

2.2.2 Theoretical Framework

Website developers can positively influence user experience and user engagement with the help of insights into human attention and motivation. User experience describes the subjective experience and qualitative impressions of a website visitor (Lehmann et al., 2012). User engagement is the active involvement of users into a website. A positive user experience can have the effect of user engagement and retention. User retention is the ability to capture and retain user engagement through positive user experience. It is the process of engaging existing users to motivate them to stay committed to a product or service (Couper et al., 2010). It is of high interest to website developers to actively improve user experience in order to maintain a high user retention rate. Human attention and motivation are complex biological processes which can inform effective website design and infrastructure for improved user engagement (Garett et al., 2016). Moreover, the theory behind brand building and brand building tools is essential to establish a successful new digital brand. Thus, attention, motivation and brand building make up the theoretical framework for leveraging user experience and user engagement.

a) Attention

Attention is the ability to focus mental capacity selectively on one particular aspect of perception, either in the environment or inner world, while disregarding any other information that can be perceived at the same time (Bucher, 2012). Attention is a property of human cognition which has been studied extensively in the fields of Neuroscience and Cognitive Psychology. Neurocognitive research describes the brain as an information-processing apparatus with limited capacity, which concentrates attention on a specific piece of information that is subsequently being processed (Bucher, 2012). Visual attention can be selectively and voluntarily directed at a specific stimulus of interest. Research has shown that visual attention is especially captured by stimuli that are emotionally salient and stimuli that particularly stand out from other information, such as highly saturated color, bold font or images and symbols (Bucher, 2012; Schupp et al., 2007).

As the brain's ability to direct attention at one object is limited and only temporary, an attention economy considers attention as a scarce resource (Bucher, 2012; Franck, 2019). Thus, in an economic sense, human attention is a limited but desirable good (Franck, 2019). A specific example is the fact that enterprises compete for client attention in order to get them to engage with their brand and products. Thus, insights on the mechanisms on how to capture attention are very important to and are employed by the political, business, technology and information sector. Attention research is especially helpful for media and communication research and marketing specialists who aim at seizing potential customers' attention to enthuse them for a brand (Franck, 2019).

As the internet is highly complex in structure and content, there is an abundance of information available online, which makes it difficult for individuals to allocate visual attention (Bucher, 2012). Thus, digital enterprises have aimed to understand the science of attention and use it to their advantage on websites and digital platforms, in order to increase website visits and clicks (Bucher, 2012). Digital platforms therefore organize their infrastructure and design technology with the goal of inducing and maintaining user attention by including emotionally and visually salient stimuli (Bucher, 2012; Franck, 2019; Schupp et al., 2007).

Website engineers make use of concrete attention-stimulating infrastructural and design elements which shape the functionality and user experience of a website. The social networking service Facebook is an example which actively captures, maintains and measures human attention through certain design elements (Bucher, 2012). One illustrative example is the 'Like' button

which was designed to demonstrate the connection between people and things. It symbolizes user engagement with a particular content and expresses a users' support and solidarity with that thing. Each 'Like' has a connotative meaning and users can learn about the public activities of their social network by having insights into each other's' 'Likes'. This element intrigues user attention and improves their user experience. A second example is the fact that users can create a virtual social network by adding friends and seeing mutual friends, which makes Facebook an emulation and extension of social networks in the real world. The mentioned infrastructural and design elements on the digital platform Facebook are emotionally and visually salient, and thus designed to attract and maintain user attention (Bucher, 2012; Schupp et al., 2007).

b) Motivation

Behavioral sciences study the motivation behind actions and classify motivation into two different types; extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation exists when an individual performs a behavior with the expectation to receive a subsequent external reward, such as monetary reward, status and other types of tangible or intangible achievements. Intrinsic motivation on the other hand occurs when an individual acts driven by internal rewards such as personal fulfillment, the completion of a meaningful task, and feelings of competence and personal development (Kankanhalli et al., 2012). Motivation is a mechanism that drives behavior and can be strengthened by rewards. A specific behavior is more likely to occur again, if it is followed by positive consequences, which is scientifically termed 'positive reinforcement' (Eyal, 2013). Thus, if website designers want to elicit the motivation to engage with a platform in users, they should positively reward user engagement.

c) Brand Building

A brand can be actively built and strengthened by consulting specific factors that influence brand strength. The Interbrand global brand consultancy established ten brand strength factors based on internal and external dimensions (Interbrand, n.d.).

Internal factors determine the inner strength of a brand and build the basis for brand success;

- i) *Clarity*, which means internal coherence about brand mission, vision and goals
- ii) *Commitment*, which emphasizes the importance of internal unity and commitment to the brand

iii) *Governance*, which clarifies the need for a strong brand strategy and its enactment and
iv) *Responsiveness*; which is the ability of the brand to constantly evolve and respond to changes in the market.

External factors establish how the brand presents itself to the competitive landscape;

- i) *Authenticity*, which is the ability to portray internal truth and coherence based on a solid value ground
- ii) *Relevance*, which makes the brand and its mission worthwhile and needed,
- iii) *Differentiation*, which determines users' perception of a differentiated brand identity and experience,
- iv) *Consistency*, which is the ability of the brand to portray a consistent brand image across channels,
- v) *Presence*, which is the degree to which the brand is talked about,
- vi) *Engagement*, which signals the amount to which customers and users demonstrate interest in and participation with the brand (Interbrand, n.d.).

All of these factors contribute to successful brand building and help determine a strong brand identity.

2.2.3 Application to iQuestion.online

Research shows that website design and infrastructure can attract the attention and secure the motivation of users (Lehmann et al., 2012). Attracting users and increasing user engagement, is an important goal of iQuestion.online, as users are of central importance to the functioning of the platform. iQuestion.online aims to capture the attention of new users to the platform and motivate them to engage with its services and ultimately contribute to the functioning of the platform by asking questions. There are specific design and infrastructure recommendations which can be made in the context of iQuestion.online. Therefore, this section will firstly explain design research and design recommendations, and secondly elaborate on website infrastructure aspects and recommendations.

a) Website Design

A way for website engineers to capture user attention and motivation is through the visual design of the website. Website design significantly affects user behavior. The research team recommends three specific design structures for the iQuestion.online platform; color scheme, images and logo. Firstly, the choice of colors plays a crucial role in website design, as it helps to capture user attention and can intrigue user's interest for the digital platform (Kondratova & Goldfarb, 2007). There is an abundance of colors at the disposal of website designers, which makes it crucial to choose the color coding with an idea and purpose for the website in mind (Kondratova & Goldfarb, 2007). Secondly, images can have powerful messages and have a strong emotional effect. iQuestion.online should therefore use many images on the platform that support the website content and the message that iQuestion.online wants to deliver. Lastly, a logo is a graphic element which influences brand associations and brand identity, as it is mostly portrayed together with the brand name and is thus strongly connected to the brand (Bossel, Geyskens, & Goukens, 2019). Hence, in order for the logo to support brand identity, it needs to be chosen wisely.

Color Scheme

The theory on the relationship between color and emotion is relevant for digital design, as it helps to inform the appropriate choice of color scheme for a brand, which is a central marketing element (Kaya & Epps, 2004; Kondratova & Goldfarb, 2007). Every color has several symbols that are consistently associated with it and that evoke certain mental connections and emotions. Research shows that the induced emotion of a specific color somewhat depends on personal preference and past experiences with it, but overall people have largely similar associations with specific colors. For instance, the color green and its many shades uniformly evoke emotions such as relaxation, harmony, happiness and comfort (Kaya & Epps, 2004). Especially light shades of green are connected to positive emotions. It is a refreshing and also soothing color that is often associated with nature, sustainability and autonomy (Kaya & Epps, 2004). The color white has the connotation of hope, purity, cleanness, harmony and peace. It is also a refreshing color which mostly evokes positive emotions (Kaya & Epps, 2004). Blue, and especially dark blue, is a color that is connected to professionalism, knowledge, formality, stability and expertise. The color blue is in the logo of brands such as American Express, LinkedIn, Facebook, VISA, IBM and Ford, that

are all well-established, sophisticated brands (Kaya & Epps, 2004). iQuestion.online already relates to the connotations of the mentioned colors, or aims to connect to them. Thus, for the platform design of iQuestion.online, the research team recommends to use the color-combination of green, blue and white, in order to align with iQuestion.online's political and sustainable mission.

Shades and saturations of colors have different effects and are thus to be chosen wisely. In the past, websites with high symmetry, low complexity, shades of blue, medium brightness and medium or high saturation have received the highest aesthetic ranking (Seckler, Opwis, & Tuch, 2015). Medium brightness and high saturation are not only aesthetically pleasing, but also have a motivational effect on website users. Bright and saturated colors raise a "call for action" and motivate people more than dark or dull colors (Kondratova & Goldfarb, 2007). Thus, the research team recommends iQuestion.online to implement colors on the very last end of the spectrum (high saturation) in the blue, blue-green and green section of figure 2, which are indicated with black stars (Kondratova & Goldfarb, 2007).

The recommendations for the specific color design on the website are made with the goal to aesthetically please users while also mobilizing them for political action. The background color is recommended to be white, as that speaks for cleanness, hope and purity and forms a nice backdrop to the rest of the information on the site. Since research showed that websites with low complexity are most aesthetically pleasing, the research team recommends iQuestion.online to utilize a rather simplistic color scheme (Seckler et al., 2015). This will help users feel less distracted by many different colors, and rather help them to focus their attention on specific highlighted information. It is recommended that black headings pop out of the white background and important key words such as 'participation', 'transparency', 'accountability' and 'dialogue' are highlighted in a highly saturated green. The majorly white and black design speaks for professionalism, which can help iQuestion.online to initially establish its brand, as the information will seem sophisticated and reliable.

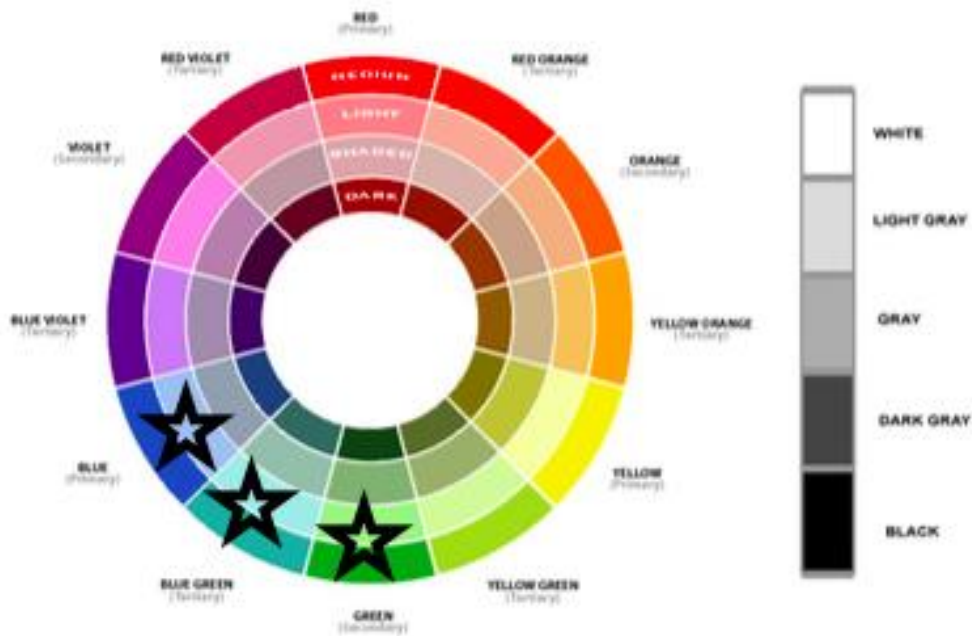


Figure 2: “Artistic” color wheel (Kondratova & Goldfarb, 2007)

Images

Websites often include images in their design, as they attract attention and evoke emotions in the user. The images recommended for the iQuestion.online platform should represent the mission and vision of iQuestion.online as a supportive element. There are going to be both illustrations and photographs. Illustrations are graphical interpretations of a concept which can be implemented in print and digital media. Photographs allow humans to capture situations visually in real-time and revisit them at a later point. The illustrations for iQuestion.online will follow the above-mentioned color scheme of blue, blue-green, green and white and depict the themes of democracy, dialogue between citizens and institutions, and question-posing. They will be implemented on different web pages of the digital platform, linked to their respective topic. Photographs are recommended to be installed on the front page of iQuestion.online in order to initially capture website visitor attention. To sustain user attention, the research team recommends the photographs to be interchanging images on the front page with the following scenes;

Scene 1: A photograph of politically engaged citizens, in the setting of a peaceful protest. The citizens could have their fists raised and ideally have emotional facial expressions to illustrate citizen engagement and the desire for change. Below, an example of such a scene is provided.



Figure 3: Save Your Internet - Demo against Uploadfilter (Spiske, 2019)

Scene 2: A photograph of the Municipality Maastricht building, as an example of an institution which is questioned. A group of citizens, ideally students, can be captured with their back to the camera while walking towards the Municipality building at which they will address their questions and represent their own interests. Underneath, an image of the Maastricht Municipality is provided.



Figure 4: Gemeente Maastricht (2020)

Scene 3: A photograph of an individual looking like a politician, wearing a suit and looking professional. This individual will be in dialogue with a citizen, who wears casual clothing to illustrate the power dynamics between the two. However, the citizen is going to be the one who is speaking and addressing their concern, interest or question to the politician. This symbolizes the dialogue that can happen between citizens and politicians/institutions on iQuestion.online.

All of these motives illustrate the mission and vision of increased institution transparency, and accountability and citizen participation to portray the platform's intentions and values. The iQuestion.online research team asked a volunteering photographer to provide the photographs, as described above, to iQuestion.online, which will occur in the near future.

Logo

A distinct iQuestion.online logo can aid the brand building of iQuestion.online, and strengthen brand recognition amongst citizens and organisations (Park, Eisingerich, Pol, & Park, 2013). The brand logo is a marketing element which strongly impacts the associations that users and customers will have with the brand (Bossel et al., 2019). Research has shown that brand logos have a positive effect on the identification of customers with a brand (Park et al., 2013). As iQuestion.online is a new digital platform which still has to establish brand associations and brand relevance, a strong logo that suits the brand and its mission, can solidify the iQuestion.online platform among the population.

The research team recommends that the iQuestion.online logo should represent the purpose and functionality of the platform. As the central purpose of iQuestion.online is to enable citizens to ask questions to institutions and to facilitate a dialogue between them, this aspect should be depicted on the logo. Thus, the research team recommends a logo in the shape of a circle encompassing two speech bubbles. As the recommended color scheme is a combination of green, blue and white because of the associations that these colors evoke and that relate to iQuestion.online, the logo should follow this color scheme as well. The logo is also recommended to reflect the keywords of the iQuestion.online mission; dialogue, transparency and accountability, to build strong brand associations. In order to establish a connection between brand logo and brand name, the iQuestion.online logo is recommended to be portrayed next to the iQuestion.online name on every possible occasion, such as the website, posters, stickers, greeting cards, t-shirts and other

marketing products (Bossel et al., 2019). Nelia Mayer-Rolshoven, a UCM arts student, created a prototype for the iQuestion.online logo based on the research team's recommendation.



Figure 5: Logo, Copyright by Nelia Mayer-Rolshoven (2020)

b) Website Infrastructure

An effective way for website builders to capture users is by engineering certain website infrastructure elements. Research has shown that structural factors have a higher impact on aesthetic rankings than color factors (Seckler et al., 2015). Infrastructure elements determine the functioning of a platform and one of such elements is gamification.

Gamification is a strategy used to deepen user engagement by applying game elements to non-game contexts. In a game, players are confronted with a challenge, that is defined by rules and based on interactivity with other players (Koster, 2013). The external rewards obtained by winning a game fuel an extrinsic motivation. Research on the motivation behind playing games has also established that it is an enjoyable process which elicits positive emotions (Kankanhalli et al., 2012). As participation is mostly rewarded with positive emotions, and feelings of achievement, one can conclude that game design appeals to an intrinsic motivation to participate as well. Thus, the employed game elements have the potential to fuel intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to engage

with the online content, which very likely results in increased user engagement (Kankanhalli et al., 2012).

Gamification on iQuestion.online

According to Kankanhalli et al. (2012), there are several types of rewards that are achievable in gamified contexts, such as monetary reward, learning, and social and community impact. Table 10 displays the different reward categories which can be classified into extrinsic rewards; monetary, status, achievement, and intrinsic rewards; learning, other self-development, social and community impact and also achievement (Kankanhalli et al., 2012).

iQuestion.online can appeal to both user's intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, by including some of the intrinsic and extrinsic rewards established by Kankanhalli et al. (2012) into the iQuestion.online infrastructure. First, the intrinsic reward is going to be discussed. Humans have an innate need to contribute to society and grow in character throughout their lives (Kankanhalli et al., 2012). Thus, an intrinsic reward of using iQuestion.online is the positive societal and environmental impact caused by civic engagement on the platform. Their engagement proves users' competence to be responsible and autonomous citizens in society. The self-determined act of asking questions on the platform demonstrates users' capability, intelligence and dedication which are rewarded by subsequent positive emotions of achievement and fulfilment. Therefore, the iQuestion.online research team suggests that the social mission and vision of iQuestion.online need to be clearly visible in the design of the platform, as they provide the reward of positive 'Social and Community Impact' for political and social engagement on the platform (table 10). Also, the effects of asking questions, such as an institution response or even a change in institution policy following the citizens' questions, are to be demonstrated on the platform as previous examples of success.

In addition, the research team recommends iQuestion.online to engineer an external reward system which shall address the extrinsic motivation of users. In table 10, 'Monetary' reward and 'Status' are clear examples of extrinsic reward (Kankanhalli et al., 2012). Granting a monetary reward to users does not make sense in the context of iQuestion.online, as it is an innovative digital platform in the pilot phase, and money should not be an incentivizer for platform engagement. A status reward system, however, can be implemented into the iQuestion.online infrastructure. Users will be rewarded with a status symbol following their engagement on the platform. This status

reward can give them the recognition within the iQuestion.online community and will most likely motivate them to remain on and return to the platform to uphold and improve their status (Kankanhalli et al., 2012).

Reward	Description	Example
Monetary	Financial benefits for users	Voucher
Status	Recognition within a community	Recognition as expert
Achievement	Significant accomplishment	Achieving sales target or next level in the game
Learning	Gaining skills and knowledge	Learning science concepts
Other self-development	Self-development benefit	Health and wellness
Social and Community Impact	Positive impact within a community or society at large	Raising funds for charity, Solving environmental problems

Table 10: Reward Categories (Kankanhalli, Taher, Cavusoglu & Kim, 2012)

There are specific design elements for gamification that can be employed by website engineers, which are shown in table 11; Points, Virtual badges, Leaderboards, Level & Status, Quests & Challenges, Progression and Viral Loop (Kankanhalli et al., 2012). The elements of Points and Virtual Badge can serve as status reward, as they depict the progress a user has made in the game and are a visual representation of the achievements through engagement in a gamified context. The design element Leaderboard enables a comparison of achievements between participants. The research team recommends to apply these three gamification elements to iQuestion.online.

Design Elements for Gamification	Description
Points	Users can earn different types of points by participation and performance
Virtual badge	Users can collect badges that visually indicate their achievements as they accomplish specific tasks and missions
Leaderboard	A leaderboard enables users to compare their own performance with others and stimulates competition
Level & Status	Level typically shows progress in the game. Level may be indicated by a numeric value or a user's status such as 'novice' or 'expert'
Quests & challenges	Quests and challenges guide users to perform pre-defined tasks. They help inexperienced users to learn how to move forward
Progression	A visual tool that displays the advancement of users and the remaining work to reach a goal. It motivates users to accomplish a pre-determined goal
Viral loop	The steps a user goes through between entering the site to inviting the next set of new users. In most social games, users can play better by inviting and working together with others

Table 11: Design Elements for Gamification (Kankanhalli, Taher, Cavusoglu & Kim, 2012)

Points

The design element 'Points' can reward users for their participation on iQuestion.online. This is a practical application of the psychological concept of positive reinforcement. A behavior is more likely to occur again due to a positive reward being obtained as a consequence of the behavior (Eyal, 2013). In the case of iQuestion.online, a system would be programmed through which asks receive points both when asking a question, and when receiving an answer from institutions. This mechanism both rewards participants for asking questions and for formulating them in a manner in which a response by institutions is more likely to be evoked. A potential model is that four

points are gathered when posing questions, and an additional six points are gathered when the question is answered. Citizens would therefore be able to obtain ten points for a successfully posed question. The chosen numbers are arbitrary and can be subject to change. This reward system grants users a certain status through the acquisition of points, and thus motivates participants to engage with the platform. It does not only grant an external status reward on the digital platform, but also might have positive real-life implications through the achievement of social and community impact. A visual representation of this Gamification element is provided in table 12.

Points will also be given to the institutions for answering questions. All entities start with 100 points when a question has been forwarded to them. These 100 points are being awarded once, without the possibility of being re-awarded. Similar to the citizens, institutions would gain four points for responding to a question, and ten points in total for a satisfactory answer, which is judged by the question-poser. A satisfactory answer is one that is proven by relevant data. If the institutions do not provide answers with enough evidence, such as not including facts and figures that support their claims, they will not be granted points for this answer. Thus, according to this model, institutions are rewarded for being responsive to citizens and then again for providing truthful and satisfactory answers.

Institutions that do not respond to questions will be punished for non-participation and will have points removed. This is an example of punishment; the removal of points will make the undesired behavior less unlikely to occur again (Eyal, 2013). Therefore, an entity that has received a question and has not replied within thirty days will have five points removed. It is a form of nudging, as it is supposed to nudge the respective institution to answer the question in the future (Bornemann & Burger, 2019).

Virtual badge

Milestones of point achievements are recommended to be rewarded with virtual badges which indicate the amount of successfully posed and answered questions. The numbers chosen in the badge system are again arbitrary and can be subject to change. For instance, for every 100 points; question-posers are rewarded with a badge that is a visual and symbolic gratification of user engagement. Every 500 points, that is every 50 successfully answered questions, could cause a real-life reward, such as a voucher of a sustainable shop or organization.

The organizations, in turn, are first and foremost rewarded with an immaterial and immediate real-life benefit, which is the establishment of more transparency, accountability, and thus credibility amongst citizens. Additionally, a concept of transparency and accountability indicators is tied to the point system. According to their interaction with users, points are being added or removed, and concurrently, a colored indicator is provided to the addressed entity (table 13). The research team recommends to grant entities the following indicators; yellow for simply receiving a question, orange for not responding to the question within thirty days, red for not responding after thirty days and not reacting to a reminder after fifteen subsequent days, or green when successfully answering a question (table 13). The accountability level is constantly visible next to the name of the entity on the platform, which provides an opportunity for public shaming when their indicator is orange or red, or grants public recognition to the entity, when their indicator is green. Each accountability level is attached to a set of actions that iQuestion.online and its users follow to hold entities accountable, and socially responsible, which is in line with the theory of nudging (Lepenies & Malecka, 2015).

Additionally, if institutions prove themselves to be accountable to citizens' questions by obtaining 500 points (50 successfully answered questions), they receive a badge which makes them eligible to purchase a certification of transparency and accountability, which deepens their official credibility amongst customers and citizens. Similar to the Guide Michelin star system, three stars can be gathered in total on the certification. Every 500 points grant another star. Hence, a maximum of 1500 points can be gathered to reach the maximum of three stars on the certification. Such a certification can be represented on their website and in shops. In order to ensure user engagement over time, the point and badge system is going to be saved for a year, and starts from zero every twelve months. The specific procedure for acquiring the certifications and their price is going to be discussed in the Finance section.

	Points	Badges
Citizens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4 points for asking + 6 points for receiving answer → 10 points in total 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 badge for every 100 points + real-life reward (e.g. voucher) for every 500 points
Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4 points for answer + 6 points for satisfactory answer → 10 points in total - No response within 30 days: -5 points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - See table 13 for accountability indicators based on points - Eligible to apply for certification with 500 points

Table 12: The Gamification Elements Points and Badges on iQuestion.online

Accountability Indicators	Description	Action for iQuestion.online team	Points
Yellow	This status is being awarded to all entities that have received a question from citizens.	No actions required.	100
Orange	An entity that has received a question but has not replied within thirty days, is given the Orange status.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Our team reminds the entity of the question. - Users are being informed about the inactivity of the entity in question. 	-5

Red	An entity that has received a question and has not answered in thirty days and has received a reminder. In case the entity has not answered the question in the 15 subsequent days after the reminder, the red status applies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Our team informs the entity about the downgrade. - Users are being informed about the inactivity of the entity in question. - Users can organize online or offline actions to hold the corporation accountable 	-10
Green	An entity that has received a question and answered it with relevant data proof within 30 days.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Our team informs the users and the entity about the status upgrade. - The entity in question can gather additional points to eventually receive the iQuestion.online certification at 500 points 	+10

Table 13: Transparency and Accountability Indicators for Institutions

Leaderboard

Finally, the element leaderboard can be useful on the platform in stimulating competition among users and thus motivating authentic questions. A leaderboard is a depiction of comparative user performance, which shows the leader, the second best and all the others following. The research team recommends the leaderboard to be installed on the community section of the platform. On this leaderboard, the number of points and amount of virtual badges and certifications will be displayed. This allows users to demonstrate their progress to other users, which is expected to motivate more participatory engagement (Kankanhalli et al., 2012).

Overall, it is very likely that through the employment of gamification strategies, the digital platform iQuestion.online is going to experience an increase in the depth of user engagement from both constituents of users (Kankanhalli et al., 2012). If this occurs, iQuestion.online can observe a successful adherence to its mission statement, the facilitation of dialogue between citizens and institutions.

3. iQuestion.online - the INGO

3.1 Implementation analysis

By Paris Cosma

iQuestion.online is an ambitious initiative, aiming at fostering participatory democracy through the establishment of an international non-governmental organization (INGO) and the provision of an innovative online tool for the civic society. Some of the most common critical success factors of innovation are: (i) clear goals and objectives, (ii) realistic schedule, (iii) senior management, and (iv) adequate funding (Fortune et al., 2011). The following chapter provides an insight in the various phases and activities that are required to implement iQuestion.online to the stage of being able to launch a pilot platform. Moreover, the research team provides practical recommendations and a concrete planning for future project managers to employ towards establishing an INGO and launching a pilot platform.

3.1.1 Phases and Activities overview

<u>Phases Overview</u>	<u>Start On</u>	<u>End On</u>	<u>Phase Name</u>
<i>Phase 0 - <u>Completed</u></i>	October, 2019	January, 2020	Ideation
<i>Phase 1 - <u>Completed</u></i>	February, 2020	June, 2020	MaRBLE Research Project
<i>Phase 2</i>	July, 2020	October, 2020	Pilot Development
<i>Phase 3</i>	November, 2020	January, 2021	Pilot Launching

<u>Activities Overview</u>	<u>Phase</u>
1. Establishment of an International Non-Governmental Organization	Phase 2
2. Further development of machine learning algorithms	Phase 2
3. Recruitment of Human Resources	Phase 2
4. GDPR Compliance and Minimization of personal information	Phase 2
4. Capacity Building	Phase 2

3.1.2 Detailed activities

Activity 1: Establishment an International Non-Governmental Organization (INGO): “iQuestion.online Stichting”

Activity 1 Justification: As noted the research team recommend the establishment of an INGO to own and manage iQuestion.online under the auspices of the Climate Innovation Hub. CIH is a multi-level and multi-actor innovation center, specialized at governance and action mechanism design contributing towards economic, environmental, and social sustainability (The Lab, n.d.). CIH empowers social innovations and transitions by centralizing various ideas and fosters interactions for concrete issues and solutions at the regional level with a view on global interconnectedness (The Lab, n.d.). CIH has an objectives-first approach in designing societal mechanisms towards the desired result. We believe that an innovation center like the CIH is the most appropriate collaboration hub as it will build a multi-actor and multi-level capacity and host partnerships between politicians, academics, non-governmental organizations and the global humanitarian regime towards achieving a common goal, namely, citizen participation in decision-making, transparency and accountability of the global humanitarian regime.

Activity 1 - Milestones			
Milestones	Description	Notes	Due Date
<i>1.1 Draft the statutes of conduct to establish a foundation in the Netherlands.</i>	<p>The <i>Netherlands Chamber of Commerce (KVK)</i> requires the statutes of a stichting (foundation) to include: i) name, ii) purpose and cause, iii) procedures for appointing and removing officers, iv) location, v) decision-making procedures, vi) procedures and vii) payments in the event of dissolution (KVK, n.d.).</p> <p>We recommend that the statutes also include fundamental values of iQuestion such as independence, transparency, accountability, and respect to personal data (commitment for privacy). Including these values will ensure that iQuestion stays loyal to its mission and vision since future board members could only deviate from them by re-writing the code of conduct and statutes, and submitting them to a civil-law notary.</p>	<p>The <i>European Convention on the Recognition of the Legal Personality of International Non-Governmental Organisations</i> requires that organisations that wish to conduct business as INGOs need to be registered in one Member State of the European Union and conduct business in more than two Member States (ICNL, 2020). Consequently, establishing a foundation in the Netherlands is needed.</p>	September 4 th , 2020

<i>1.2 Draft a deed stating that a stichting is created.</i>	A civil-law notary is required to draft a deed stating that the iQuestion Stichting has been established.	KVK requires newly formed foundations to draft a deed with a civil-law notary stating that a stichting has been created and list its statutes and code of conduct.	September 18 th , 2020
<i>1.3 Registration of a stichting at KVK.</i>	Submission of the deed, statutes and code of conduct to KVK.	An example form can be reviewed here: KVK Registration .	September 25 th , 2020
<i>1.4 Officiation of International Partnerships</i>	Officiation of PIP with at least one of the recommended partners and provision of iQuestion.online to the region they conduct business.	According to the European Convention on the Recognition of the Legal Personality of International Non-Governmental Organisations (ETS No. 124) INGOs funded in the European Union must meet the following criteria: (i) have a non profit-making aim of international utility; (ii) have been established by an instrument governed by the internal law of a Party; (iii) carry on substantive activities in at least two Parties; (iv) have its statutory office in the territory of a Party and central management and control in that State or in another Party (ETS No. 124, 1991).	October 12 th , 2020

Activity 2: Further Development of word processing algorithms

The current word processing algorithms on iQuestion.online were developed by a non-expert volunteer. To reach maximum functionality and reduce the required human capital to facilitate all functionalities is recommended that experts further develop the platform.

Milestones	Due Date
2.1 Further develop the word-processing algorithm used for sorting the questions.	September 30 th , 2020
2.2. Develop a censoring algorithm using limitations for the Universal Convention on Human Rights.	September 30 th , 2020
2.3 Review and further develop all functionalities offered for maximum automation and efficiency.	September 30 th , 2020

Activity 3: Recruitment of Human Resources

This activity regards the establishment of the administrative team and the team of experts for iQuestion.online.

Milestones	Due Date
3.1 Create concrete descriptions of the job and internships positions.	August 30 th , 2020
3.2 Propose to Maastricht University and Maastricht School of Management to collaborate on offering internships and field research opportunities to their students.	September 30 th , 2020
3.3 Create a marketing strategy for the recruitment.	September 30 th , 2020
3.4 Launching the recruitment campaign.	September 30 th , 2020
3.5 Initiate Hiring.	October 30 th , 2020

Activity 4: GDPR Compliance and Minimization of personal information

This activity regards the review of the way iQuestion.online collects and uses users' data.

Milestones	Due Date
4.1 Review of the current Privacy Policy by two lawyers.	September 30 th , 2020
4.2 Review all ways iQuestion.online receives and manages data by one data scientist and two lawyers.	September 30 th , 2020
4.3 Minimize the collection of users data to the minimum amount t required for operations.	September 30 th , 2020

Activity 5: Capacity Building

This activity recommends the establishment of partnerships on two different levels. Firstly, operational partnerships which will enable iQuestion.online to nudge institutions and collaborate with various, social and environmental initiatives. Secondly, international partnerships which will enable iQuestion.online to export its functionalities around the world and become an INGO.

<u>Recommended International Partner</u>	<u>Relevance</u>	<u>Partnership Level</u>
1. National Endowment for Democracy (NED)	NED is a non-profit organization facilitating the growth and strengthening of democratic institutions around the world. NED is experienced with the struggles of democracy, and the lack of sufficient citizen participation. Additionally, the organization supports financially more than 1600 initiatives of non-governmental organizations. We recommend that future project managers collaborate with NED in two levels: (i) partner to receive their	International & Operational

	expertise knowledge and feedback on iQuestion.online (ii) investigate funding support.	
2. Democracy International (DI)	DI is an organization who commits on supporting active citizens, responsive governments and engaged civil society with the mission to achieve a more peaceful and democratic world. We recommend that iQuestion.online partner with DI to amplify the actions of both initiatives.	International
3. European Endowment for Democracy (EED)	EED is an independent organization initiated by EU and EU member states and focuses on Fostering Democracy in the European neighborhood. EED supports civil society organizations, pro-democracy movements, civic and political activists, and independent media platforms and journalists working towards a pluralistic, democratic political system. We recommend that iQuestion.online receives a review from EED and investigate possible funding support to enable facilitation of the iQuestion services in Turkey and other neighboring countries in Eastern Europe, Middle East, North Africa and the Balkans.	International & Operational
4. World Movement for Democracy (WMD)	WMD is a global network of civil society activists, scholars, parliamentarians, thought leaders, journalists, and funders who are committed to advancing democracy. We recommend that iQuestion.online becomes a participating member of WMD, further develop its concept and receive an in-depth scrutiny and recommendations from other WMD members. Additionally, we suggest that iQuestion.online is promoted to all WMD member organizations as a tool that can be used at their scale of action.	International & Operational
5. Fridays for Future International (FFF International)	FFF International is a global movement of climate and human rights activists with more than 17 million members. We recommend that iQuestion.online is promoted through all of their taskforces as the official tool used to receive citizens ideas, questions and demands towards entities; enabling the movement to reflect the opinions and concerns of all of their members at a global level.	International
6. National Democratic Institute (NDI)	NDI is a non-profit non-governmental organization that supports democratic institutions and practices at a global level. NDI partners with locals around the world to establish and strengthen political and civic organizations, safeguard elections, and promote citizen participation, openness, and accountability in government. We recommend that iQuestion.online collaborates with NDI to further develop the platform and its aim. Moreover, such a collaboration is predicted to be highly valuable for	International & Operational

	iQuestion.online because of the expertise of NDI, but more importantly because of its networks. We predict that is going to allow an easy and rapid establishment of iQuestion.online in various countries around the world.	
7.Social Voluntary Network Together (TC)	TC is the largest voluntary network in Cyprus, and the second largest voluntary network in a single European country (proportionally to its citizens). TC aims to actively engaging citizens in both environmental and social issues. It has received an award from the European Voluntary Service as an exemplary approach in involving citizens and promoting volunteerism. We recommend a collaboration with TC to enable an adoption of iQuestion.online in Cyprus. Moreover, this partnership can be very beneficial for iQuestion.online since the expertise of TC in engaging with and promoting volunteerism will help facilitate its global activities.	International
8. The Council on Participatory Democracy (CPD)	CPD self-convocated forum organized by citizens, movements and organizations that analyzes, coordinates, and use participatory democracy instruments at a European level to impact the European Union. We recommend the establishment of a partnership to enable iQuestion.online to benefit from CPD's network and expertise and support the further development of its mission and vision.	International
9. Find out Why (FOW)	FOW is an initiative of journalists which aims to foster informed public dialogue on social and environmental issues. They prioritize integrity and focus on ensuring that misinformation and fake news are not accepted from the public. The iQuestion.online future project managers are advised to collaborate to provide iQuestion.online with their expertise on how to manage possible sharing and exchange of information through its platform.	Operational
10. Maastricht University (UM)	UM is an academic institution in the Netherlands. We recommend establishing an operational partnership in which iQuestion.online offers internships to students of various degrees. Such a collaboration would enable UM students to receive real life experience on their academic interests. Additionally, iQuestion.online will benefit from the input of the highly motivated students of UM.	Operational
11. Zuyd University (ZU)	ZU is a university of applied sciences in the Netherlands. We recommend the establishment of a collaboration similar to the one we recommend for UM.	Operational

3.1.4 Privacy policy of iQuestion.online

This privacy policy was developed by reviewing all the ways iQuestion.online collects and uses users data on the platform by the research team. It must noted that the policy was not reviewed by legal experts. Consequently, we strongly recommend that legal experts review and further develop the privacy policy before launching of the pilot platform.

Who we are

iQuestion.online is an organization under the Dutch Law. Our online address is:
<https://www.iquestion.online>.

What personal data we collect and why we collect it

Comments

When visitors leave comments on iQuestion.online we collect the data shown in the comments form, and also the visitor's IP address and browser user agent string to help spam detection.

An anonymized string created from your email address (also called a hash) may be provided to the Gravatar service to see if you are using it. The Gravatar service privacy policy is available here: <https://automattic.com/privacy/>. After approval of your comment, your profile picture is visible to the public in the context of your comment.

Media

If you upload images to iQuestion.online, you should avoid uploading images with embedded location data (EXIF GPS) included. If you upload EXIF GPS data, that data is inevitably collected. Visitors to the Community Forum of iQuestion.online can download and extract any location data from images on the website. We highly recommend to refrain from this as we would like to achieve total anonymity in instances you decide to be an anonymous member.

Cookies

If you leave a comment on iQuestion.online Community Forum you may opt-in to saving your name, email address and website in cookies. These are for your convenience so that you do not have to fill in your details again when you leave another comment. These cookies will last for one year. You can use iQuestion.online without these cookies.

If you visit our login page, we will set a temporary cookie to determine if your browser accepts cookies. This cookie contains no personal data and is discarded when you close your browser.

When you log in, we will also set up several cookies to save your login information and your screen display choices. Login cookies last for two days, and screen options cookies last for a

year. If you select "Remember Me", your login will persist for two weeks. If you log out of your account, the login cookies will be removed.

If you edit or publish an iQuestion, iDemand or Organize an action, an additional cookie will be saved in your browser. This cookie includes no personal data and simply indicates the post ID of the article you just edited. It expires after 1 day.

Embedded content from other websites

Articles on iQuestion.online may include embedded content (e.g. videos, images, articles, etc.). Embedded content from other websites behaves in the exact same way as if the visitor has visited the other website.

These websites may collect data about you, use cookies, embed additional third-party tracking, and monitor your interaction with that embedded content, including tracking your interaction with the embedded content if you have an account and are logged in to that website.

Who we share your data with

By principle iQuestion.online will never sell your personal data. In instances you decide to be a non-anonymous member, we will share you username with the entity your actions were addressed to. Your username can be a fake name. In instances where you don't want any identifiable data to be shared, you must indicate that you are asking anonymously. This is possible in the Ask Now page.

How long we retain your data

If you leave a comment, the comment and its metadata are retained indefinitely. This is so we can recognize and approve any follow-up comments automatically instead of holding them in a moderation queue.

For users that register in the Community Forum of iQuestion.online, we also store the personal information they provide in their user profile. All users can see, edit, or delete their personal information at any time (except they cannot change their username). iQuestion.online administrators can also see and edit that information. If you would like to disable the administrators from viewing such data, you must delete your data from your profile.

What rights you have over your data

If you have an account on iQuestion.online or have left comments, you can request to receive an exported file of the personal data we hold about you, including any data you have provided to us. You can also request that we erase any personal data we hold about you. This does not include any data we are obliged to keep for administrative, legal, or security purposes.

Where we send your data

Visitor comments are checked through an automated spam detection service. This service is akismet. The information we collect typically includes the commenter's IP address, user agent, referrer, and Site URL (along with other information directly provided by the commenter such as their name, username, email address, and the comment itself).

Your contact information

We strongly advise users to only share their contact information with people that they trust. In cases where the user provides such data on their profile, iQuestion.online administrators can view these data. If you would like your data to not be accessible you must delete your data or email privacy@iquestion.online with the Subject: "Delete Personal Data <YourUsername>"

Additional information for Data used by the Community Forum of iQuestion.online

What personal data we collect and why we collect it

Profile Data

When you register for the Community Forum, you may be asked to provide certain personal data for display on your profile. The "Name" field is required as well as public, and user profiles are visible to any iQuestion.online visitor.

User information provided during account registration can be modified or removed on the Profile > Edit panel. You have control over who is able to view a particular piece of profile content, limiting visibility on a field-by-field basis to friends, logged-in users, or administrators only. iQuestion.online administrators can read and edit all profile data for all users.

Activity

iQuestion.online records certain user actions, in the form of "activity" data. Activity includes updates and comments posted directly to activity streams, as well as descriptions of other actions performed while using iQuestion.online, such as new friendships, newly joined groups, and profile updates.

The content of activity items obey the same privacy rules as the contexts in which the activity items are created. For example, activity updates created in a user's profile is publicly visible, while activity items generated in a private group are visible only to members of that group. iQuestion.online administrators can view all activity items, regardless of context.

Activity items may be deleted at any time by users who created them. iQuestion.online administrators can edit all activity items.

Messages

The content of private messages is visible only to the sender and the recipients of the message. With the exception of iQuestion.online administrators, who can read all private messages, private message content is never visible to other users or site visitors. iQuestion.online administrators may delete the content of any message.

Cookies

We use a cookie to show success and failure messages to logged-in users, in response to certain actions, like joining a group. These cookies contain no personal data, and are deleted immediately after the next page load.

We use cookies on group, member, and activity directories to keep track of a user's browsing preferences. These preferences include the last-selected values of the sort and filter dropdowns, as well as pagination information. These cookies contain no personal data, and are deleted after 24 hours.

When a logged-in user creates a new group, we use a number of cookies to keep track of the group creation process. These cookies contain no personal data, and are deleted either upon the successful creation of the group or after 24 hours.

3.2: Finances of iQuestion.online

By Emma Olyff

3.2.1 Introduction:

This section of the report will present how can iQuestion.online be a financially viable project. Numerous studies such as Blazek (2008) or Smith, Gonin, and Besharov (2013) demonstrate that organizations need to tie their financial plan to their project's mission to avoid organizational tensions due to conflicting values. Therefore, this chapter aims to provide a financial plan for iQuestion.online, that will rightly match the mission and values of the project. Firstly, the chapter will explain why iQuestion.online should be a non-profit organization. Then, the chapter will explain what needs and costs iQuestion.online will create. Afterward, the chapter will review practices that other NGO use, and present how iQuestion.online can be financially viable, using external funding, certification sale, and ultimately merchandise sale. Finally, the chapter will provide recommendations in the case of surplus money.

3.2.2 Why should iQuestion.online be a non-profit?

iQuestion.online aims to facilitate dialogue between citizens and institutions, to recreate a society in which everyone has a voice and where organizations and institutions are accountable for their practices and transparent about them. Hence, the team deems that pursuing profits seems unrelated to the project's essence and could interfere with its principal mission. However, iQuestion.online still requires a plan for financial sustainability and financial growth at the organization level. Blazek (2008) explains that if non-profit organizations desire to expand their impact, they should attempt to create financial growth because it is only with enough capital that non-profits can expand their operations. The iQuestion.online research team, therefore, developed an initial financial plan and recommends that future project managers further investigate different options for financial sustainability according to the new means and goals the project will have.

3.2.3 Costs & Needs Assessment:

By Paris Cosma

The following cost assessment is an estimation of the needs to enable a successful pilot launch and the costs involved. We recommend that future managers re-assess the costs after the completion of Phase 1.

<u>Table 14. Personnel Budget and Justification</u>		
Position	Main Tasks	Monthly Cost (€)
Data Scientist (Internship)	- Develop the machine learning algorithm for censoring hate speech.	140
Data Scientist (Internship)	- Develop the machine learning algorithm directing questions to institutions.	140

Data Scientist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop the machine learning algorithm directing questions to the official dispute resolution structures of entities. - Overview the two data scientist interns. - Minimize the amount of personalized data required for the operation of the platform. 	2800
Legal Advisor (Internship)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure compliance with GDPR law. - Review the Privacy Policy. 	140
Legal Advisor (Internship)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Investigate the possibilities of creating collective legal actions in support of the Active Questions. 	140
Legal Advisor (Internship)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Investigate the possibilities of creating collective legal actions in support of the Active Questions. 	140
Legal Advisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure compliance with GDPR law. - Investigates the possibilities of creating collective legal actions in support of the Active Questions. - Overviews the two legal advisor interns. 	2300
Administrative Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facilitates all day-to-day activities. - Manages the volunteers. - Overviews all teams and reports to the Council of iQuestion.Online INGO. 	2000
Marketing Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develops and manages all external communication of iQuestion.online. - Develops a social media campaign. - Creates viral content for iQuestion.online content. - Overviews the marketing team. 	2300

Marketing Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develops and manages all external communication of iQuestion.online. - Develops a social media campaign. - Creates viral content for iQuestion.online content. - Create content required for Active Questions and iDemands. 	2000
Total Personnel Budget		12.400

Narrative Justification

Salaries were adjusted based on the average salaries on each field in the Netherlands from: [Gemiddeld Inkomen](#)

Table 15. Technology Budget and Justification

Item	Description	Cost
EcoSite Premium (EUROPE)	Sustainable Hosting from GreenGeeks from 10-10-2019 to 10-10-2020. Note 1: from October 2020 the price will increase to 300 euro per year Note 2: annual cost	167€
WPForms Premium	To enable integration with the community forum Note 1: annual cost	199.50
Domain Name	www.iquestion.online Note: annual cost	39.95

ID Protect	For www.iquestion.online Note: annual cost	10
Astra Theme	The fastest theme on wordpress, used to enable access to users with low broadband.	249
Total Technology Budget		665.45

3.2.4 iQuestion.online revenue plan:

By Emma Olyff

The following section of this chapter will firstly review several broadly adopted financial plans that organizations using online platforms tend to use. Then, the section will reveal which strategy the iQuestion.online research team suggests for the project.

a) Practices review:

Advertising and affiliate marketing

A first revenue stream that numerous organizations use today on their platforms is advertising and affiliate marketing. Such strategies are widely used by Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram, for example, but also by bloggers and small businesses (Rose, 2018). Advertising and affiliate marketing often work by using a spare spot on websites where specifically chosen affiliate organization ads are displayed. Such a method has proven itself highly cost-efficient. Blogs with high traffic sometimes can manage to make about 5000€ in a month only using this technique (Rose, 2018). While this technique is successful in making money, the research team of iQuestion.online believes it is incompatible with the project's mission, firstly, because influencing the users' behavior in any direction is contradictory to the ideals of iQuestion.online. Secondly, because in order to make such practice successful, it is often necessary to rely on personalized advertisement, collecting users' data (Davis, 2018). However, iQuestion.online highly values the user's privacy of information and personal data (see section privacy policy section 3.1.4).

Consequently, the research team recommends that future project managers refrain from using such practice.

Data monetization

Another technique that is growing in its use is data monetization. Data monetization is a strategy that collects user's data and sells it to other companies who will use it to target-advertise their products and adapt their offers to the customers' preferences (Botta et al., 2017). However, such practice is highly controversial as many users either are not aware of the extent to which their data is being collected or do not understand the importance of their data privacy (Botta et al., 2017). Once more, as iQuestion.online values users' privacy, the research team strongly recommends against the use of such practice.

Transaction fees

Transaction fees are used on platforms such as Airbnb, Paypal, and e-commerce hosts (Jones, 2019). To collect transaction fees, platforms take a small percentage of each money transaction that is effectuated on them (Jones, 2019). Such a technique is principally used on platforms that offer services or products to their customers. Contacting the institutions could be considered as a service that iQuestion.online could charge the users for. However, it is not in iQuestion.online's current interest to charge money for such a transaction, and the research team strongly suggests against ever doing so. However, this technique could be kept in mind if the scope of iQuestion.online operations enlarges in the future to consultancy services for example.

Admission, membership fees and freemium plans

Admission fees, membership fees, and freemium plans are all techniques that attempt to monetize users' presence on the platform. Such techniques are often used by platforms that provide online services, such as Netflix, Spotify, or website hosts. Admission or membership fees require users to pay a fee to access the services that the platform provides. Freemium fees require users to pay higher fees if they desire to access further functionalities of the websites (Kumar, 2015). iQuestion.online research team has considered using freemium subscription but does not recommend it. If iQuestion.online were to adopt such practice, it would require from users a fee to

access some or all of the features the platform offers. However, such a monetization technique might hinder the participation and engagement of limited budget users and organizations. As the mission of iQuestion.online is to provide more democratic dialogue to citizens and organizations, disabling participation based on monetary means is counterproductive and contradictory.

Product sales

Product sales is a strategy widely used by organizations to generate revenues (Croxen-John & van Tonder, 2017). Product sales have become an essential source of financial resources for social and sustainable enterprises to pursue their mission (Smith et al., 2013). UNICEF is an example of another organization using such a business model. UNICEF aims to save and protect the world's most vulnerable children (UNICEF mission, n.d.), and sells handcrafted products created by artisans on their platform UNICEF market to finance their mission (About UNICEF market, n.d.). According to UNICEF (n.d.), the profits generated from each purchase are, in part, redistributed to the artisans who crafted it, and in part directly redirected to UNICEF funds.

Since such a strategy does not oblige participants to spend money to use the platform, while still offering them unlimited use of its functionalities, iQuestion.online research team recommends that the future project managers of the project use it. However, it will be of crucial importance that future managers find products to sell that are in line with iQuestion.online values; transparent, accountable, and sustainable.

Service sales

Service sales, in turn is a technique that is equally used by organizations that have established themselves in the market (Rose, 2018). Organizations often use such a strategy by providing consultancy advice to customers on the organization's expertise domain (Rose, 2018). Another organization in Belgium for example; Climact, uses such a business strategy. Climact is an organization that tries to encourage institutions and organizations in Belgium to shift to more environmentally sustainable practices. The services that Cimact offers are consultancy advices related to implementation strategies, legislation, regulation, and finally, project management (Climact Services, 2020). iQuestion.online might not use such a financial strategy for the pilot project because it does not have expertise in a specific domain yet; however, the research team strongly suggests the future managers of iQuestion.online to use it in the future.

External funding (By Paris Cosma)

A final financial strategy that the research team reviewed is external fundings. A non-profit's primary revenue model ought to be stable over time since the main revenue source is associated with long-term viability of non-profit organizations (Kim, 2017; Teasdale, Kerlin, Young, & Soh, 2013). Commercial revenue sources are generally considered more flexible and resilient in comparison with alternative funding sources, thus contributing to financial self-sufficiency and long-term sustainability of non-profits (Carroll & Stater, 2009). However, since non-profits are often not experts in business conducts, such as commerce, the potential benefits may be exaggerated and may ultimately lead to financial instability (Shon & Zhang, 2020).

The theory of resource dependence suggests non-profits to develop and rely upon multiple sources of funding to minimize the risks associated with dependency on a primary source of funding (Froelich, 1999). According to Bouchard and Rousselière (2016), the risk of dissolution decreases for non-profits that rely on multiple sources. Moreover, Bielefeld (1992) notes that the theory of organizational institutionalism suggests dependency on diverse sources facilitates the establishment of institutional interconnection within the community that the non-profit conducts its actions and further enhances the legitimacy of the organizations.

b) Implementation to iQuestion.online financial plan

By Emma Olyff

Now that the previous section highlighted two financial strategies that iQuesiton.online pilot project could use, the upcoming section of this chapter will explain how to implement them practically.

Products sale:

Product sales, such as what UNICEF offers, are one of the two financial revenue models that iQuestion.online will use in its pilot phase. iQuestion.online research team suggests that within their product sales iQuestion.online offers merchandise sales, namely greeting cards and t-shirts, as well as certification sales.

Customized greeting cards:

The first product that the iQuestion.online research team suggests for the platform to sell is sustainable greeting cards. The inspiration for this product came to the team because it was the

first product that the UNICEF market sold (About UNICEF market, n.d). During the pilot project, one design drawn Eléonore Cambier will be available. However, the users will be encouraged to submit drawings or paintings they created to be added to the available designs. Hsieh and Chang (2016) demonstrated that when businesses encourage customers to be part of the designing process, engagement, and community feeling associated with the brand tend to rise. In turn, this creates in customers a greater desire to get involved with the brand and purchase its products.

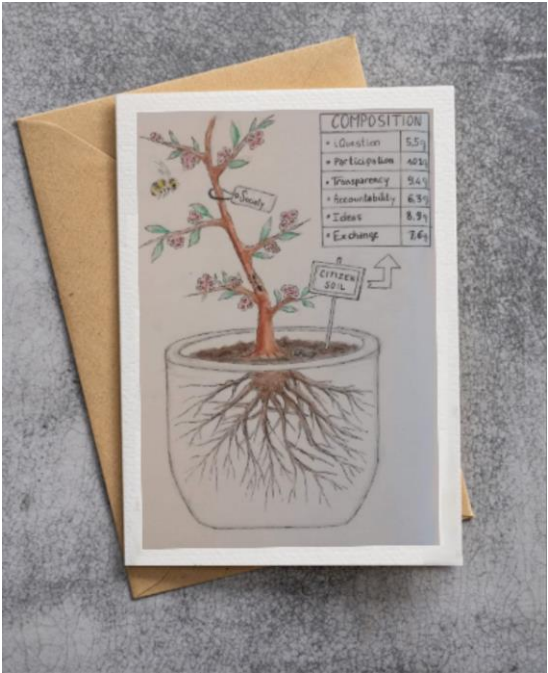


Figure 6: Prototype of the iQuestion.online greeting cards. (Copyrights: Eleonore Cambier, 2020)

Sustainable supply chain:

Number of cards	Price excl. VAT
100 cards	17,61€ (0,097€ per card)
500 cards	49,07€ (0,082€ per card)
1000 cards	84,16€ (0,076€ per card)

5000 cards	340,68 (0,067€ per card)
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Table 17: Prices from Print en Bind. Prices adopted from Print en Bind:

<https://www.printenbind.nl/en>

Selling price

Research has shown that social enterprises should set their product prices around the same as their competitors, but also keep in mind, that consumers are usually more likely to perceive higher prices as fair if the profits go to a social or sustainable cause (Cătoiu, Vrânceanu, & Filip, 2010). Organizations such as Oxfam, UNICEF, and Doctors without borders (MSF) sell greeting cards in packages of 8 to 20 cards, for prices varying between 4,5€ to 20€ (Boutique sans frontières, n.d.; Oxfam shop, n.d.; UNICEF market, n.d.). The Noteworthy cards company sells unique greeting cards for about 3€ and provides all findings to people suffering from poverty (Noteworthy Cards, 2020). These prices (recapitulated in the table 18) give a good idea of the cost range that iQuestion.online should charge for their cards. However, these social enterprises directly redistribute the profits to people in need around the world, creating a clear and calculable social impact. Following the recommendations by Cătoiu et al. (2010), iQuestion.online, which cannot provide such a visible social impact, might have to set its prices slightly lower for customers to find the prices fair. iQuestion.online research team, therefore, suggests that iQuestion.online sells single cards for 2€, sets of 8 cards for 10€, and sets of 20 cards for 15€.

	UNICEF	Oxfam	MSF	Noteworthy cards	iQuestion.online recommended Prices
Single Card	x	x	x	3€	2€
4 cards package	x	x	x	12€	x
8 cards package	x	x	10€	x	10€

10 cards package	10€	3,5€ – 4,5€	x	x	x
20 cards package	18€	4,5€	x	x	15€

Table 18: Greeting cards prices. (Boutique sans frontières, n.d.; Noteworthy Cards, 2020; Oxfam shop, n.d.; UNICEF market, n.d.)

Customized shirts:

Secondly, as not every user of an online platform might be interested in greeting cards, iQuestion.online research team also suggests that the platform sells customized and sustainable t-shirts. The t-shirts could contain the iQuestion.online logo on the front and an inspirational drawing on the back. The t-shirts will initially be available with three different designs (drawn by Nelia Mayer-Rolshoven), but as for the greeting cards, the platform users will be encouraged to submit their designs in the future.



Figure 7: Prototype for the iQuestion.online t-shirts.

Sustainable supply chain:

Different suppliers' options are possible; however, the preferred choice would be to collaborate with the company INK in Brussels. INK is the closest business to Maastricht that also provides the most transparent information regarding their practices and corporate social responsibility. The shirts are made either of entirely recycled materials or 100% organic ring-spun combed cotton, and the ink of the drawn design is a water-based ink that contains no toxic or harmful substances (INK, 2020). The preferred t-shirt option is to purchase fully recycled materials t-shirts (60% Recycled pre-consumer cotton organically grown 40% Recycled post-consumer polyester), although it offers a smaller range of color options. Table 19 displays the prices for light grey t-shirts made of recycled materials with the iQuestion.online logo on the front and a one-color drawing on the back.

Number of shirts	Price per piece excl. VAT
100	7,38€
500	5,86€
1000	5,22€

Table 19: Ink Brussels t-shirt prices. *Note.* Information received by email.

The second option is to purchase INK shirts that are made of 100% organic ring-spun combed cotton. This option, despite its more significant environmental impact, offers a better choice of t-shirt colors. The following table depicts the prices for such shirts in a light grey color. The price includes iQuestion.online logo printed on the front and a one-color drawing on the back.

Number of shirts	Price per piece excl. VAT
100	8,43€
500	5,99€
1000	5,53€

Table 20: prices from Ink Brussels. *Note.* Information received by email.

Selling price

For the t-shirt selling price, iQuestion.online research team performed a market analysis to provide an idea of the price range the future project manager could set (see table 21). In this case, however, the compared organizations only provide t-shirts with a logo. As iQuestion.online t-shirts will also have artwork in the back of the shirts, the suggested price will slightly lean on the more expensive side. As the production price is between 5,22 and 7,38 euros, and the average of the market options is 18, it is suggested that iQuestion.online sells each of its shirts for 19€.

	UNICEF	Oxfam	MSF	Maastricht University	Recommended iQuestion.online Price
Price for one t-shirt	22€	7€	28€	15€	19€

Table 21: Review of t-shirt sale prices. (Boutique sans frontières, n.d.; Maastricht University, n.d.; Oxfam shop, n.d.; UNICEF market, n.d.)

Certifications sales

Another product that the iQuestion.online research team suggests for the iQuestion.online financial plan is the sale of certifications. Certifications are physical or digital documents provided to entities satisfying several criteria of an industry-standard (Castka & Balzarova, 2008). Certifications are widely used worldwide to attest, for example, food quality, fair trade standards, or environmental impact. The Green Key, for instance, uses a similar model. The Green Key is a renowned third party supplier that accredits eco-labels to the tourism industry that exhibits excellence in environmental responsibility and sustainable operations (Green Key, n.d.).

iQuestion.online would use such a model by accrediting iQuestion.online certificates to organizations and institutions that rank high in the transparency and accountability indicators (see gamification section from chapter 2.2). As explained in the gamification section of the user experience chapter, practically, each institution or organization that has accumulated a minimum of 500 points on the platform, and that are awarded a green transparency and accountability badge will, therefore, be able to apply for an iQuestion.online certificate. These certificates will then be

usable by the entities for a year either on their website or in their physical locations to attest their transparency and accountability to their customers. Each certification will specify whether the entity collected one, two, or three stars transparency and accountability standard (see gamification section from chapter 2.2). The design of the certificates should be slightly modified each year to ensure that organizations re-apply for the new year certification, and therefore prove their continuous transparency and accountability.



Figure 8: Prototype of the iQuestion.online 2020 certificate. (Copyrights: Nelia Mayer-Rolshoven, 2020)

Sustainable supply chain:

iQuestion.online certificates will be provided both digitally and physically, in the form of sustainable stickers. iQuestion.online will be able to purchase physical customized recycled stickers from the organization Avery in Amsterdam. The price for 1500 recycled stickers of 6 cm of diameter is 131,16 € or 10 cm of diameter for 555,98€ (Avery WePrint, n.d.).

Selling price

The first year of certification will be offered by iQuestion.online, but then, organizations will have to pay to receive their certifications. The price of the certification will vary depending on the size and revenue of the organization. Other certification accreditors on the market, such as the B-certification of the Green Key, provide increasing prices adapted to the size of the accredited organization (B-Certification, 2020; Green Key, n.d.). The tables 22 and 23 provide an overview of these prices as a reference for iQuestion.online's price range (B-Certification, 2020; Green Key, n.d.).

Size of the organization	Price of the certification
Small accommodation Restaurants Attractions	500€
Campsites and holiday parks Conference centres	750€
Hôtels	1000€

Table 22: The green-key prices of the certifications. (Green Key, n.d.)

Annual sales	Price of the certification
\$0 - <\$150,000	\$1000
\$150,000 - <\$4.9 MM	\$1100 - \$2000
\$5 MM - \$19.9 MM	\$2000 - \$8,500
>\$19.9 MM	>\$8,500

Table 23: The B-certification prices of the certifications. (B-certification, 2020)

The price ranges for the green Key and the B-certification are quite high; however, both accreditors need to process documentation and often visit the organizations to assess whether they remain liable for such certificates. Since this will mainly not be the case for iQuestion.online certificates, the certification prices will be substantially lower. The team imagined to ask the following prices; 5€ for non-profit organizations, 50€ for for-profit organizations with annual sales of less than 100

thousand euros, 150€ for for-profit organizations with annual sales of less than 1 million euros, and finally 1000€ for for-profit organizations making more than 1 million euros in annual sales.

Non-profit organizations	5€/year
For-profit <€100M annual sales	50€/year
For-profit <€1MM annual sales	150€/year
For-profit >€1MM annual sales	1000€/year

Table 24: iQuestion.online certification suggested prices

External Funding:

By Paris Cosma

As investigated above, the research team recommends to iQuestion.online future management team to develop commercial revenue sources. However, the research team also researched how to provide iQuestion.online with external funding possibilities. We recommend that future project managers develop and run a GoFundMe fundraiser campaign to cover the initial costs. Additionally we recommend that they investigate the possibilities of receiving funding from the bodies outlined in the following table:

Name of funding Body	Type	Further information/ Reference
European Research Council	European Research Funding Body	ERC: European Research Council

Marie Curie Actions	European Research Funding Body	Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions
Joint Research Centre	European Research Funding Body	Joint Research Centre JRC in brief EU Science Hub
European Commission - Digital Agenda/DG Connect	European Research Funding Body	Shaping Europe's digital future Digital Economy & Society
Executive Agency for Health and Consumers - Funding	European Research Funding Body	Executive Agency for Health and Consumers (EAHC) — Climate-ADAPT

Horizon 2020	European Funding Programmes & Open Calls	Horizon 2020 The EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation
Belmont Forum	-	Belmont Forum
The Netherlands Initiative for Education Research (NRO)	Dutch Research Funding Body	Netherlands Initiative for Education Research (NRO)
EU LIFE CLIMATE ACTION - Climate governance and information	European SME Funding Body	LIFE Climate Action Climate Action

Table 25: Funding bodies

3.2.5 Surplus money plan

By Emma Olyff

While iQuestion.online's expenses are likely to be higher than its earnings at the beginning of the project, it is essential to consider what might be done with the extra money if iQuestion.online was to earn more money than it needs to spend. Authors explained that when organizations have

financial resources, they should either improve the activities they already carry out or expand them (Langley et al., 2009). While the next chapter of the report will explain recommended future expansion of iQuestion.online, this short section will indicate how iQuestion.online could improve their current activities.

The end of this report's first chapter presented the logic model framework to help iQuestion.online's future management team measure their impact (see measurement of iQuestion.online impact from section 1.4). This model can also help to understand which areas of the project should be improved. This schema illustrates the model in a different display (see figure 9), which helps better understand the points of influence the project team has.

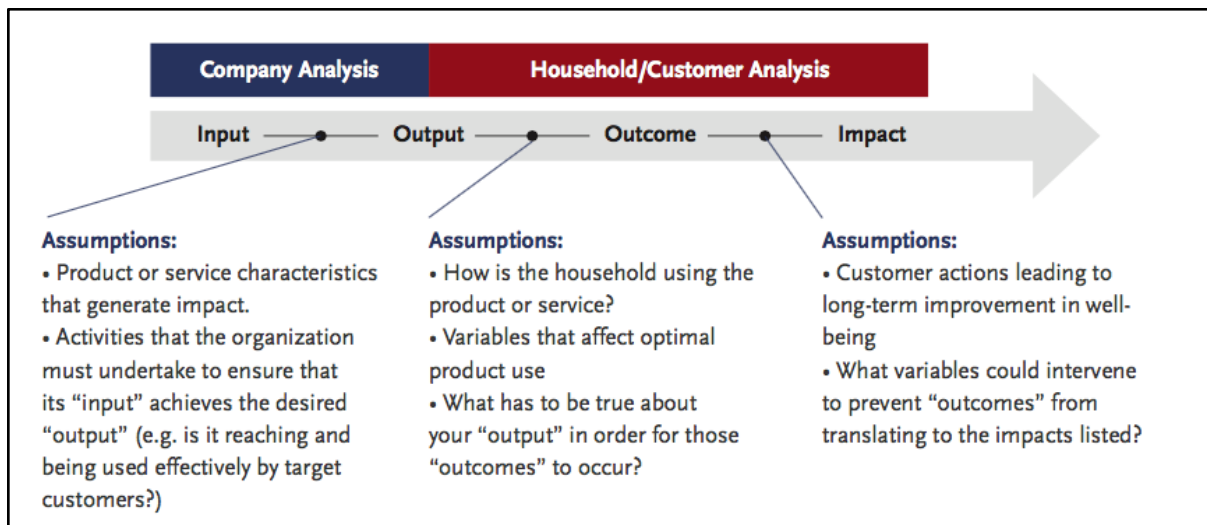


Figure 9: The logic model framework. (So, & Staskevicius, 2015).

If the future project management team desires to improve the existing project, they can attempt to analyze their input, output, outcome, and impact. If one of these components does not hold the expectations the team had, it might be explainable by the previous component, or by mistake in the assumptions the team made. Assumptions are beliefs that the team held when creating the project. If the output is not as satisfactory as expected, for example, the team can review its input and adjust its financial contribution or the number of people working on it. The team could also try to understand the assumptions that may have been erroneous. For example, the team may have assumed that iQuestion.online will be most effective in the form of a forum; however, such a

design could diffuse each question's importance and reduce the overall impact of the project. The team might then change how iQuestion.online functions in order to improve the project's output.

Such an analysis can occur for each component of the model. Importantly, it is crucial to understand that part of the project's success depends on user behavior. While a platform may work effectively, it may not meet the user's needs and desires. The user may also not use the platform for its intended purpose. User analysis can then provide additional insights on how to improve the platform to adapt it to the reality of its use. All these steps can be particularly useful after the pilot project has been launched, to readjust activities and practices, and better achieve the project vision.

4. Discussion & Future Outlook

4.1 Conclusion

In conclusion, this MaRBLLe project attempted to provide academic research to inform the iQuestion.online real-life project by answering the research question *'How can the digital platform iQuestion.online be developed in order to help breach the democratic deficit; to reintegrate citizens into the political dialogue and to increase institution transparency and accountability?'*. In an attempt to answer this question, the research team employed the methodology of qualitative meta-synthesis in the process for innovation of design thinking. Specifically, the research team joined iQuestion.online during the exploration phase of design thinking; and provided insights on the ideation and prototyping steps. This MaRBLLe answered the research question by firstly providing an in-depth problem definition of the democratic deficit. Then, it explained how the platform of iQuestion.online can be a solution to this problem by inviting citizens in the political discourse, incentivizing institutions and organizations to be transparent and accountable about their practices and finally nudging them to take actions upon citizens' demands. This MaRBLLe report then, explained the process analysis of the iQuestion.online digital platform. Furthermore, the report answered the research question by explaining how to retain users' attention and motivation through recommendations on the website design in terms of color schemes, logo, and images as well as on the website infrastructure using the technique of gamification. Afterwards, the MaRBLLe provided a set of activities that are required to establish an INGO to manage iQuestion.online activities and conduct.. Finally, the report helped understand how iQuestion.online could establish itself sustainably by creating viable revenue streams, suggesting that iQuestion.online future management team should sell greeting cards, shirts, and certifications, as well as aims to receive external funding.

4.2 Limitations

While the research team believes that the final product of this MaRBLLe research successfully answers to the questions it aimed at addressing, limitations to both the MaRBLLe and the iQuestion.online real-life project remain.

4.2.1 Limitations of the MaRBLLe

The research part of this MaRBLLe project was successful; however, the real-life implementations are still limited in several aspects. Firstly, the website still needs expert inputs to be fully functioning, enabling iQuestion.online to perform its mission. Such improvements would be needed regarding the website's infrastructure by implementing gamification, for example, and by improving the word processing algorithms to enable questions sorting.

4.2.2 Limitations of the iQuestion.online

The limitations of the real-life project iQuestion.online are also multiple. Firstly, it should be highlighted that a digital platform as the solution to the democratic deficit provides the possibility for civic engagement only to people with internet access and digital capabilities. This, therefore, limits the influence that iQuestion.online might have in addressing the problem, by excluding certain parts of the population.

Additionally, the research team emphasized that there needs to be censoring of hate speech and discriminatory questions. However, there is still the danger of extremists establishing themselves on the platform by being upvoted in the community forum. The future iQuestion.online development team needs to pay close attention and develop a strict algorithm on how to ensure the adherence to the human rights code.

4.3 Future Outlook

The research team of this MaRBLLe project has indicated various recommendations for further development of iQuestion.online. The recommended activities also provided an indication of the future steps that the project managers should follow. As mentioned in the concluding remarks above, several limitations need to be addressed before launching the platform. Additionally, we recommend to future project managers to establish a service provision of legal support where non-profit organizations can benefit from advise and guidance. Moreover, the word-processing algorithms and the online platform require further development to enable a higher degree of automation and accuracy.

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