

SOCIAL MEDIA USE BY RURAL COMMUNITIES IN NAMIBIA: A CASE
STUDY OF THE ANAMULENGE CONSTITUENCY IN THE OMUSATI
REGION

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to determine the level of social media use among the residents of Anamulenge Constituency in the Omusati Region using a mixed method involving qualitative (in-depth interview) and quantitative (survey) designs. The study employed multi-stage cluster sampling by adopting systematic and random sampling to choose settlements, houses and finally participants who use social media for the survey component while interviewees were purposely chosen using the same criterion. A survey questionnaire and interview guide constituted the research instruments. The findings of the study were that Facebook is the most utilised social media platform by the Anamulenge community members, followed by TikTok which speaks to these platforms user-friendliness, not only to the community members but to public officials who wish to communicate messages to the community; despite these social media's popularity, a weakness was that it was being used for misinformation and disinformation. However, their advantage is that it allows for timely communication among residents of Anamulenge Constituency. Therefore, it is recommended that the government enforces its social media use policy and use social media for government information sharing in Anamulenge Constituency given its widespread adoption. It is also critical to open up access to community members to make for interactivity and engagement as well as aid the task of development. In this connection it is recommended that more network towers be erected for stronger connectivity for individuals to access the internet without difficulties.

Keywords: Facebook, connectivity, Engagement, User-friendliness, interactivity

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

4IR	Fourth Industrial Revolution
CDMA	Code Division Multiple Access
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GSM	Global System for Mobile Communications
HPP2	Harambee Prosperity Plan II
ICT	Information, Communication and Technology
LGBTIAPAN2AA+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or intersex and asexual, Pan-sexual, Ally, Non-Binary, 2Spirits and Ace
MTC	Mobile Telecommunications Company
NDP	National Development Plan
NEFF	Namibian Economic Freedom Fighters
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SMS	Short Message Service
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SWAPO	South West Africa People Organization
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UGT	Uses and Gratifications Theory
UN	United Nations
UNAM	University of Namibia

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DEDICATION


This project is dedicated to everyone who played a part and have been the symbol of motivation until its completion.

DECLARATION

I, Gottlieb N. Johannes, hereby declare that this study is a true reflection of my own research, and that this work, or part thereof, has not been submitted for a degree in any other institution of higher education.

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Gottlieb N. Johannes		October 2025
Name of Student	Signature	Date

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

According to Maryville (2020), the definition of social media is described by the forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, thoughts, personal messages, and other content (such as videos). Emma (2022) concurs with Siddique (2020) that in recent advances in communication technology, including hybrid communication, a combination of synchronous and asynchronous modes of interaction such as video calls, emails, chats, forums, and participatory social media have had a significant impact on changing communication patterns. Social media, in particular, has enhanced connectivity and participation in many aspects of social life, converting what was once considered as an audience into netizens described as habitual Internet users (Luoma-aho, 2010). Furthermore, the recent growth in social media activity in Namibia increasing by 126 000 (+21%) between 2023 and 2024 as a result of 2.9% mobile connections between January 2022 and January 2023 and 62.2% Internet penetration in January 2024, makes it imperative to determine their uses (Datareportal, 2024). Specifically, in January 2024, there were 1.63 million Internet users in Namibia; while Facebook is the most popular social networking platform with 59.93% of users, YouTube, Tumblr, Pinterest and X all have usage rates below 18% in Namibia (Statscounter, 2024). However, the use of social media in many communities, in particular, has not yet been documented, despite the fact that this change has significantly increased over time (Quake, 2024). Thus, the purpose of this study was to provide valuable insights into how social media can serve as a vital tool for empowerment and connectivity in rural Namibia, ultimately contributing to informed policy-making and infrastructure development (Chinyamurindi & Shava, 2018). This

researcher used the case study of the Anamulenge Constituency of the Omusati Region to examine social media usage patterns in rural communities in Namibia.

1.1.1 Facts on the Study Site

The Anamulenge Constituency forms part of the Omusati Region. It was established in line with the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia, Article 106 (1). The settlement area is regarded as the district capital. This constituency is home to 20,344 inhabitants, of which 9,674 are male and 10,670 female (Census, 2024).

In addition, the constituency recognises the Traditional Authorities Act 25 of 2000 under which the Ombalantu Traditional Authority was established to commit to its customary obligation by upholding, promoting, protecting and preserving the culture, language, traditions and traditions and traditional value of the Aambalantu Community, preserving and maintaining the cultural sites, working arts and literacy works of the Aambaanhu community (Ombalantu Traditional Authority, 2024).

Namibian politics heavily relies on the constituency. It is traditionally a stronghold of SWAPO party because between 2004 and 2015 councillors won uncontested without an opposition party having nominated a candidate. During this period, most inhabitants took their complaints to the radio as there were limited platforms to express their opinions. In 2023, social media was bombarded with complaints about the current councillor, a sign that inhabitants are engaging in social media usage.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Various services found in Namibia, ranging from health, education to social and technology, are almost always distant from rural areas. Rural areas are those “fragments” of the country with “detached populations” typically separated from urban areas (Alexande et al., n.d). Based on the former, this situation forces people to

travel to urban areas daily, let alone permanently migrate to places where such services are adequately accessible (World Bank Group, 2021). Moreover, most rural communities are found in developing countries, where the majority of basic services (including internet networks) are not available to their inhabitants (United Nations, 2019). Statscounter (2021) suggests that rural residents have a problem accessing information as compared to those in urban areas. One major reason could be the lack of infrastructure which links people to the network and enables them to serve their needs (Internet Society Foundation, 2023). Therefore, stringent measures should be taken to curb issues of Internet congestion leading to limited social media accessibility (Tiwari et al., 2019).

This study examined social media usage by mapping out specific uses of social media and analysing the impact of demographic factors in the rural society of the Anamulenge Constituency.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The primary objective of this study is to examine social media use in rural parts of the Anamulenge Constituency, which will inform and determine the level of access to social media among residents of the Anamulenge Constituency in the Omusati Region in Namibia.

The subsets of the main objectives are:

- To determine the level of access to social media among residents of the Anamulenge Constituency in the Omusati Region in Namibia.
- To identify the types of social media used among residents of the Anamulenge Constituency in the Omusati Region in Namibia.

- To determine the attitude of the residents of the Anamulenge Constituency in the Omusati Region in Namibia towards social media.
- To ascertain the use of social media among residents of the Anamulenge Constituency in the Omusati Region in Namibia.
- To identify the factors influencing the use of social media among residents of the Anamulenge Constituency in the Omusati Region in Namibia.
- To ascertain the advantages and disadvantages of the use of social media among residents of the Anamulenge Constituency in the Omusati Region in Namibia.

1.4 Significance of the study

The magnitude of this study can only be measured if its ability is designed to examine the use of social media. Even though Namibia is regarded as a developing country, the global economy is embracing technology growth for both exchanging information and trading (Malunga, 2023). Information has not been communicated efficiently, particularly in rural areas (Seretse et al., 2018).

This study is significant as there is barely any academic research undertaken in this specific area (Anamulenge Constituency). In addition, the study will make recommendations that, should they be taken into consideration, would foster a better understanding of how social media usage in rural areas could be vital to effective two-way information sharing between inhabitants and constituency officials. Furthermore, the study can set a precedent for aspiring researchers, particularly when the country is experiencing literature limitations.

1.5 Limitation of the study

The limitations are boundaries set for the study. It focuses on using social media in rural communities in the Anamulenge Constituency. This uncovered uses of social media in rural communities, which are usually under-researched quite apart from the uses in urban areas. Furthermore, the limitation helped to confine the study and made it explicitly manageable and appropriate to the envisioned research goal.

1.6 Delimitation of the study

The study was restricted to males and females who use social media in the Anamulenge Constituency. It should be stated that the discoveries of this learning may not be necessarily appropriate to males and females in other constituencies in the Omusati Region. In addition, the findings will not be essentially applicable to other regions in Namibia and the people who do not use social media.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This section sets out the literature review and theoretical framework of this study. According to Ilegbedion and Lawani (2024), a literature review deliberates information already published on a given subject to identify gaps in knowledge and theoretical shortcomings and demonstrate what should be further researched.

On the other hand, the theoretical framework is described as a specific and focused framework that links the researcher's perspective to the data analysis (Vinz, 2024). It delivers an assembly for organising and rendering the data collected. In addition, it provides the precise telescope allowing the researcher to recognise frequent patterns, themes, and groups related to the research analysis (Hecker & Kalpokas, 2024).

2.2 Literature Review

2.2.1 Overview of social media

Social media are interactive technologies that allow the creation or sharing/exchange of information, ideas, career interests, and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks (Hudson, 2020). According to Linda and Ashar (2024), social media as a communication tool endorses changes in the manner people behave, affecting societal engagement and opening doors to identify lasting opportunities and find developmental solutions.

In new media, the audience is not simply positioned as an object to be targeted by the message (Scheme, 2020). This is an indication that the changes that come with media technology and the definition of channels of communication have transformed the character of the audience to a proactive way of communication triggered by the messaging style (Morić, n.d). One may argue that people's lifestyle is brought about

by way of social media interaction (Leah, n.d). It is commonly known that people use Instagram and others to share any kind of invitation in the form of digital posters on social media nowadays (Lenkert, 2023). Therefore, it could be concluded that the majority of information is frequently conveyed through social media.

Furthermore, several governments and businesses interrelate with their targeted audience via social media. The majority of community members express their grievances through the community social media account as an alternative to the direct contact with village heads (OMV Group, 2024).

2.2.2 Usage of social media enablers statistics

Social media engagement involves numerous behaviours users practice to respond to any topic of discussion (Carr, 2020). Comments, followings, shares (retweets on X), and clicks on shared links are examples of this. The social media sites' analytics (Facebook insights, Twitter analytics, LinkedIn Page analytics, etc.) make all of these activities quantifiable (Marketing Hub, 2020).

Communication remains an integral part of everyone in the world as human beings (Witzany, 2018). Arguably, there is a constant need for human beings to develop and arrange information to be communicated from one person to another (Karyotis & Khouzani, 2016). Indeed, 2023 submits that it does not matter the space of interaction, whether engage in exchange of goods which constitutes regular social interactions, information sharing between seller and the buyer, this still requires to secure harmony and understanding of the expectations, not forgetting appropriation of the course to action (Goodwine, 2015). Many people utilise smartphones and computers to communicate messages, leading to feedback that will prove satisfaction from the receiver (Silver et al., 2019). In the main, new technologies play an important role in

communication issues which affect everyone who might be involved (Alhadlaq, 2016). To solely focus on the utilisation of social media will not do justice to this study, but the inclusivity of a summary of what would be the influences of social media paying attention to the examining the methods of communication done through technology. The methods include Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube and Instagram.

It is not enough to discuss social media's impact on communication and leave out the focus of the independence of the systems in communication. Without a doubt, social media is considered to reduce the cost that usually comes with communication, which subsequently moves to increased accessibility (Brussee & Hekman, 2009).

Social networking sites are growing in popularity in Namibia (The Namibian, 2019). The trend of mobile handsets enables users to access the Internet and connect to any social networking sites of their choice conveniently (Jabeur et al., 2013). The applications associated with social media do not only appeal to young people but to everyone who seeks social media engagement. This is because issues or topics discussed through social media affect the majority of the population regardless of age and gender (Crame & Inkster, 2017).

Many of the examples of how social media, which include X, has been used to express or demonstrate action (Fisher, 2023). The most notable example comes from Arab Spring as it was perhaps mistakenly referred to as the "Twitter Revolution" though it is clear the social uprisings were facilitated by social media, even if not the primary source of the activism (Aday et al., 2012). Journalists also used Twitter on the ground in Egypt, posting observations and links to stories, photographs, and blogs (Zuckerman, 2011). It turned to be perceived as social media facilitated the rise of

citizen journalism, with Egyptians themselves tweeting breaking news items, which were re-tweeted by bloggers and journalists (Sneep, 2013).

Politics as part of a society's lifestyle signifies the role which enables the engagement and agree to disagree concept. Therefore, politicians have embraced social media to convey their political messages (Smidi & Shahim, 2017). Not only politicians but also citizens, in the form of protesters, appreciate the presence of social media to demonstrate their views against governments of the day and give a voice to the voiceless masses. It only takes a single composed post on social media with a click of a button for the message to be heard by not only locals but also internationals (Raja, 2012). Those who have already researched before this study had discovered that "online revolutionary conversations" had long been taking the airwaves. For example, there was a discussion on how social media was a core source of information that shaped political debates in the Arab Spring period (Gire, n.d). In addition, social media conversations should be encouraging the governments if they are keen to make their citizens feel at home and are part of the governmental decision making. This mutual understanding between governments and citizens will only break political unrests and citizens will not unprovoked attack state as they feel be part of any decision affecting ordinary people. A situation of blocking "access to the Internet" like it happened in Egypt with the attempts to prevent the uprisings (Dunn, 2011). This caused other issues like communicating with a sick relative in the hospital when a family member is not around. This, therefore, affected innocent citizens who did not want to be part of the uprising. The result of the Arab Spring involving social media led to the academics concluding that it played a significant role in "mobilization, empowerment, shaping opinions, and influencing change" (Ahmad, 2015).

Among 105 countries, Namibia is recorded to have more cellular phone “subscriptions” than its population (Remmert, 2019). According to Datazone (2023), 85.2% of the Anamulenge constituency population experienced material (cell phone) deprivation in 2001. However, cell phone subscription now stands at 113% (World Bank Group, 2021). Mobile penetration in the country has “passed 110%, with about 2.35 million active customers for both Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) and Code Division Multiple Access (CDMA) combined” (The Namibian, 2012). Most Namibians use “cell phone-based short message services (SMS) and WhatsApp”, motivated by the need for knowledge gain (Shihomeka & Arora, 2017). The high use of cell phones in the constituency prompted MTC to erect telecommunication towers in different villages (including Okafitu Kakamba) of the Anamulenge Constituency (The Namibian, 2012).

Cell phones are used to access social media in the Amulenge Constituency (Kambo, 2009). Wigmore (2020) defines social media as connections among individuals that foster norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness. This makes for better understanding amongst inhabitants, hence the high subscription to social media (Grabner-Krauter & Bitter, 2013).

2.2.3 Major Social media platforms in communication

The Internet has reformed how the world perceives and engages with media (Picard, 2015). Today, people can work in partnership, publish, share content and ideas much more easily than ever before, in real time and with people all over the world. Therefore, Twitter, Myspace, and other platforms promote this online dissemination and collaboration (Simplilearn, 2024).

Ortiz-Ospina (2019) believes that social media is without a doubt a pervasive share of the majority's lives of which is almost unlikely to participate in virtual activities without physical observations. Stokes (2024) states that it is unimaginable to evade social media in offline channels. Additionally, viewers are being directed to their social media accounts by "hashtags and snap-codes" on posters, TV shows, and advertising. Furthermore, when the platforms were at their birth, they allowed individuals to congregate on them to deliberate matters affecting their livelihood (Tran, 2018).

On the contrary, Anderson and Rainie (2018) argue that today, social media is more than that, as it steers the hyperconnected and internet-dependent world. These platforms give access to direct content that is liked by the user to consume no matter where they find themselves (Markovic, 2024). Noting that time is of the essence, social updates that take longer will pass the relevant time for the targeted audience (Natividad, 2024).

Oladipo (2024), on the other hand, submits that it does not matter if you are a well-established online marketer or a new promoter; owning a business requires knowing the types of popular platforms to attract consumers. This will permit you to magnify your "brand reach, engage with the right people", and strategically identify the social media marketing approach (Darby, 2023).

However, Haenlein and Kaplan (2010) recommend that it is not only about a conglomerate of users on the host of social media applications but whether the rightfulness of networking site the business manifests. To validate Haenlein and Kaplan's recommendation, Qualtrics (2024) confirms that before social marketing starts, questions should always be asked to determine brand image and find the target

audience. This helps to craft messages directed to a specific audience, which will be hypothetically believed as a result of market research.

Therefore, to succeed with social media, one needs to understand the basics, such as various platforms available to you, the objectives that social media can help you to achieve, and how to create a strategy using social media to achieve those objectives (Saylor Academy, n.d). Hence, part of the study focuses on some major social media platforms, namely, i) Facebook, ii) Instagram, iii) LinkedIn, iv) Tumblr, v) Myspace, vi) Pinterest, and vii) Twitter (NapoleonCat, 2024).

i) Facebook

Over three (3) “billion” people in the world utilise or subscribe to this network monthly (Dixon, 2024). This translates to 37% of people who are on Facebook. More than 900 million engage in direct messaging, which is a spin-off application for its active users (Dixon, 2024). While most small businesses use Facebook, more than five million advertisers recognise it as their best brand promotion tool. To date, the platform stands to be a safe bet should anyone seek online relevance (Statista, 2024). The platform’s innovation team developed an advertising tool called “Facebook Ads Manager”, making it easier to involve more people and subsequently attract a large number of followers or subscribers (Meta, 2024). Meta (2021) continues to say that Facebook’s consumer penetration has tremendously surpassed its competitors for its user-friendly interface and other options others do not have, like text, images and videos. Furthermore, content that encourages meaningful connections and conversations between people, particularly those from "family and friends", is given priority by its algorithm (Tasmanian Government, n.d). Out of 3,022,401 people in Namibia, 954,900 are Facebook users as of May 2024, accounting for 32.6% of its

people (NapoleonCat, 2024). As per population dynamics, women scored the highest percentage at 51.3%.

ii) Instagram

This platform is a visual graphic social networking where users showcase and share information, products or services with photos or audio visual. Similar to Facebook, this platform interacts with videos, stories, reels and photos (Park, 2023).

This platform provides an option for pre-scheduled posts, allowing users to pre-upload content, and it can allow people to generate a business profile (Stefan, 2024). Frequently, audiences may use user-generated content that can be shared.

Like Facebook, Instagram is designed in such a way that it allows engagement amongst different users online (Krose, 2024). The majority of users, according to McLachlan (2024), either look for the best photo to upload, busy posting or checking celebrities' corners. Many of these platforms are highly addictive. Instagram make it worse as it ensures to entertain and engage its users by offering numerous fun filters and all positive vibes content (Montag et al., 2019). From content creators to celebrities, the platform successfully ensures career development for any of its users (Grin Technologies Inc, 2024).

iii) LinkedIn

There are around 400 million monthly active users on this platform. It started as a search engine and has grown into a careerist and professional way of interacting. Those in different industries of production disseminate their information to shape and inform their potential followers. This is the platform where personal brand is

prioritised (MountHolyoke, 2023). Professional talent, as well as leadership development, is exposed through LinkedIn (Ambekar, 2024).

iv) Myspace

Ramanathan (2024) defines Myspace as a free service network that allows users to generate profiles presenting photos and interests that could be linked to other people's profiles. Although the network has been experiencing a drastic decline in terms of users, in 2022, there were 6.9 million visits on its platform. This was the most recorded decline from its 90 million users globally. As of 2023, there are still millions of people using Myspace, although the number of users is much smaller than it was at its peak. This statement is a true reflection, particularly in the Namibian context where users barely recorded beyond 0.1% as depicted by the "Statcounter GlobalStats".

v) X (Twitter)

Established eighteen (18) years ago, X (formally known Twitter) is a social networking service that grew to become the greatest of the times regarding political and professional interaction. Many scholars have recorded that the platform is highly interactive, giving its users options to hear audio and watch videos (Helter, 2024). Information from CharaterCounter.com (2022) suggests that a defining feature was its demand for succinct posts, originally capped at 140 characters and later extended to 280 in 2017. On this social networking site, users can share concise messages, images, and videos through "tweets" and engage with other users' content through likes or retweets (RisePath, 2023). The number of likes a post receives determines the degree of engagement on the platform (Sehl & Mikolajczk, 2024). In the previous year, 2022, researchers learnt that retweets ignite positive content and appreciation of one's post from his or her audience (Segev, 2023). It has a replies option; this exercise, on the

other hand, creates a negative perception of the post, which will not be appreciated by the creator (one who posted) (Helmbrecht, n.d).

vi) Tumblr

Although not common, this platform is being used in Namibia and is described as a blogging and social media tool that permits users to circulate a tumblelog or short blog post. Furthermore, the platform contributes to the collection of individual's photos, quotes, links, music, and videos from the browser and phone. It allows cross-sharing of content with other platforms like Facebook and Twitter. Many writers described it as a "microblog" giving option to its users to a quick snap unlike longer diary style in found in common blogs (BigCommerce, n.d).

In addition, the major difference from other platforms is the free-form nature of the site and the ability of users to simply modify their own pages. Despite this advantage, the platform's rate of growth in users has been declining each year, even though there is still a slight increase in the number of Tumblr users. According to Webwise (n.d), globally, there are 198 million monthly active visitors on Tumblr, indicating that 40% of users are Gen Z, while 30% are millennials. In 2020, Tumblr recorded 29.4 million users in the North American continent alone.

Notwithstanding the record increment, in 2018, the network banned adult content, which led to the decline of the subscription. However, in February 2024, the number of users had increased to 19.85 million from 386.29 million in January 2024. In Namibia, therefore, social media stats indicate that from June 2024 to September 2024, the usage of Tumblr has declined by 0.4% from 0.86% in June to 0.46% in September, respectively.

2.2.4 Social media use from a global, African, Southern African and Namibian perspectives

a) Social media use from a global perspective

Many people globally believe that sharing ideas, thoughts, and opinions creates a safe environment where everyone feels appreciated, thanks to the availability of social media (Smith, 2024). “The world is a global village” is a concept clearly defined by not only the use of the Internet but by the social media it comes with (Traub, 2023). Social media, in most cases, is used during the launch of business opportunities, brands, and organisations to keep informing or alerting people on what could be happening in the market space (Mclachlan & Newberry, 2023).

The United Nations Data Portal Population Division (2024) indicates that over 7 billion people are living on this earth. This means, on the face of the earth, there was a projected increase of population in 2019 by 74 million people in 2023 (Kemp, 2024; We are Social, 2024). This only predicted that the number of mobile phone users will likely increase in proportion to the population. The figure was recorded to sit at close to 6 billion at the start of 2024 (Taylor, 2024). The updated figure reached almost 70% of the world’s total population. One would conclude that more and more mobile manufacturers are manufacturing many mobile devices, as the global total has gone up by 138 million (+2.5%) since early 2023 (Jan 2024). It is now justifiable that more than 60% of human beings on earth now utilise the internet (Pelchen, 2024). Kemp (2024), not done with the population statistics, further states that over a year, the number of Internet users has again recorded by close to 2% at the beginning of the year 2023. Businessmen and women would use these statistics to capitalise on the selling of products and services. As if that is not enough, active social media has passed the 5 billion mark since 2023 (Meltwater, 2024). Therefore, globally, the entire social

media subscription went up again by two hundred and sixty-six million, equating to the annual growth of 5%. It indicates that during the course of the previous year, there were, on average, eight new social media members worldwide. Pang et al. (2018) write that social networks are used to facilitate communication and connection. As the number of people keeps increasing, so does the market for Internet providers. With well-thoughtful and organised campaigns, the right messaging and a quality business environment, a successful business is almost guaranteed (Wright, 2021).

Despite the consideration of the right messengers, the correct message, and a user-friendly environment, Lopez (2018) further suggests that the success of the use of social media in brand building depends on well-informed strategies. It is wise of the business persons to allow customers to view their inputs either on the already developed product or product yet to be produced. Again, the sense of belonging principle will apply to the success of the market. For this exercise, a good example will always be Citroen UK. The car dealer chose to involve its customers on Facebook by allowing them to influence the final decision and create the style, look, and feel of the next Citroen C1 Connexion vehicle. This was indeed the strongest successful story to narrate in the commercial of crowdsourcing (Baker, 2012).

In 2013, several designs were received by the manufacturer, and in the end, it unveiled the winning design to be sold to the (Hall, 2013). Indeed, any kind of business has a chance to inspire and build confidence in its existing and potential customers (Zuk, 2010). When there is dissatisfaction emanating from the consumers' inputs, it is best to terminate the campaign or relook at the crowdsourcing (Grobler, 2020). It is conclusive that social media addicts spend about two hours per day (Howarth, 2024).

Based on this analysis, Dijkstra et al. (2001) conclude that specific sites may come and go with the inherent trendiness of interest, either inside the continent or within a specific country with the intention to build the network. This is particularly important with people, as it will underpin trust going forward. It is now a known fact that business or friends' relationships is mostly built through using online platforms, more so when people live far apart (Indeed Tutorial Team, 2023).

Social media and happiness

People are hesitant to speak or discuss the connection between social media and personal happiness (Miller, n.d.). Robinson and Smith (2024) suggest that a psychological study confirms that social media addiction may upsurge disadvantages like cyberbullying. The study attributes bad feelings to several sources. On social media, users may feel ignored by their contacts (Williams, n.d.). People always want to compare themselves to others. Imagine being on social media every now then, seeing photos of people you might trigger hatred, especially with those used to look like you knew. In many research studies, individuals compare their own lives to images of their acquaintances' lives seen online. In the opposite perspective, people are depressed because they believe their time on social media is unproductive (Miller et al., 2024). Other research, however, criticises and refutes this finding. They discovered that using social networks for conversing may boost contentment, indicating a favourable association between the usage of social media and greater social wealth (Pouwels et al., 2022). The fact that some research highlights negative emotional repercussions of social media while others see possibilities for good emotional support could simply reflect the fact that people use social media in very varied ways (Chen & Xiao, 2022).

According to Schmeer (2020), the use of social media has more advantages than disadvantages, which include the ability to gain skills and interact with new people and ideas. Schmeer, further affirms the advantages of the connection between new capacities and aspirations, which will generate self-happiness.

The imagination of different kinds of lives for an individual plays itself out with new technology. It indicates that people will expect that if social media opens up new opportunities, it will be for the goal of happiness (Foo, 2024).

b) Social Media use from an African perspective

From the perspective of the African community, like in other continents, the revolution of media use has taken its ground (Rwodzi, 2020). People started to adapt to the dynamics of virtual communities where they modify, create, and exchange their ideas (Bhanye et al., 2023). Indeed, there is a recognition of how geographical separation disconnects people across the continent, necessitating the recognition of the effect of enabled user-generated and interpersonal communication, as well as the continued empowerment of African society through an unrestricted flow of information (Shabbir et al., 2021). The political dynamics are facilitated by social media, paying particular attention to decentralisation, which will eventually harness political engagement even in the most remote rural areas (Olaniran & Williams, 2020). Furthermore, the content awakened from its so-called “dark continent” as described by the researchers of Africa’s development (Wilder, 2020). The continent takes the issue of social media use very seriously (Cox et al., n.d). It has been noted that criminal activities, hate speech, xenophobia and threats to national security are some of the disadvantages (Fulantelli, 2022). Despite the shortcomings, the continent can not be run in reverse gear by not recognising such development as the new world requires a valuable

repository of information that comes with the purpose to serve in the new technology era. The transformation of citizenship has been on the agenda to try to reform governments, which will be able to regularly monitor not only the health sector but also the information fraternity (Oginni & Moitui, 2015). However, this should not be interpreted as a threat to the continent but rather as a contributor to beneficial economic, political, and socioeconomic growth (Bhanye, 2023).

Social media use from a Southern African perspective

From the SADC perspective, the dynamics are related to the embracement of interactive and participatory platforms to enable meaningful and effective communication in the region (Alodat et al., 2023).

If such development is ignored, the region's people would be able to relate to others in many ways: academic, business and professions and the demand for political change like it took the stand in the north of Africa for the uprising (Casero-Ripolles, 2023). Opportunities and risks are predicted to increase, particularly in terms of individuals' "digital rights" and the "common good" (Cepeda, 2019). People's fundamental rights should be preserved while taking into account public interest issues (for example, security and public health). The threshold for certain legal requirements should be met for the insurance of such rights (ECDPA, 2015). Article 19 of the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" guarantees everyone the right to express themselves freely. This right speaks inclusively about holding opinions without a third party's endorsement, which in most cases forces duress, leading to the distortion of information (United Nations, 1948). Free speech and expression should be highly prioritised in the agenda that seeks democracy (Funk & White, 2022).

It is indicated that the aforementioned rights work together with the right to privacy, recognised in Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and in many other international and regional human rights instruments (United Nations, 1966).

Personal information can spread by the click of a button, which can be regarded as intruding into the private life of an individual, which consequentially has the potential to break confidence of human beings (United Nations, 2021).

Regionally, the statistics show that the total cost of mobile ownership ranges from 10% to 68% of average income. This is beyond the majority of any given population, meaning that people might also afford the Internet cost given the percentage of smartphone owners in the world. Allen (2024) recorded that in South Africa, close to 26 million utilised mobile phones to access social media towards the national elections in May 2024. Out of 60 million individuals in that country, 43% have access to the Internet, and the number is growing.

SADC and social media use in politics

The arrival of the networking platforms like X (formerly known as Twitter), WhatsApp and Facebook have the main influence on the electoral processes and democracy in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) (Nganje, 2019). This trend is occurring at the period of wide-reaching displeasure with autonomous governments, predominantly amongst young people, numerous of whom progressively deliberate obsolete establishments and procedures to be approachable to their desires and aims (Berthin, 2023). It is noted that going forward into a great democracy of the digital age remains uncertain. The arrival at that destination brings an extensive consent that such platforms are advocating for the interruption and

radicalising of the processes exercised in the democratic state with the optimistic and undesirable results (Kofi Annan Foundation, 2023). For this to happen in the lifetime of the current generation, policymakers are urged to react or engage with the broad range of stakeholders (Fobbe & Hilletoft, 2021).

Citizens are aware of the global trend of new technologies, thus, they will select the most efficient methods to participate directly or indirectly with each other in political discourses that affect their lives (Townley & Koop, 2024). This transformation urges the participatory functions of any democratic state to demonstrate fairness, especially regarding regulating access to information (Nesta, 2022). For example, many countries encourage online debates opportunities which accompanied by the emerging sites although, Innovation in Politics Institute (2023) finds out that before and after elections result in 2019, South Africa, the true reflection did not manifest as the social media engagement was high as opposed to the election day turn up. Moreover, platforms such as Instagram, X and Facebook generated an arguably transparency, and maybe not accountability, towards the electoral processes when the responsible body allowed positive critics until the last day of elections counting. Having said that, the gap which contributes to the breaching of the monopoly was closed. It led electorals to more informed voting choices (Pacific University Oregon, 2019). Furthermore, social media platforms are also converting the core values of the organisation and operation of political parties, which in some cases have prearranged growth to the purported platform parties with the ability to improve intra-party communication mobilisation and participation (Alodat et al., 2023).

In addition, the use of social media to boost the quality of democracy is only as good as the political context in which these platforms are positioned through technologies (Chan & Yi, 2024). For democracy to be expressed through various social media

platforms, there should be a conscious pledge to align the guidelines and standards of the political game to the important ideals of transparency, human dignity, social justice and accountability (UNESCO, 2021).

As stated above, where ambiguity seems to present itself, individuals or groups could come up with their own process that they think they trust, which will lead to political unrest in the country, especially where chaos is the order of the day (Adeeb & Mirhoseini, 2023).

Like anywhere else, in the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), effective political engagement needs truthful communication between the government and its citizens (Ngwube et al., 2016). To a greater degree, citizens may express their rights to direct how they need to be governed. From the government side, developing trust among the community members should be prioritised (Trappett, 2021). This means that citizens should always be updated on what the government has been doing. Moreover, public institutions should, at any given time, practice openness and be dedicated to serving the community (Johnston, n.d.). This type of commitment can only be achieved if effective communication is guided through different methods of communication. Not long ago or still is the case within SADC, some governments prioritise the utilisation of traditional media to inform and educate their citizens (Sitto et al., 2022). Some of the common traditional media platforms used are newspapers, television, and radio (Indeed Editorial Team, 2024). However, with the fast growth of internet communication, standards of disseminating information have been advanced (Bäcklund, 2001). It is observed that governments acknowledge channels for interaction with the purpose of interconnecting with their citizens (Lin & Kant, 2021).

According to Jin (2024), social media platforms, from Instagram and Twitter (now known as X) to Facebook, are the definition of a consolidated economy of the world and how human beings define other people's cultures and norms. Chaffey (2024) dissects that in any way, no one could have ever anticipated this evolution. In recent years, South Africa has experienced a significant shift in how the presentation or appearance of the rooming and unregulated networks is accepted by its citizens (Wasserman, 2024). Social media use in that country is not simply viewed as the use of specific tactics or tools but also scrutinised under a microscope to ensure that people comprehend the finer points of digital experiences (Linda & Ashar, 2024). According to Statista (2024), in less than 15 years, the number of active social media users in South Africa tripled.

Moreover, this "shift in communication between citizens and government officials in SADC involves discourse which encompasses broadcasting and conversation" (Yildiz, 2007, para. 4). This insinuates that social media aids both listening and responding (Lutkevich, & Hildreth, 2022). Governments such as the Republic of Namibia offer or do not heavily put restrictions on peers' interactions through media of choice, even if laws like Communication Act 8 of 2009 limit certain gestures used in communication intending to prevent issues like online cyberbullying.

uMkhonto Wesizwe (2024) says that the facilitation of communities' network accessibility lies upon governments to promote engagement in the planning and management of public assets and create awareness of any development government intends to start. Among other things, social media platforms are useful for informing the public about current events (Ausat, 2023). Despite many technological innovations, social media dominates the others as having transformed numerous facets of human life (Wibowo et al., 2023). It evidently shows the impacts and influences it

has in diverging and converging engagements suitable for all humankind interactions (Lukić, 2023). Mutanda (2024) says that in modern society, the recognition of social media is of equal importance to any aspect of living. The use of social media is not only common within small communities but can be useful across government agencies across SADC.

Jamil et al. (2021) argue that perhaps when the technological revolution was created, those who initiated it did not perceive or anticipate the extent to which social media was to fix gray areas, paying particular attention to particular geographic locations for people who live in it. However, if it went through numerous researches and the data were analysed and tested, the results showed unimaginable appreciation in specific geographic locations (Zhao, 2023). In this situation, Livingston (2013) observed that the popularity of social media inside a certain geographical area prompted an expansion to a larger audience. Bertot and Jaeger (2010) explain that the range of prospects of interconnectivity with citizens are created once the government take charge of the platforms. For example, the benefits presented include the openness in communication, which will disregard hurdles linked quality connectivity (Sharie, 2018). In addition, governments can standardise the platforms, which in the end will enable information accessibility as Namibia, among other SADC countries, promulgated Access to Information Act 8 of 2022. According to the Blog Post (2024), social media has a large number of users and a ready audience. Furthermore, contact via social media occurs in real time. As a result, a message can be conveyed and distributed to a large number of people.

The SADC Secretariat (2020) states that "internet is used in some well-known mobilization" of SADC citizens. Cortright (2007) cites Ethiopia's Tigray War as an example of how social media had a significant influence on the situation. People used

the internet to connect, organise, and raise awareness through decentralised networks, resulting in nationwide protests involving 35,000 people (Gheyntanhi & Moghadam, 2014). In Egypt, Hershey (2010) claims that social media contributed to the success of anti-government rallies that led the country's autocratic leader to resign. This implies that social media can influence social, political, and economic transformations.

In some SADC countries, like Malawi, the government can improve access to its information by utilising the internet through enabled dynamic, interactive channels (SADC Secretariat, 2019). Tufekci (2014) agrees that allowing individuals to participate on social media will enable the government to respond to society's comments more quickly (Aubrey & Felix, 2013). However, the government has the ability to address the specific interests of citizens as well as their concerns (World Economic Forum, 2017).

In addition, the state may create alternative ways to reach those that do not form government formations or cannot be reached through existing platforms (Song & Lee, 2015). Where it is unlikely to leverage with standing platforms, knowledgeable or expert citizens can be requested to assist the government to create alternatives so that those who cannot are provided with other means (Kim & Sin, n.d). Ramirez (2023) encourages citizens to be responsible for themselves, particularly when the government does not come to their rescue.

In Zimbabwe, for instance, there is a huge recognition and respect of people who use available networks as their reliable mode of communication. It does not matter the generation or age group; all people in Zimbabwe use these platforms to communicate issues affecting their lives (Oyewale, 2023).

The former Rhodesia is not in isolation; Kenya is another country that sought the capitalisation of the available social media platforms to be used (Malinga, 2017). There are existing social media accounts managed and maintained by government agencies. These government agencies will then customise such platforms to suit the needs of their citizens by the way of informing and receiving feedback. Most studies, in their recommendations, are calling for the use of such platforms, believing that they create harmony and increase transparency as well as motivate public office versus citizens engagement (Njeru, 2021).

Therefore, Rasmeni (2020) thinks that government officials should not just use institutions' accounts but they can use their own accounts to communicate official information. Namibian (2021) recommends that local leaders in rural areas develop social media profiles to confront escalating occurrences of insecurity and communicate with their communities. Therefore, without comprising security information for the government, the public deserves to know what is happening in government when they so wish (Contentgroup, 2023). In rural areas, regional leaders (including headmen, kings and queens) would be able to learn or communicate with their community members through an organised social media education forum (Murule, 2013).

c) Social media use from the Namibian perspective

From Namibia's standpoint, no data on social media use existed prior to independence. Even now, regular citizens have limited access to it. It could be because the country is still new, and research in this field is scarce. While this is true after independence, data recording methods changed, and some information repositories retained them. The

country is gaining traction in order to meet global standards in information communication and technology.

This is not the case now, as in January 2024, Internet users in Namibia stood at 1.63 million. Namibia's internet penetration rate stood at 62.2% of the total population at the start of 2024. There is an analysis that establishes almost 24 thousand had used the Internet in a year until January 2024. In January 2024, over 700,000 social media users were recorded to make up "26 per cent of the total population".

Considering the role of social media in developing countries like Namibia, for the past five years or more, the country has seen an emphasis on increasing connectivity, as a result of applying a structure that permits people to be tied to more efficiency of the centers of the economic (UCLPress, n.d). Yet, the argument of the majority of people not connected is still in existence despite the notable recent injecting of the affordable and ready-to-use smartphones that are compatible with the internet service.

Furthermore, the building of boundaries of social networks is another part which will prolong the lifespan effectiveness communication once the concentration is deep rooted in the rural areas (Simon et al., 2021). At this point, the assumption is generated that when individuals experience improved infrastructure to communicate with one another, they inform, or others will learn from them and collectively gather resources to even better the infrastructure to the benefit of a large community (Luxton, 2016).

Internal and external stakeholders can engage themselves through social media platforms as it is termed by (MICT, 2017) that wikis, message boards and micro-blogs could form part of those platforms. The government of the Republic of Namibia put in place policies which stand as good guidance for quality governance and the use of new technologies for communication (MTC, 2017). At independence, for example, the

Namibian Government used E-governance dedicated for online accessibility through policies adopted to support the use of social media. This undertaking was the first of its kind in the country, formed with the purpose of integrating online platforms for its citizens to obtain access to the digital world. Hence, the government arrived at the birth of an e-governance policy in 2005 (OPM, 2005). Despite this, to test development to be highly lively for information sharing, Dasgupta (2013) looks at it with a different eye, that citizens are not provided any say in policy formulation as this policy does not holistically fathom citizens participation and effectiveness on governmental decision making. This would directly speak to Access to Information Act 8 of 2022, which stipulates in Part 5, Section 30 (1) subsection (a) and (b), that a person has the right to access information held by public and private entities if it aids in exercising or protecting a fundamental human right (Government Gazette of the Republic of Namibia, 2022). It is, therefore, noted that this Act, upon its promulgation in 2022, does not specify the platforms which citizens could have access to the information they are looking for. However, despite this latest development, without a clear stand on the utilisation of social media, many African countries, including Namibia, are already beyond this stage of development (Signe & Gurib-Fakim, 2019).

Namibia is clearly not lagging behind in the embrace of social media as a digital global village that enables effective and user-friendly communication (Shihomeka, 2017).

Therefore, when utilising social media networks for various purposes, the new or amended policies should provide a practical approach for government communicators to utilise three key components of social media platforms:

Virtual Engagement – The government utilises virtual engagement through social media to engage with the public, allowing them to contribute to shaping policies and programs (Balkin, 2020).

Re-purpose – The government should utilise social media to convert print, audio, and video information into web-based content, complementing traditional media channels for public access (Masiya & Lubinga, 2023).

Search – The government provides the public with the ability to search for any public information posted on social media platforms at any time (social media use policy and implementation plan 2016/17 – 2019/20).

2.2.5 Social media’s rural area infiltration

The effort to accelerate rural area development comes when the usage of social media has infiltrated rural areas to a reasonable percentage in comparison to urban areas (Widodo et al., 2021). The evolution of Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) has become the game changer and is believed to be a transformer even in rural areas (Slideshare, 2015). It is historically proven that technology growth is driven by the pursuit of improved facilities and benefits in people's daily activities, even in developing countries, despite rural developmental challenges (Javaid et al., 2022).

The involvement of villagers in enhancing regional potential through ICT support is now a crucial aspect (Karli et al., 2023). The digital age significantly alters human habits and behaviours (Korte, 2020). Community-based internet managers must develop a strategy for packaging content in social media communities to cater to the needs of community members (Gomez, 2023). The village's internet usage may be less optimal due to the limitations of ICT experts in the village (Sanders & Scanlon, 2021). The shortage of reliable technicians for handling ICT infrastructure leads to existing devices being idled longer than they should be (Shilongo, 2023). Notably, even in a formal setup, most rural offices' staff's ability to operate existing equipment is limited (OECD iLibrary, 2024).

Generally, most community involvement in information exchange is utilising and receiving information from individuals at the level of informative participation (Gruzd & Haythornthwaite, 2013). The word of mouth. However, the real-time management of the system has not involved many individuals directly (Mackay, 2018). The smart village is managed and involved in by a few individuals (Kennedy et al., 2022).

Servae (2003) suggests that rural residents should form a community-based internet management team to address human resource constraints and improve the use of existing rural internet. This community-based internet management should organise and implement training strategies to enhance the capabilities of rural communities in the information technology as well as social development areas so that the expected goals of the NDP5's social transformation can be achieved (NPD5, 2017). In this spirit, the research seeks the refinement of both communication and learning to complement the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) in the 21st Century (Schwab, 2016). These strategies will fulfil the inclusive, equitable and sustainable economic growth and human capital development (Schwab & Zahidi, 2021). This development will be to the advantage of a substantiable social media usage and its role in social change.

2.2.6 Effect on socialisation

The creation of new social media platforms daily influences the new kind of socialisation, particularly in rural communities (Lallana, 2015). The rise of social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Tumblr has revolutionised instantaneous socialisation, providing a level of interaction that older generations may not have experienced (Zeeshan, 2023). Numerous psychotherapy specialists are studying the impact of social media on community members' social skills (Byers, 2023). At this point, this study highlights the potential benefits and drawbacks of adjusting social abilities.

2.2.6.1 Immediate Indulgence

Social media's instancy and lack of patience and persistence are becoming less developed qualities among community members (Alghamdi et al., 2023). Social media is generating a need for instantaneous gratification or reaction from officials or other community members (Frimpong et al., 2022). This immediate response calls for an immediate action to the problem, which may lead to mayhem, should a solution has not been reached as per the timeline (Ashkenas, 2011).

Social media plays a crucial role in facilitating communication; however, it should not destroy patience among community members (Biro, 2016). Notably, the deliberate practice of building patience can prove to be a highly beneficial one for today's rural generation, and this can help reduce internal feelings of urgency and solve social anxiety as a result (Jefferson, 2001). Engaging in practical activities like sports and school debate clubs can effectively teach patience in a social setting (Taylor et al., 2015).

2.2.6.2 Effective communication Impediment

Face-to-face interactions and body language observation provide unique insights that are often overlooked by social media in community socialisation (Akram, 2018). In person, verbal communication involves expressing ideas and opinions, while non-verbal signs help communicate the message (Segal et al., 2024). The Cambridge Dictionary (nd.) states that the ability to understand, recognise, value, or react to something falls under body language, eye contact, tone of voice, and behaviour, which all increase the understanding. The removal of certain elements leaves the other party to decipher more of the meaning for themselves. Without a doubt, this can simply, and often does, lead to misunderstandings.

On the contrary, social media is positively used to support public members to feel connected or a part of a community in any given society (McMaster University, 2018). This instant and easy form of sharing information has increased amongst community members as they are able to intermingle with each other every day (Olmstead, 2024).

2.2.7 Social media as a marketing tool

This research has determined that those in business aim to boost brand awareness by being innovative in engaging customers on social media platforms (Kujur & Singh, 2017). As social media usage increases among shoppers, its promotion through these platforms has become crucial for marketing shopping decisions (Yousafzai, 2023). Sellers have looked beyond the advertising aspect of only social networking sites and discovered an interactive way of social media that ignites, and the focus should be on engaging in conversations with consumers rather than relying solely on one-way communication networks (Arnautovic, 2011). In many cases, large companies regard social media as an advertising strategic tool and hire employees to supervise social media pages (Marchand et al., 2021). Social networking sites are being utilised to boost a company's brand appeal and reach a wider market, enabling personalised communication and increased consumer participation in marketing and brand information creation (Hayes, 2024).

Furthermore, the relationship between social media and consumer decision-making is current, as social media influences advertising attitudes, brand attitudes, and consumer purchasing intentions (Yuceer et al., 2024). It does not necessarily affect consumers' decision-making, but it might possess an arbitrating effect (Sema, 2013). Overall, social media can significantly influence brand attitudes and buying behaviour.

Social media represents a global uniqueness in marketing, showcasing its reformist, non-discriminatory, timely, measurable, and clear standardisation approach (Sweeney, 2017). Therefore, in this global context, we can observe rural development as part of the process of standardisation of development (OlivierI et al., 2010). It is necessary to develop rural network structures based on global standards given the government's role as per the Harambee Prosperity Plan II (HPP2), emphasising the implementation of the “Open Access Network” aiming at promoting universal broadband access by 2025 and establishing a secure and robust ICT ecosystem through infrastructure sharing.

The community's love for social media leads to a phenomenon that is exploited by the business world (Kietzmann et al., 2012). For example, MTC launched its social networking site called MTC Namibia, which provides the most recent updates on the advancements in its technological services. Social media serves as a tool for corporate communication activities, promoting their interests and objectives (Union Bank, 2023).

Social media and ICT development in rural areas provide local governments with an opportunity to support and communicate innovative rural development programs (Darmawan et al., 2019). The utilisation of social media as a community-based internet development medium is a significant aspect of this study (Lachapelle, 2011). This involves the utilisation of various technological tools and methods for sharing and discussing information (Gowri, n.d). Social media is primarily used for disseminating information to a wide audience, allowing users to create and share content (Arisanty & Wiradharma, 2020). YouTube and TikTok are popular video-sharing platforms where users can upload, share, and view videos. Facebook was created to connect individuals and organisations to diverse networks of common interests or associations

(Bhandari & Bimo, 2022). In community development, one can utilise social media to enable social networking, converge, form partnerships, and build relationships by leveraging the platform (FasterCapital, n.d).

Social media networking platforms facilitate the sharing of ideas, user-generated content, images, and videos, fostering personal and professional connections and associations (Raghavan, 2024). Further, social media networking serves three primary purposes: personal communication, group linkage, and idea promotion. It significantly aids community development by fostering relationships, improving communication, documenting efforts, sharing real-time information, and reaching a wider audience than ever before (Kietzmann et al., 2011).

2.2.8 Social media: A favourable tool for people and an opportunity for engagement in Namibia

Most people in Namibia employ social media to stay connected, have fun, share interests, and extend real-life relationships (Madden et al., 2013). It offers support networks for various aspects affecting young people's lives, including LGBTQ, mental health, climate change, fashion, and sports (Miller, 2023). According to Tang et al. (2021), social media is an effective weapon in spreading awareness on various issues like mobilising youth on a large scale for an anti-corruption movement and creating awareness for various health problems like COVID-19. Although social media has many positive impacts, it can also have severe consequences if not used properly and ethically (Malar, 2017). Therefore, it aids young individuals in acquiring and enhancing their knowledge and skills (Bandy, 2023).

Development thinking and practice focusing on youth-centred programs are fostering social change and empowerment for young people in rural areas, particularly women and men (Combaz & Mcloughlin, 2014). This type of engagement, which is most

popular in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), comes with social media that stimulates the awareness, involvement and capabilities of young people in rural communities (Diouf, 1994).

Adornato (2018) states that social media allow people to share their work directly with the audience, thus fostering an informal relationship with them. Social media is an important educational tool, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, when youth were primarily responsible for rising to the challenges. Communities can foster resilience and drive social change during the pandemic if they are heard, empowered, engaged, and allowed to lead. Godwin and Parker (2012) encourage the use of social media, especially in situations where face-to-face learning becomes limited. They further state that the use of social media encourages people to contribute their own content, which is the essence of engagement (Sheehama, 2023).

Lastly, social media is recognised as an ideological platform that everyone can identify with in the nation and/or society (Sarai, 2019). This notion guides those who control content on social media to be neutral, unbiased and objective, thus allowing rural people to define their own life-styles and political values (Ghosh, 2021). Medium theorists argue that the nature of a medium can significantly impact its social impact, making media technologies powerful social forces that shape our perception and understanding of the world (Croteau et al., 2012).

2.3 Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework is a set of concepts, theories, ideas, and assumptions used to comprehend a particular phenomenon or problem (Vinz, 2022). Researchers often borrow blueprints from these sources to develop their own research inquiries (Adom & Hussein, 2018). This aids researchers in designing, conducting, analysing, and

interpreting their research findings (Sileyew, 2019). The theory provides a comprehensive explanation of variables, identifies knowledge gaps, and guides the creation of research questions, hypotheses, and methodologies to address these gaps (Sreekumar, 2023). The researcher focused on one type of theory out of several theories that can be applied in this research analysis.

The study is reinforced by the Social Media Engagement Theory, which mainly established individual engagement with content on social media platforms through active participation and interaction (Voorveld et al., 2018). To complement Voorveld's theory, Nehi (2024) suggests that public engagement theory plays an equally important role in society. Public engagement is a conceptual model that describes the goals, methods, outcomes, and challenges of public engagement (Sein et al., 2024). This theory can assist public administrators in comprehending the rationale, design and evaluation of various types of public engagement, especially through social media platforms (Tagi, 2019). Further, the theory includes the ladder of citizen participation which categorises different levels of public involvement from manipulation to citizen control; the spectrum of public participation which defines various degrees of public influence from inform to empower; the dialogue and deliberation framework which discerns different modes of communication from debate to collaboration; and the public value framework which recognises different sources of public value from democracy to effectiveness (Kusi, 2023). To further elaborate the public engagement theory, Habermas (n.d) theorises that the "public sphere" is a crucial aspect of our social life where public opinion can be formed.

This idea assumes that all citizens have equal access to information (Rodrigues, 2002). Citizens behave in public when they address issues of general interest without coercion. All of these ideas agree that individuals can organise participation in social

change and democratic processes by collaborating with others (Tenenboim, 2022). According to the social media engagement theory, users feel a sense of social presence or connection to the platform's content and other users (Lum & Chang, 2023). This can help users develop a sense of community and belonging, as well as trust and reliability in the information they share (Zhang et al., 2021). The role of social influence is another important aspect of social media engagement theory (VanderLinden, 2023). Individuals are more likely to engage with content that is popular or has been shared by others they trust (Buyapowa, 2024). This may lead to the spread of information and ideas through networks of connected users and can also contribute to the echo chambers creation where users are exposed to information that reinforces their existing beliefs and perspectives (Cinelli et al., 2021). Several factors can influence an individual's level of engagement on social media (Gu & Duan, 2024). These can include the platform itself (e.g. Facebook vs. Twitter), the type of content being shared (e.g. text, images, video), and the user's personal characteristics and motivations (e.g. age, gender, interests) (Alhabash & Ma, 2017).

The theoretical framework plays a significant role, especially in social media research. It dissects the understanding and analysis of the complex dynamics of the online platforms used by people (Taherdoost, 2023). These frameworks offer a conceptual framework for researchers to analyse various aspects of social media phenomena (Singh, 2023). While several theories were discussed and linked to in this succinct introduction, this study focuses on one that can offer important insights into the relationships, motives, and behaviours of people and communities in the digital sphere (Cherry, 2022). Furthermore, the study has employed the social network theory to assess the attitudes, motivations, intentions, and behaviours of the participants concerning their adoption and utilisation of social media (Sanz et al., 2013). The

theory is crucial for determining the impact that social media has, especially on people who live in Namibia's rural areas, which is the primary focus of this study (Leonard & Kiana, 2023). It encourages the researcher to use it to determine how social media use affects the rural community's standard of living.

The social network theory

The social network theory framework examines the connections and relationships between individuals or entities within a social media network (Studymaster, 2024). The theory delves into the dynamics of information flow, influence diffusion, and the formation of communities within these networks (Cordasco et al., 2019). This theory, as described by Liu et al. (2017), states that innovation diffusion occurs between individuals or organisations within a social system. A connection pattern that includes friendship, counsel, communication, and social support can be viewed as the social network of actors that create, disseminate, and embrace innovations (Bryant, 2012). The diffusion process is networked (Liu et al., n.d.). A social network's structure and qualities can have a major impact on innovation acceptance and spread (Jacob & Teuteberg, 2022). The idea provided a novel approach to understanding community social structure since anthropologists failed to understand individual or group behaviour in terms of traditional categories such as families, tribes, or villages (Berkman, 2007). Barnes and Bott (2010) concluded that academics established the notion of social networks to analyse links that straddle traditional relationship, residential, and socioeconomic categories, as well as to interpret behavioural observations such as job access, political involvement, and marital roles. Our "development of social network models has enabled a better understanding of the structural characteristics of interpersonal relationships" (Berkman, 2001, p. 5).

Network analysis is a method that examines the structure, composition, and flow of resources within a network (Wellman, 2024). It looks at patterns of social links between actors rather than individual players to see how these structures influence their behaviour (Granovetter, 2024). Social network theory asserts that the network's structure significantly influences individual behaviour and attitudes by influencing resource flow, access to opportunities, and constraints on behaviour (Krause et al., 2007).

A key idea in social-scientific research, the theory highlights the importance of weak relationships, such as acquaintances, in affecting information transmission within social networks (Marchesi et al., 2011). It has been discovered that testing the paradoxical theory in informal contexts is difficult (Bojinov, n.d).

According to Kenis and Oerlemans (2009), the concept that actors are embedded in networks, actors and whether they are individuals or groups, are firmly rooted in networks of relationships that provide both possibilities and limitations for their behaviour. Li et al. (2022) assume that cooperation is more efficient than competition in business and that cooperation can create competitive firms. People's behaviours, standards, and beliefs are formed by their networks: People's behaviours, values, and beliefs are molded by their networks somewhat than being separate choices (Lumenwaymaker, n.d).

The network perspective assumes that network science is currently widely used and has advanced across fields (Clark, 2008). The underlying presumptions evaluate overlapping networks within a particular context, focusing on individual relations rather than individual traits and analysing relationships within a particular group (Agneessens & Labianca, 2022). The traditional research on district reform adoption

usually concentrates on the traits of individual leaders, such as their self-efficacy and receptivity to new ideas (Boyne et al., 2005). A network approach to understanding the adoption process would focus on the influence of district leaders and other organisational units (Daly, 2013). These relationships offer the opportunity to exchange ideas, expertise, and unspoken knowledge (Yeboah, 2021). Influence transmission can significantly impact the success of reforms on a broader scale (Marchesi et al., 2011).

Kolli and Khajeheian (2020) confirm that the main advantage of social network theory is its ability to generate potential information on actors, relationships, decision framing, and the influence and exchange of information for progress.

Different scholars critiqued the theory based on the following explained factors:

- **Structural determinism:** Critics established that social network theory studies often focus on the structural effects on individuals rather than how individuals establish and disrupt ties to achieve advantageous positions (Kirschbaum, 2019).
- **De-motivating collective action:** Critics say that social network theory focuses on individual conduct, which can de-motivate collective action that might change society (Hu et al., 2014).
- **Rapidly changing networks:** Social network analysis may not accurately represent rapidly changing networks (Vacchiano et al., 2024).

The theory is criticised for potential issues with data entry, privacy concerns, interpretation due to network complexity, and potential inaccuracies in representing rapidly changing networks (Stone, 2018).

Conclusion

Social media has a significant impact on global community contact. As previously stated, with the advent of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter (now known as X), people are constantly exposed to a wide range of information and influences. This can have both beneficial and negative consequences, affecting factors such as self-esteem and mental health. Education, along with the development of policies governing social media use, is critical in assisting people in navigating the digital realm. This education should prepare people to analyse content critically and engage responsibly online. This allows consumers to make more informed judgments regarding their internet conduct. Developing a digital literacy culture and ethical social media use is critical for preparing people to flourish in a connected society. Therefore, it is important for educators and policymakers to collaborate in the drive to create a safe and supportive online environment for everyone.

Although this study primarily focuses on one specific theory, it could consider the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) (Hossain, 2019). This theory's origin is as far back as the 1940s, at the time when communication intellectuals originally wanted to learn why certain media and content are attracted to different people in the same community (Kasirye, 2022). It was supplementary extended sometime in the 1970s when again researchers started probing not only the satisfactions that consumers are looking for but the gratifications they actually obtained (Nell, n.d). Did they get what they sought?

Nowadays, UGT remains the most widely utilised theory in media effects research. In fact, communication researcher Ruggiero (2000) suggests that the trending of new

media's uses and gratifications is being investigated more than ever before since the perspective on it is particularly relevant for evaluating why people adopt new mediums.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to outline the specific procedures and strategies used to categorise, select, process, and analyse information on a topic. This encourages the reader to critically assess the study's overall validity and dependability (University of the Witwatersrand, 2023). Chris (2021) defines research methodology as the chapter that provides solutions to two major questions that the readers may have: How was the data obtained, created, and analysed? Furthermore, the researcher's detailed methodologies for data collection and analysis serve as the foundation for the research design, population, sampling techniques, data collection procedures, and ethical considerations (Taherdoost, 2022).

3.1 Research Design and Method

Bhandari (2023) defines research design as a strategy for answering a research topic using experimental data. He goes on to say that it helps ensure that the data collection methods meet the study objectives, which guides the usage of the appropriate type of data analysis (Paradis et al., 2016). This is a non-experimental descriptive cross-sectional study design, which adopted a mixed method of qualitative (in-depth personal interview) and quantitative (survey) approaches for obtaining data from appropriate hypothesis testing (Pollfish, 2021). According to Formplus (2021), the mixed-method technique is widely utilised when researchers want to become acquainted with an existing phenomenon and gain fresh insights into it. The case study seeks to understand the case in its natural situation, acknowledging its complexity and context. As a result, the study took a mixed-method approach, through a survey as a

primary method and an interview as a secondary method to learn about their uses of social media.

3.1.1 The case study Approach

Priya (2020) states that a case study is an empirical examination that looks at a phenomenon in its real-world context. Case study research employs a variety of data collection methods since it entails an in-depth examination of a phenomenon. It is not a data gathering method, but rather a research strategy or design for studying a social unit (Devi, n.d).

A case study can be:

- a) Descriptive – to provide a detailed description of an occurrence within its real-world context.
- b) Explanatory - The study seeks for casual elements that explain a certain phenomenon; and
- c) Exploratory - aims to uncover new research questions for future studies by examining a particular phenomenon.

This study seeks to interpret specific information on the use of social media by rural communities in Namibia, using the Anamulenge Constituency in the Omusati Region as a case study. Hence, the researcher uses an exploratory type of case study with the purpose of enlightening the statement of the problem in question.

3.2 Population

Banerjee and Chaudhury (2010) define population as a complete set of people with a specialised set of characteristics with its subset as a sample. Further, Thomas (2023) describes the population, commonly known as the “target population” as a group or

collection of individuals, things, or events that have specific traits that the researcher is interested in.

Therefore, the population of this study comprises the total population of 20,344 inhabitants with sampling from 9674 males and 10,670 females in the rural communities of the Anamulenge Constituency (Namibia Statistic Agency, 2024).

3.3 Sampling Method/Technique

This study was not designed at a census, hence the need for sampling. Sampling is the act, process, or technique of selecting a suitable sample, while a sample is a subset of the population that is taken to be a representative of the entire population (Tejumaiye, 2017). There are two types of samples, namely, probability samples and non-probability samples (Qualtrics, 2024). The probability sample is selected according to mathematical guidelines whereby each unit's chance for selection is known, while the non-probability sample does not follow the guidelines of mathematical probability (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011).

The study adopted a non-probability sampling method for the interview, and purposive sampling was used to select the elements (Lavrakas, 2008).

As a result of a systematic sampling, there was a sampling frame. The non-probability sampling. The selection of respondents went through multi-stage sampling. Stage One - Got the list of the population; Stage Two - men and women; Stage Three - men and women who use social media; Stage Four - purposively sampled those to participate in the study.

For the survey, the sample for this study was obtained through the multi-stage sampling process, and the selection of the constituency was through random sampling, which followed the logic of equiprobability and enabled an in-depth description of

elements that represented the population. Essentially, the multi-stage sampling technique was adopted. **Multi-stage sampling technique**, which belongs to both probability and non-probability sampling techniques and involves using more than one technique or a series of steps to select a sample for a study. It is simply sampling in stages (Tejumaiye, 2017). The clustered sampling technique, which involves a random sample of clusters, was used to select communities, etc. (Sedgwick, 2015). The purposive sampling technique was used to select the men and women in line with the convenience sampling technique, which was used to select the respondents. A proportional sampling technique was used to calculate how the respondents were chosen. The stages in which the sampling was categorised are: Stage One - Got the list of the population; Stage Two - men and women; Stage Three - men and women who use social media; Stage Four purposively sampled those to participate in the study. As a result of the multi-stage sampling technique, this exercise allowed the researcher to obtain balanced evidence in the sense that the responses by women and men as community members will be analysed and reported on (Laerd, 2012).

3.4 Research Instruments

This study collected data through interview guides (**Appendix C**) and a questionnaire (George, 2022). The researcher produced interview guides based on the study questions in Chapter One (1) of primary data collection from participants, which were recorded using a phone recorder (Alshenqeeti, 2014). Semi-structured tools are significant in this study because they enable detailed data collection and analysis (PubGenuis Inc, 2024). They provide a structured framework for asking questions while also allowing for flexibility and open-ended responses (Martinez, 2023). The study employed a survey questionnaire (**Appendix D**) and an interview guide (**Appendix C**) that reflected the study's

aims. The researcher's major goal during the interview sessions was to elicit critical information from selected informants. The interviews were videotaped and transcribed to facilitate cross-referencing significant themes in identity creation and social media influence.

In addition, other methods were used to validate the instrument, namely, validity and reliability.

Validity of Instruments

It may be difficult to determine if the respondents and interviewees would understand the questions asked by the researcher or if the questions would need to be modified (Hennink et al., 2011). Thus, after designing the instruments, the researcher tested them for validity. To validate the instruments, **two steps** were taken. In the first step, the instruments were submitted to the supervisors, who reviewed them several times to ensure that the research objectives were addressed. The second step was the test for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient.

Reliability of Instrument (Questionnaire)

The reliability of this study was determined by Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The researcher calculated this in data analysis to determine how reliable the variables were at measuring people's opinions. The reliability coefficient ranges between 0 and 1.

Reliability Analysis of social media use in rural communities in the Anamulenge Constituency of the Omusati Region and agreement with key statements on social media use in rural communities in the Anamulenge Constituency of the Omusati Region. So, validity was based on various typologies of evidence gathered. These

include reliability, which means or is measured in the consistency of the measurement that the researcher conducted (Creswell, 2014).

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher first got ethical clearance from the University of Namibia before obtaining authorisation from the Anamulenge Constituency office to conduct the research. The researcher then called the residents and acquired their permission to participate in the study via a signed consent form (**Appendix B**). He distributed copies of the study questionnaire and scheduled interviews (recorded/captured in long hand depending on their option) with residents via WhatsApp, one of the social media platforms. Overall, the participants were given ethical approval to establish the legality of the study with their response.

Respondents were asked to answer the questions without disclosing their identity unless they chose to do so. After the respondents received permission to interview, they were free to choose where the interviews would take place (within the constituency). In many situations, when participants lacked the funds to travel to their preferred locations, the researcher consoled them by offering to drive them there. At the start of each interview, the researcher reiterated and reminded all respondents of the study's aims and goals, as well as their anonymity, while also informing them that the session was being recorded on the phone audio recorder.

The purpose of the voice recording was to preserve what the researcher might have missed in real time of the interview (Rutakumwa et al., 2019). This helped to record factual views of the participants, particularly during the data analysis.

All the interview sessions took less than twenty-five (25) minutes, where English and Oshiwambo were used as languages of communication. When all these were done, the

researcher evaluated the responses and marked those that needed clarity and reached out to the respondents once more. Researchers securely stored collected data by creating hard copies and scanning them as soft copies, ensuring their safety in case of unforeseen circumstances.

3.6 Data Analysis

The researcher organised and re-organised the interview data from participants into meaningful categories and presented them thematically. The survey data was analysed using SPSS's 28 descriptive statistics feature.

3.7 Validity and Reliability

For the researcher to ensure validity, the population selected was purposively done with the aim to provide precise responses. A ten (10) minute opportunity was given to the respondents by the researcher to clarify anything they did not adequately comprehend. Furthermore, the option of triangulation was used by the researcher to strengthen the validity of findings as it speaks to the efforts of seeking strong research that draws from diverse sources and ensures alignment with the findings from various sources. The study's conclusions were credible since the data were evaluated and weighted against the literature studied, and the interconnectedness was clearly demonstrated. As a result, there is no doubt that this study can be used as extra research and literature for many other related studies around the globe.

3.8 Research Ethics

The researcher complied with the University of Namibia research's code of ethics viz autonomy and nonmaleficence by obtaining consent of research participants and, assured them that they can withdraw from or refuse to take part in the research for the former as well as ensured no harm to participants (UNAM Research ethics policy,

regulations and guidelines, 2019; Wimmer & Dominick, 2013). In addition, anonymity was guaranteed to the survey respondents and confidentiality was assured to the interviewees (UNAM Research ethics policy, regulations and guidelines, 2019; Wimmer & Dominick, 2013). The respondents were not guided by the researcher's existing knowledge of the subject but rather encouraged to express their own feelings, opinions, and experiences. To observe the research's ethics and confidentiality, no third party received recorded materials from the researcher. The research data will be retained for five years in a secured cabinet and then shredded (American Psychological Association, 2020; UNAM Research ethics policy, regulations and guidelines, 2019). Ethical clearance certificate was obtained from the university of Namibia Decentralised Ethics Committee (DEC) - Appendix A.

Conclusion and summary

The research utilises data from social network services to analyse content and debate flow, and contextualise discussions within an enumerated social network. The research field in social media usage is a vast area that can be explored by utilising data from various social network sites. Researchers face numerous challenges in designing studies, acquiring data, and transforming it into a useful form for analysis. The researchers created a framework for understanding the use of data from social media platforms. The chapter laid the ground for the study to be able to provide data collection details. The study's design is set up in such a manner that it will answer questions beyond common social media platforms like Facebook, whereby it will also focus on the understanding of public attitudes towards selecting their preferred social media type, with the extent to which others play a significant role. There is no study that the researcher is aware of that examines social media use, particularly in rural

areas. It is thus critical to comprehend the options presented by mixed method research design in a case study methodology that employs several data collection methods.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the study's findings. This chapter presents an analysis of the study, which measures the usage of social media in Namibian rural areas through an investigation of social media use in rural communities in the Anamulenge Constituency of the Omusati Region. The researcher delivers the study's findings and analyses data from the self-administered interview guides.

The chapter further presents the primary data analysis, which includes charts, graphical displays, and tables, as well as answers to the study questions. The study's findings were reviewed critically, with a comparison to the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter Two. The researcher ensured that the findings addressed the study's research questions and that the objectives were released.

The study used 130 questionnaires, with 110 completed and rated suitable. This constituted a successful total response rate of 85%. This is consistent with Agustini (2018), who states that a response rate of more than 50% can be evaluated and published. Babbie (2004) rated the answer rate as 50% justified, 60% good, and 70% very good. The study had a respectable response rate of 85%, according to the claims. Additionally, twenty (20) interviews were conducted, and all of them were well responded to. This comprehensive involvement and response indicated a suitable report of the study.

4.2 Findings from Survey

Social media has become the primary platform for community members to socialise. Individuals often value online contacts more than offline connections. Most

respondents under 40 use social media to express themselves and explore modern lifestyles.

The findings from the survey were based on a survey of 110 adult of the Anamulenge Constituency residents. The survey was conducted between July 07 and August 20, 2024, in English and Oshiwambo (researcher translated) according to respondents' preferences. The questions were designed specifically for the rural communities in the Anamulenge Constituency.

The survey recorded a very strong link between occupation and how they access social media. When respondents were asked to provide their occupation status, 70 out of 110 indicated employment. This is a great number for the sample. When asked how they accessed social media, 94 said they utilised their cell phones. Therefore, the link between these two aspects is that one would assume that for one to buy a cell phone, one must have some sort of income.

The overall results of the survey show that social media use amongst rural communities needs more support and other interventions to effectively communicate to people consistently. This varies from communities in rural areas. Out of 110 successful respondents, 80 respondents indicated that social media was their favourite as they are on it all the time (53).

In the survey, the study intended to find out the type of social media used by the respondents. The study found that a resounding 92% of the respondents use Facebook as their main social media channel. TikTok and Instagram came in at a close second and third place, with 89 and 66, respectively. According to the findings, the majority of the respondents use Facebook as part of their communication. Other social media platforms like YouTube, Twitter, and Pinterest were all below 66 respondents. This is

a fascinating insight and highlights where opportunities may exist for the rural communities to gain an intensify the levels of engagement on any topic of the developmental aspects.

a. Sample

The researcher chose a sample of 130 respondents, of whom were subscribers or users of social media, with the majority of them subscribing to multiple sites.

4.2.1 Types of social media used by the respondents

The responders were shown a list of several social media. From the list presented to them, they were asked to indicate their favourite social media. As the result indicated in Figure 1 below, the majority (83% of the total 110 who successfully responded) of them uses Facebook, with nine on Pinterest, while only one participant uses other social media platforms apart from those presented. As a result, these data support Network Adika's (2023) claim that Facebook is the most popular social media platform in African rural areas.

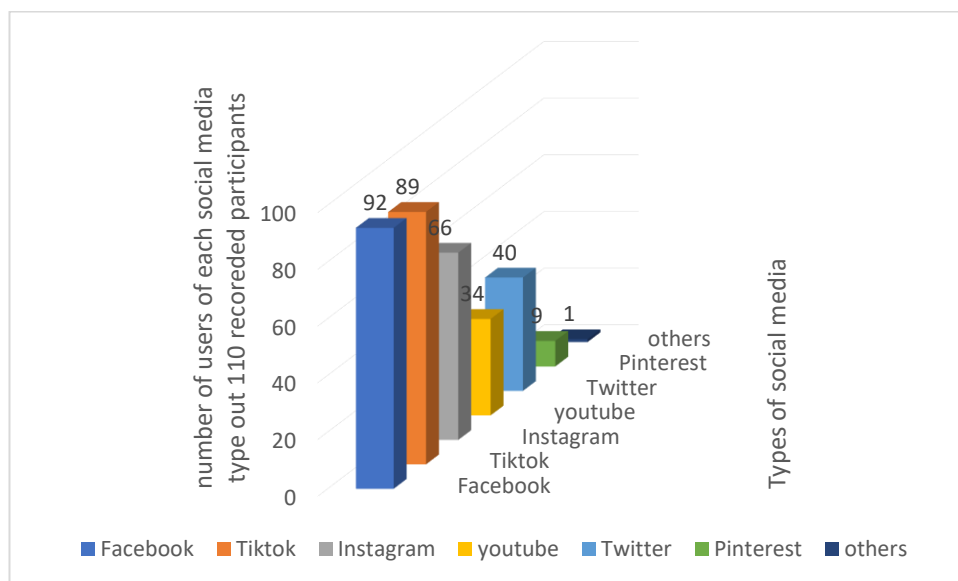


Figure 1: Types of social media

4.2.2 Respondents' reasons for using social media

The respondents were asked to give reasons why they use social media. Out of 23 respondents under the age of 20, 15 suggested that the reason they use social media is for educational purposes, while those aged between 21 and 30 mainly use it to acquire new skills in different areas, which in this way express themselves as important members of that community. This result is testified by Mirza (n.d) that the young people's ability to communicate improves as a result of their usage of social media, which also translates into effective communication involving much more than just sitting in a classroom.

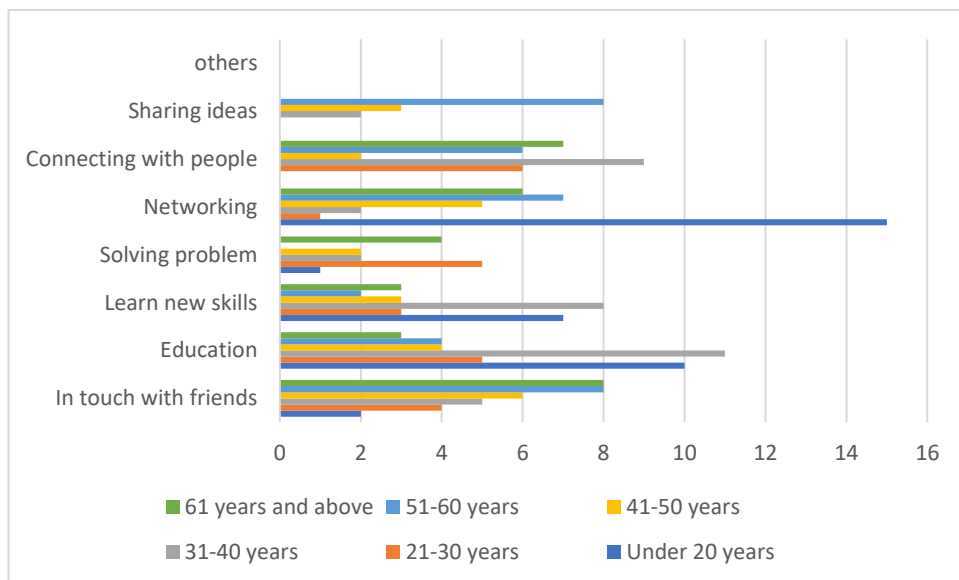


Figure 2: Reasons for social media

4.2.3 The respondents' gender

Figure 2 above shows that more than 50% of the participants are females who were willing to partake in the survey. Out of 65 females who responded, 29% are above the age of 31. Despite many female participants, only one of them above the age of 61 showed interest, which concludes that this gender category barely uses social media for one reason or another.

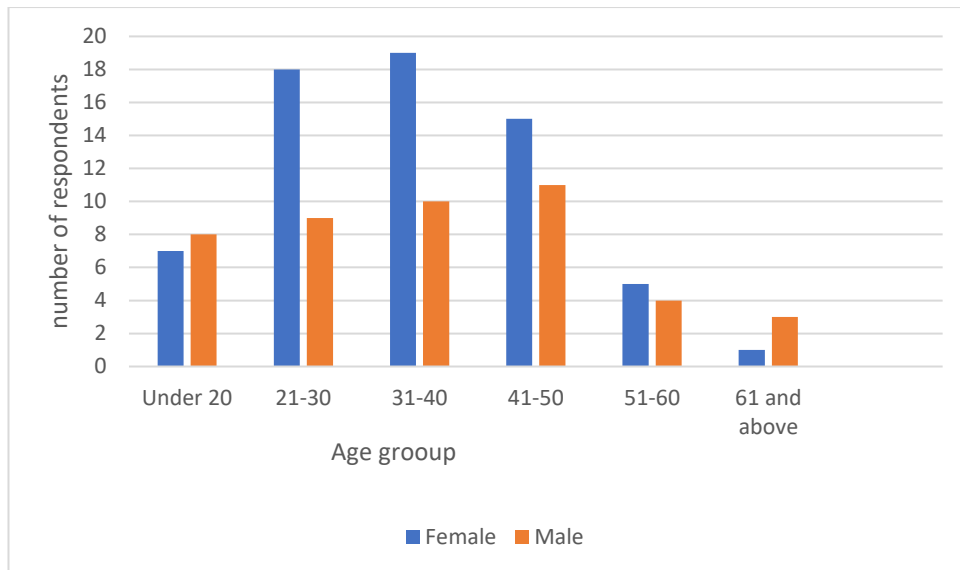


Figure 3: The respondents' gender

4.2.4 The respondents were asked to state their occupation status

The results in Figure 4 below show that the majority (at 38% of 110 participants) of the respondents have sources of income. This would suggest that respondents have non-stop internet access as suggested by Figure 4.5, which submits that 48% of the participants are “all the time” on social media when asked to indicate the rate of their social media usage. However, 15 respondents have no sources of income, but some of them indicated that they have regular access to social media. This may lead to the conclusion that respondents use different methods of accessing the internet, be it at school as 22% of them are students.



Figure 4: The respondents were asked to state their occupation status

4.2.5 Respondents' level of education

Over 50% of the respondents have attended the highest institutions as per the response to the level of education. The result, however, suggests that the constituency (Anamulenge) has a generally good level of education despite six respondents out of 110 who indicated “no formal education”.

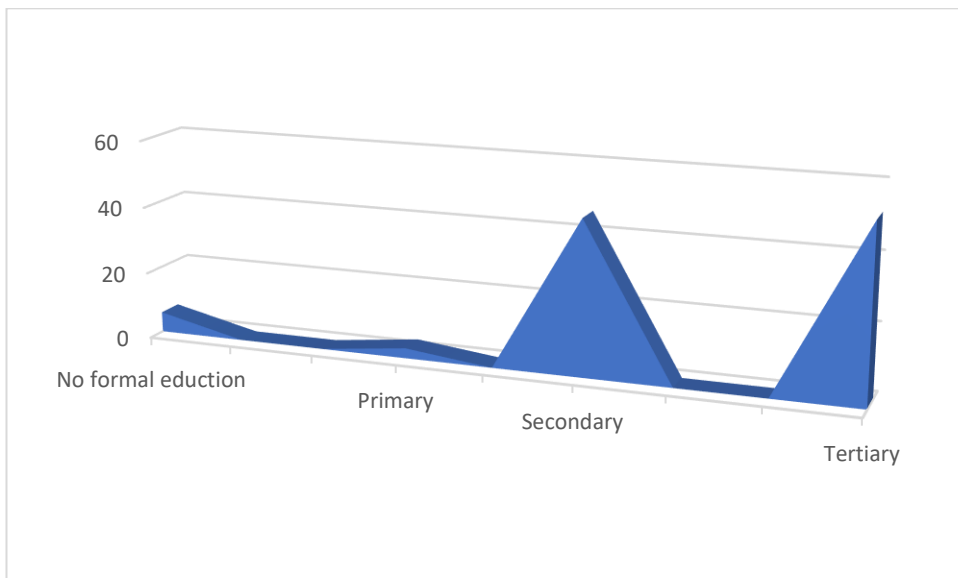


Figure 5: Respondents' level of education

4.2.6 The instruments the respondents use to access social media

The respondents were presented with the list of instruments they use to access social media. The results in the chart indicate that the cell phone is the most used at 84% usage while 25% computer used. Tablets, phablets, and internet cafes are all below 10% usage as instruments used to access social media by the respondents. This result agrees with Mirembe et al. (2019), who wrote that cell phones and computers were the most frequently used tools among rural areas, which this study indicates, by the extension to the Anamulenge community members.

Furthermore, Teodorescu et al. (2023) claim that the rise of mobile connectivity is dramatically changing the way people live, work, engage, and socialise.

Cell phones are thought to play an important part in the social revolution (Michael et al., 2017). The global phenomenon of mobile connectivity has become an important part of everyday life. Many individuals throughout the world use cell phones to access social media. According to the data analysis of this study, more than 80% of respondents use their cell phones to access the Internet regularly, compared to 25% who use desktop computers (Shimray & Ramaiah, 2019).

Some may claim that the popularity of some social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram, stemmed from the fact that many mobile phones have built-in applications that do not require data to download. They, therefore, use them on the go.

The use of social media has become global. Thanks to mobile phone manufacturers Apple, Samsung, and Huawei. These mobile devices enable easy social media access. They allow users to post on social media services at any time (Saha & Saha, 2018). Mobile devices have revolutionised social collaboration through blogs, content communities, and social networking sites.

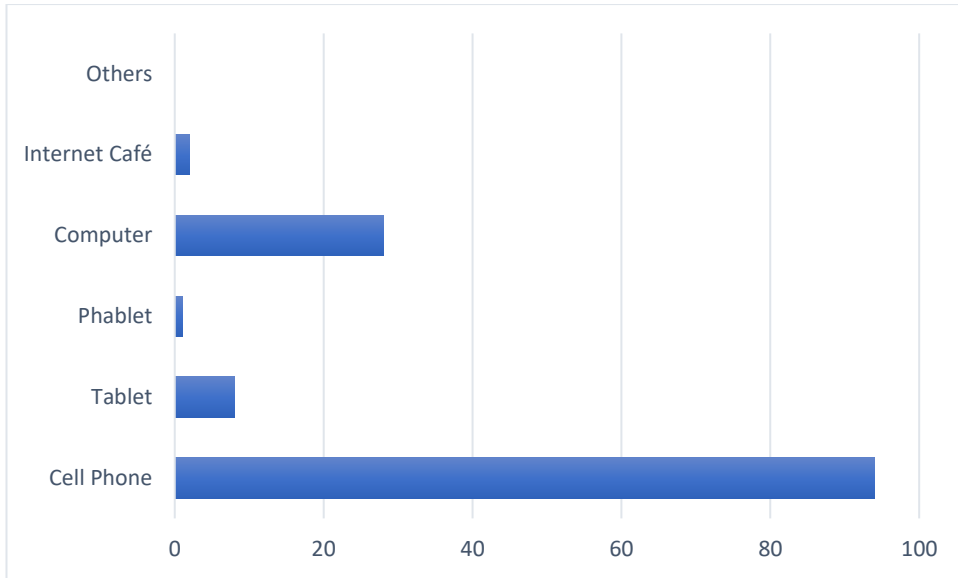


Figure 6: The instruments the respondents use to access social media

4.2.7 How often do respondents use social media: regularly, occasionally, or all the time?

The findings indicate that community members under 20 years make up 87% of regular and all-time usage of social media, while those aged 21 and above make up 65% of the targeted population.

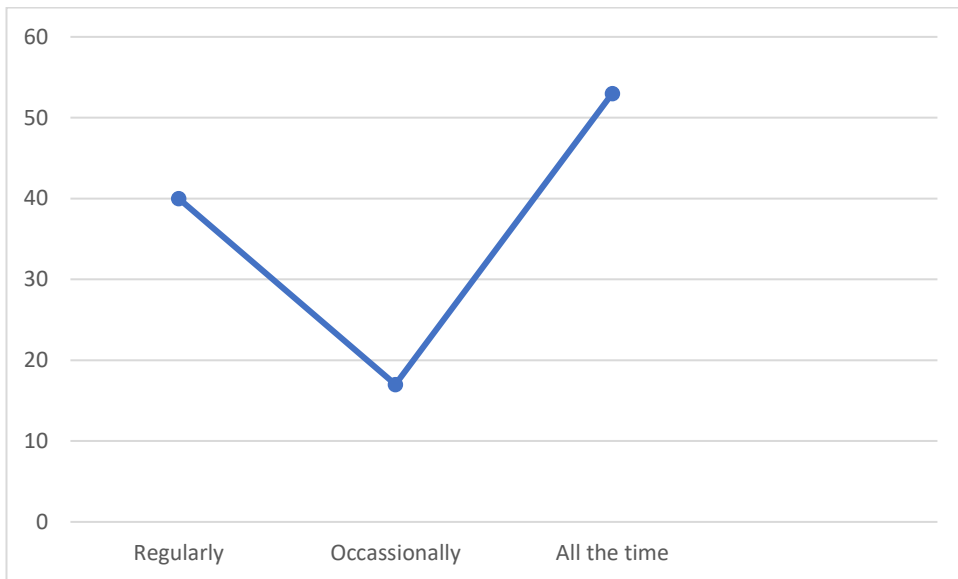


Figure 7: Frequency usage of social media

4.2.8 How strongly do participants agree or disagree that social media assists them to know what happens in their community?

An overwhelming majority of 93% strongly agreed that social media assists them to know what is happening in the community. Furthermore, 65 respondents of (93%) strongly agreed because government, regional, and constituency leaders keep in touch with them through social media. They confirmed that only through social media could they learn new skills and be able to share their thoughts. Only 9% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the notion that social media is a source of distraction.

The later analysis concurs with Linder (2024), who suggests that social media, which is a modern way of communication, tempts people away from their daily work obligations.

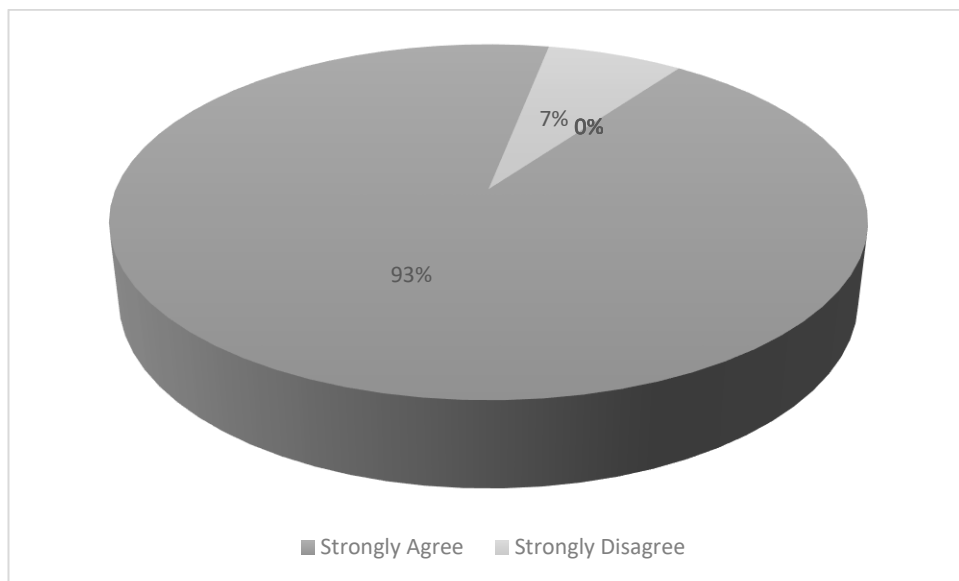


Figure 8: Strongly disagree or agree

4.2.9 The overall attitude towards social media

One of the study's objectives was to determine the attitude towards social media use. The results confirmed that 50% of females highly favoured social media, while only

23% of males have a favourable attitude towards social media use. Moreover, males presented 5% of neutral responses, whereas 2% were unfavourable. The results further showed that females made up a total of 10% for both unfavourable and neutral. Regarding the age range for responding to the attitude, the results showed that 83% were 21 to 40 years old for the favourable attitude.

Simplilearn (2024) suggests that the growth in the use of social media has completely changed how people interact as a result; this is subject to advantages and disadvantages. Therefore, one of the advantages was to boost the interaction between families and between friends. This idea insinuates how favourable social media could be in terms of engagement with family members and the global network. Therefore, the results in Figure 9 below show that 73% of the respondents find social media to be favourable for the purpose of communication, especially for sharing content and ideas on those platforms. Despite the overwhelming majority finding social media favourable, 18% had a neutral attitude towards social media, while only 9% showed an unfavourable attitude towards the usage of social media.

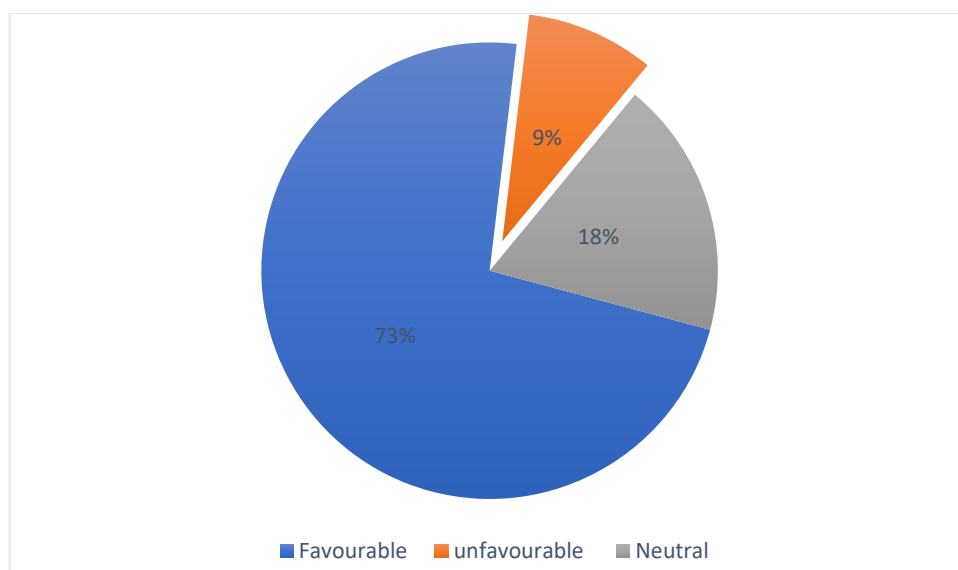


Figure 9: Overall attitude towards social media

4.3 Findings from Interviews

Interview data collection was the second strategy in this study, where a sample of 20 interviewees was initially selected to participate. Ten females and ten males. The study intended to collect data from the balanced gender representation, paying particular attention to how social media use fit into the rural community from both female and male perspectives. However, only 13 have successfully responded to the questions.

Interviewees generally agreed that social media platforms are important tools of communication in modern life. The interview findings do not differ from findings from the survey as they similarly indicated Facebook, amongst others, is the most favoured platform used by the interviewees.

Nine interviewees indicated that they use Facebook to connect with their family, sell their products, and read news to be informed about the current state of affairs in both the country and globally. They had observed that public officials, particularly from their constituency, use the platform to communicate to the public on issues affecting their lives. In terms of future use, the majority agreed that with the increasing social media platforms, traditional media like newspapers might be no longer relevant in society as most people use social media. Out of the 13 successful interviewees, only three indicated that it was easy to access social media because of the close proximity of infrastructure, which enabled quality Internet connection.

The majority of the interviewees had indicated that their reason to be on social media was to create business opportunities. It would be concluded that if one is selling products or services, then part of the marketing strategy should include allowing the potential customers to get to know you as a human being. For the clients to relate to

the seller, posting fun videos or pictures of daily exercise or other things about your day-to-day life should constitute about 20% of your posts and 80% of your products or services. This statement does not contradict the interview findings as it indicated that 53% of the interviewees agreed to posting on social media as opposed to only being consumers of others' posts.

On the contrary, interviewees who do not post thought it is unnecessary to post because although social media is a great way to connect with people, it is important to use it responsibly. Posting too much can be overwhelming to followers and can make them feel like they are bombarded with information.

In the Anamulenge communities, there appears to be a common belief about social media friends, especially people below the age of 41. During an interview data collection when community members were asked to explain how easy it is to “access” social media coupled with what do they “use” social media for, majority proudly responded: “not easy and for business and to communicate with friends and family”. Some would further elaborate with comments like to keep them “busy” when meeting new friends on social media. It is commonly known that having a greater number of friends following an individual on their social media page is regarded as an undoubted signal of one’s personal attraction and contemporary taste. As indicated below in the data analysis, Interviewee 4 articulated the opinion that was shared by many respondents: that many followers do not only speak to a larger base customer but also is an essential part of the experience of being a modern citizen. This means that if one does not interact on social media, they will be regarded as anti-social. However, being on the platform will allow you to meet new friends who will later be your customers if you are on social media for business.

4.3.1 Types of social media used by the interviewees

Source: *Interview data (2024)*

Out of 13 interview participants who responded successfully, nine had indicated that they use Facebook mostly, four use Instagram, and only one uses Twitter. With this result, it is clear that Facebook is still the most used despite the emerging platforms. Interviewee 1 had set the ground for this question when s/he said, “*I predominately use Facebook despite my subscription to other platforms, like X*”. While Interviewee 2 said, “*I my first social media interaction will always be through Facebook*”. From all the nine interviewees who regard Facebook as their most important social media engagement tool, they suggested that Facebook’s interaction “advantages” expel most of the existing platforms. Therefore, this indicates a great record of Facebook dominating the choice of social media platform by the interviewees. The popularity of Facebook had overshadowed all other platforms, not only in urban but also in rural areas.

4.3.2 Interviewees' preferred social media platforms

Source: *Interview data (2024)*

Arguably, despite WhatsApp being only a short message service (sms) platform by some scholars, when asked about their preferred social media platform, interviewees responded as being their preferred social network platform. Apart from Interviewee 13, all the interviewees confirmed that they preferred WhatsApp because of the advantage of mostly communicating only with their contacts saved in their phones, and this will help for accountability and minimise cyberbullying, which can easily be experienced on other platforms like Facebook. Despite WhatsApp carrying more weight for the usage, Facebook was recognised as the second platform to be utilised. For example, interviewees 2, 5, and 6 responded that for “*family and friends*”,

WhatsApp was the ideal platform to communicate, while for “*news and current affairs*”, Facebook was the platform they used.

4.3.3 Reasons for using social media

Source: *Interview data (2024)*

To indicate the reasons for using social media, interviewees were asked the question, what do you use social media for? They responded as follows:

Interviewee 1: *“I use social media to exercise my freedom of expression by post what I think should be implemented by the government”.*

Interviewee 2: *“Generally, my purpose is to read about what is happening in the world but in the main, since I am job hunting, I am on the platform seeking for employment opportunities”.*

Interviewee 3: *“When I am on the social media, I want learn new things and also look for product that I can buy from whoever is selling”.*

Interviewee 4: *“There is other communication platforms than social media where I can communicate with my family especially when they are abroad and I also make friendship with people are interested in what I post”.*

Interviewee 5: *“I have products that I sell, so I use social media to sell those items for my extra income”.*

Interviewee 6: *“I always engage with my customers whenever the need arises. I am known for selling skin products, so I use social media platforms to interact with my customers and my business partners”.*

Interviewee 7: *“I engage with my customers by the way of responding timely to them to satisfy their needs as they demand them from me”.*

Interviewee 8: *“It is helping me to gain knowledge and share skills that I have by advising other people on their financial matters”.*

Interviewee 9: *“I usually just on the platform to find funny videos and entertaining content as I am an aspiring stand up comedy”.*

Interviewee 10: *“I am not usually on social media, but I am there on my spare time”.*

Interviewee 11: *“I like sport, so social media keep me updated when it comes to sport. I encourage sport entities to keep us informed about sport”.*

Interviewee 12: *“Friends and family always keep on social media because of the distance that keep us not to have face-to-face interaction, that is why I we choose to communicate through social media”.*

Interviewee 13: *“Not only that I am a student, naturally I like reading, on social media platform like Facebook and Twitter I always find links which lead me to the great reading especially when I am not at school”.*

The finding concluded with some reasons for using social media, which are as follows: to catch up with what is happening in the world and country; to learn or get news and updates; to network with others; to seek employment opportunities; and to look for new products to buy. The above interview responses provided by the interviewees indicated social media as a favourite platform for people to communicate with different reasons. Many of the respondents have confirmed that they use social media for the sole reason of selling their products. The interview further established that social media embraces the seller's ability to enhance customer engagement and communication, swiftly receive feedback, and cost-effectively build a brand.

Additionally, some of the interviewees showed that the use of social media guards a harmless atmosphere for debate on issues of current affairs and inspires community involvement, which impact good governance as the core of democracy. Therefore, through social media, democracy is endorsed by posting and aggravating deliberations that concern community members. By enabling free discourse, criticism, and suggestions without fear or favour, interviewees use social media to advance democracy and encourage an open exchange of ideas. This emphatically insinuates that community members practice freedom of speech as a fundamental impression of democracy in any given society. The figure result concurs with Appel et al. (2029), who say social media has grown from people wanting to connect with friends but developed into a marketing communication tool. Originally intended for friendships, social media platforms have developed into venues for sharing information and advertising.

4.3.4 Social media accessibility, easy or not

Source: *Interview data (2024)*

At this point, the researcher intended to find out how accessible social media is. The finding indicates that more than the majority of respondents have common reasons why they find it easy to access social media. For example, interviewees 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 said that they found it not easy to access social media, especially when they are not at home where they can access their Wi-Fi. Furthermore, as the majority of the interviewees have stated, the challenge of internet access in rural areas is the unreliable network.

Although Backerdigital (2024) discovered that social media access in rural areas has improved in recent years, one interviewee, on the contrary, stated that he could “regularly” be on social media but because of an unstable internet networking

connection, he was always frustrated to access. The interviewees who indicated that it is not easy to access social media mostly mentioned the barriers to accessing those platforms. The following are the feelings of the interviewees on this question:

Interviewee 3: *“I do not own a smartphone because I cannot afford it since I am not working”.*

Interviewee 4: *“At least I have Wi-Fi at home but when I am away from home it is difficult to access when sometimes I run out data and the other time, I do not have money to buy data”.*

Interviewee 6: *“The internet network problem makes it difficult to access social media especially for some of us at the village. We need proper internet infrastructure that makes it possible to read news on social media”.*

Interviewee 9: *“I cannot afford data as I am not working. In a very long time, I have never been on social media although I have subscribed to three (3) social media platforms which are, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram”.*

4.3.5 Interviewees on whether they post on social media or not

Source: *Interview data (2024)*

Interviewees responded when they were asked to indicate whether they post on social media or they are merely consumers of other people’s posts. The researcher found out that from the successful 13 interviewees, seven had responded with a “yes”. This means that the majority (54%) not only consumed what was being posted by others but also posted what was on their minds. Meanwhile, six interviewees responded with a “no”. This means that 46% were more likely to be consumers of others' posts. An example is that of Interviewee 4, who revealed that *“I only read what others posts*

because I feel it is time consuming whenever I want to type for the post". Therefore, 54% of the interview's respondents post on social media, while 46% do not post.

4.3.6 Advantages and disadvantages of using social media

Source: Interview data (2024)

Despite social media significantly improving relationships by providing a constant and instant communication platform, allowing people to stay connected regardless of geographical distance, it comes with disadvantages such as issues with privacy, dissemination of false information and the possibility of cyberbullying. The following advantages and disadvantages were revealed by the interviewees.

Interviewee	Advantage	Disadvantage
Interviewee 1:	It informs	It is time consuming
Interviewee 2:	Creates connection between seller and buyer	Source of cyberbullying
Interviewee 3:	Connects with the world	No sense of physical belonging
Interviewee 4:	Educational resource	It might not present facts
Interviewee 5:	Access to information	Cyberbullying
Interviewee 6:	Better customer insights	It is very addictive
Interviewee 7:	Better information dissemination	No privacy
Interviewee 8:	Reach a larger audience	Spread misinformation
Interviewee 9:	Communicates with family	Promotes social isolation
Interviewee 10:		Source of fake news
Interviewee 11:	Collaborate and networking	Reduce face-to-face interaction
Interviewee 12:	Creates a worldwide audience	Causes depression
Interviewee 13:	Engages with community members Open new opportunities of business	Risk of misinterpretation

Some interviewees did not give clear-cut answers to this question, especially when they needed to elaborate more. However, some of them indicated that despite its disadvantages, they will continue using social media for the benefits it offers to them.

This question looks at the positive aspect of using social media, and numerous advantages were established. The most common answer is to create “business opportunities”. For example, **Interviewee 13** said “*Facebook open new opportunities my business to grow not only locally but also international as I have good relationship with seller from China*”. Not only him, Interviewees 2, 3, 6, 8, 10 and 11 all agreed with him by answering that social media improves customers’ insights, it “creates connection between seller and buyers”.

Additionally, as many people had moved from traditional media like newspapers, some interviewees used social media because it has the advantage of speedily accessing information. **Interviewee 5** responded to the question that “*I always read news from social media because hardcopies of the newspapers do not sell here at my village*”.

Despite having such unique advantages, social media is considered to be one of the most toxic elements in the Anamulenge Constituency. If the government does not put policies in place to guide and enforce them to use social media, it can be harmful to society. **Interviewee 6** confirmed this statement when she said, “*Even if there are policies in place, we have read people who experience cyberbullying which go against our societal norms and values. Young people who are the future of our society engage in unethical exercises because of things they learn from social media.*”

Without a doubt, social media comes with both advantages and disadvantages. However, even if there are policies to guide social media users, it will entirely depend on the user's intentions. Community members should find the balance between what is good and bad about using social media. Therefore, people should strive to use social media to satisfy their needs with the right balance.

4.4 Discussion of findings

The nature of the study required the researcher to ensure that the chosen target group resonated with community members, both males and females, who engaged in daily social media interactions. Although the bulk of the sampled participants were young, some senior persons were interested in the use of social media and replied enthusiastically to the study's questions. Clearly, all generations agreed that the usage of social media as a means of communication played a critical role in information sharing (positively or adversely) in the life of a rural community member.

The survey and interview questions revealed that there were more females than males who answered the research questions without being coerced. With 83% of questionnaire respondents and 65% of interview respondents, there was no doubt that community members not only understand the importance of the research but also that these rural community members have gained extensive social media use which permits them to be informed, learn new skills and engage with others in both private and public discourses. The researcher did not cast any doubt that the respondents' response turned out to be positive as this conclusion is informed by Kemp (2024), who laments that in January 2024, with 703.9 thousand users, or 26.8% of the total population, Namibia has a sizable social media following. Additionally, 1.63 million the country had recorded 1.63 million internet users in January 2024. While 44.8% of the population lived in rural areas. The satisfactory percentage of the respondents received from this

study clearly translates that the majority of rural inhabitants (Anamulenge Constituency) had internet access, therefore, it translates into a high number of social media users.

Even though internet service is almost monopolised, which has led to exorbitant prices, the existence of internet network providers in rural areas has been observed. This leaves community members with options, hence, most of them are able to purchase internet from the providers of their choice. The cheaper provision of free data was always the option.

In January 2024, Namibia had 2.91 million mobile connections, up from 18,000 between January and December 2023. This suggests that most respondents use their phones to access social media and the internet.

Social media is powerful for education purposes and learning new skills, particularly for the respondents from the age of 20 to 40. New technology and education which penetrated the learning space in Namibia could be one of the reasons that the majority of young people use social media for learning purposes as indicated by the results to the question why respondents use social media culminating to 65% of the total sample signifying education and learn new skills and this confirmed that social media platforms provide space for the effective modern way of communication. While this is true, the Census (2024) confirmed that the majority of people lived in rural areas of Namibia, which is an indication that the decentralisation of internet service providers, especially to rural communities by the government.

Two of the questionnaire's questions asked respondents to indicate their rate and attitude towards social media. As a result, 73% responded with a favourable attitude while 87% made up the rate of usage, respectively. This type of outcome clearly

demonstrates that, despite limits in internet access, social media has become an important component of community members' daily lives. It is widely acknowledged that such a response from players is due to social media's continued dominance as the most recent competitive type of communication tool. A noteworthy example is political activist Michael Amushelelo's Facebook post announcing his departure from the Namibian Economic Freedom Fighters (NEFF), which became a topic of conversation among rural people on the same day.

In spite of social media being a favourable tool for communication, it comes with weaknesses, as the findings indicated that 18% of the respondents were neutral and 9% indicated unfavourable. One of the weaknesses would be addiction, especially among young people with a high percentage indicating their regular interaction on social media. The addiction can negatively impact real-life relationships and well-being. Another challenge is that social media could lead to misinformation, which contribute to the spread of false information, fake news, propaganda and unverified data.

Social media platforms make it easier for people to engage with all facets of politics. According to Gheyntanchi and Moghadam (2014), political activists use the Internet to communicate, coordinate, and raise awareness across decentralised networks. It is, therefore, evident that the social media network is decentralised. The study's findings indicate that over 50% of the rural population has access to the Internet.

Moreover, the study, through data collection and subsequent data analysis, asked people who were linked to propose what they thought about public-interest topics on social media and if the information was accurate or relevant. This was in regard to the benefits and drawbacks of social media. It was evident that their behaviour as potential

models of their own society do resonate with their community as they relate to their companions in their articulation. Undoubtedly, their responses to their own condition play an important role in social networks.

One of the drawbacks noted by interviewees is that social media can spread misinformation and falsify facts. As a result, without first becoming acquainted with the structure of the social network in question, it is frequently impossible to assess the impact of increased influence on an honest, informative social media channel. Trust can result in significant opposition to the status quo, which network administrators must control, or network homophily, which is pro-status quo. Evidently, people distanced themselves from the influence of those with opposing views. While this is true, entrepreneurs could take use of the chance to develop new media platforms, as well as new ways or tools for communication tailored specifically to rural engagement. It could be an opportunity to develop a more basic type of communication vehicle that fully recognises the interdependence of tools while being easier to use by rural dwellers.

The drawbacks cited by the interviewees may indicate potential bias in empirical investigations of social media use impacts in aggregate. However, the data collection for the study may nullify this potential, necessitating the need to overcome prejudice and uncertainties. This could also help foresee the effects of the dynamics of social media use, particularly in rural communities.

Kietzmann et al. (2011) concur with the findings that the selection of a certain or specific social media platform by public officials to communicate with their community members tends to enhance anti-status-quo bias, implying an increasingly limiting or denying public opinion. This is likely to be reinforced in any

communication behaviour, particularly those that require public opinion. Furthermore, the findings would lead to the conclusion that social media platforms not only influence individual behaviour but also that social media conditions influence the message intended to be transmitted.

Blumler and Katz (2024) discuss the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), suggesting that individuals choose specific media types based on their expectations of obtaining specific gratifications. UGT, unlike other media theories, focuses on the media consumer rather than the media itself or the messages it conveys (Kujur & Singh, 2020). UGT views people as active consumers who are aware of their reasons for choosing a specific social media platform, unlike other theories that view people as passive recipients.

The uses and gratifications theory outlines five assumptions about media consumption based on these concepts.

These assumptions are as follows:

- a) Active media users do not have particularly strong effects on media messages.
- b) Media, particularly mobile-based media, face intense competition from in-person communication, text messages, social networks, and apps, making it more immediate and urgent for our attention.
- c) Media use is driven by individual social and psychological factors.
- d) Media consumption is driven by motivation and goal-oriented reasons, whether it is for habit or entertainment.
- e) People choose media based on their expectation that it will fulfill their specific wants and needs.

Consumers' gratifications from old media, such as books, newspapers, radio, television, and movies, are based on assumptions and other uses and gratifications typologies.

Remarkably, newer UGT research has suggested that new media, in this case, social media, offers similar gratifications (Xu & Takai, 2018). Sundar and Limperos (2013) highlight that while old and new media share similar social and psychological needs, new media affordances create unique needs that studies may overlook.

This is then clearly justified in this study as to why respondents use different social media platforms. Although they gave different reasons, the intentions were aligned to one aspect of gratification. For instance, one respondent wanted to make business, while others use it for family and friends to communicate, which means all of them want to respond to their needs.

Finally, in terms of social media being utilised as a marketing tool, Zote (2024) writes that there is a need for marketers to constantly refresh their social media strategy needs based on the latest trends and data. To begin with, one would need the latest social media demographics to update the strategy. A tactic that works today may no longer be as applicable as the previous year. There is a need to spend time and budget wisely as competition with more networks has broadened the scope of marketing. Marketers should stay updated with the latest data and statistics related to social media. This study will, therefore, be one of the literature references for marketers to rely on with the latest trends and data on social media use.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter presented and analysed data on social media use in the rural community of the Anamulenge Constituency. The analysed data showed that the majority of

Namibians use cell phones as an instrument to access social media for communication for various reasons, including connecting with families and learning new ideas from other users. Several suggestions emanating from participants' responses ignited to frame the recommendations as listed in the following and final chapter of this study.

The findings have cemented the argument made by Kerpen (2026) that it is difficult to realise how our lives have changed until we stop and look at how different communication is looking back ten years ago. Social media is an absolutely major contributor to the improved social life, especially filling the knowledge gap in the information sharing left by the traditional media.

The age of social media has changed society. It is noted that most of its parts are positive. Now, people can connect with others across the world. They can communicate with family and friends, stay updated with the latest news and promote or sell their products online (Varsity College, 2023).

It is revealed that both males and females are interested in social media usage, particularly in rural areas. Although there has been network improvement in rural areas, a lot still needs to be done to ensure equal network coverage compared to urban areas.

Rural areas have begun to adopt social media for the purpose of building relationships, particularly between public officials and community members. Even though some rural areas have quality networks supplied by internet providers, they might not utilise these services due to affordability and other barriers to access such services.

People have different reasons why they use social media: it is because it offers platforms for "communication, connection, education and sharing content in the digital world". It was reported in 2022 that "over 4.59 billion people use social media

worldwide (almost 60% of the world's population)". While ITU (2023) confirmed that 23% of the African rural population engages in social media use. Therefore, in recent times, there has been a difference in the number of internet users. Namibia's dwellers of rural zones still found themselves in the mix of social groups with little access to modern information sources. Furthermore, the model's combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods will aid in this endeavour.

Even though data analysis has not yet been done, the current model indicates that it is likely that the results and any new concerns that arise can be addressed (Deeks et al., n.d).

Lastly, including social media as strategic entities that adopt bias to grow their market share would be a logical expansion of the model (Mullainathan & Shleifer 2005).

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

This study aimed to analyse the utilisation of social media in the Anamulenge Constituency. The primary objective was to study the use of social media in the community of Anamulenge. The study revealed that individuals are driven to utilise key social media platforms, aligning with the diffusion theory of innovation.

One of the study's objectives was to ascertain the use of social media in promoting community mobilisation. The study's findings revealed that the community uses the following channels of social media: Facebook, Twitter (now known as X), YouTube, WhatsApp, and Instagram. While this is true as it is discovered, the study further showed that people in the Anamulenge Constituency spend more time on Facebook and WhatsApp than other social media platforms.

The study's results indicate that social media has augmented the participation of the community on public matters. It also shows the increment of transparency in public offices, especially constituency offices, on matters of public interest. The study has discovered that the growth of social media subscriptions boosted the interaction between the community and those who hold public office. Furthermore, social media platforms have amplified the receptiveness and openness of those who hold public office to the community's wishes and have improved proficiency in communicating with the public.

The second sub-objective sought to analyse the impact of demographic factors on the use of social media in the constituency. The outcome shows minimum negative impact on the impact of demographic factors, if at all, the results indicate more participation

despite age difference of between 21 and 60 years old. Like other objectives, the findings indicated the increased participation of the community members in public discourse despite age or gender.

The community member of Anamulenge were asked how social media assists them to know what is happening in the community and whether their community leaders keep in touch with them through social media.

5.2 Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concluded that Facebook is the most utilised social media platform by the Anamulenge community members, followed by TikTok. This phenomenon shows that platforms are user-friendly, not only to the community members but to the public officials to communicate their messages. The study also defined the significance of social media communication and why government policies should be put in place to the benefit of community members.

To diagnose the respondents' understanding and choice of specific social media platforms, several theories have been extensively looked at. Although this study did not dissect why respondents only use one specific social media platform as opposed to multiple use or subscription, it is highly important to understand why they trust a particular social media platform (Chen & Peng, 2022). It is assumed that if an individual only pays attention to one platform, it is likely that such a person only consumes information available on that platform (Vinney, 2024). The extent to which people use social media in any given community, however, is measured using many methods. Parida (2020) narrates that both qualitative and quantitative metrics could be the most substantial ways used to determine the use of social media for any reason presented by those who chose to use it.

The study, therefore, concluded that the implementation of social media as a means of communication not only amongst community members but also between public officials is of great impact on community mobilisation on many different issues of the public interest.

Finally, the evidence emanating from the findings demonstrates that social media usage has improved the manner in which community members interact with each other, whether employed or not, and it does not matter whether their level of education is primary or secondary.

5.3 Recommendations

Shastri (2024) submits that recommendations enhance user experience by providing relevant suggestions, which makes it easier for a user to make personal and customised decisions. This study's population was rural social media users, however, the researcher has noted the impact on other stakeholders such as public office officials, government entities, telecommunications and technology companies, and other researchers. Based on the findings, the study applied a blanket approach for the following recommendations for all the mentioned stakeholders.

- A) The rural communities with the assistance of government need to implement subsidised internet connection (data) particularly those who cannot afford but use social media platforms to the benefit of rural development.
- B) There is a need for the Internet providers to erect adequate network towers to create optimised connectivity to the Internet.
- C) Government in consultation with rural communities can implement policies to regulate social media in such a way that the platforms are not used to invade the rights of other people.

D) There is a need for community influencers: Social media experts, Community builders, Content creators, Online personalities, politicians and traditional leaders to ignite social media utilization interest amongst men and women of different ages. They can help to influence the usage of social media as an effective platform of communication.

5.4 For Further Studies Proposals

The study was done in the Anamulenge Constituency, in the Omusati Region, and the same study could be undertaken in other regional constituencies. In addition, a single village like Omufitu WaNauyala would have been suitable to limit the research to the typical rural setting. Nevertheless, future researchers can conduct their studies with this document as a reference by particular tackling the issue of how social media creates or enhances business opportunity for the village men and women.

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Appendix A

ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

Ethical Clearance Reference Number: SHS 0022 **Date:** 10 March 2022

This Ethical Clearance Certificate is issued by the University of Namibia Decentralized Ethics Committee (DEC) in accordance with the University of Namibia's Research Ethics Policy and Guidelines. Ethical approval is given in respect of undertakings contained in the Research Project outlined below. This Certificate is issued on the recommendations of the ethical evaluation done by the School of Humanities, Society & Development Decentralized Ethics Committee.

Title of Project: Social media use by rural communities in Namibia: A case study of the Anamulenge constituency of Omusati Region

Researcher: Gottlieb Ndeutapo

Johannes Student Number:

200815415 **Supervisor(s):** Prof.

E. Akpabio

Centre for Research Services

Take note of the following:

1. Any significant changes in the conditions or undertakings outlined in the approved Proposal must be communicated to the ethics committee. An application to make amendments may be necessary.
2. Any breaches of ethical undertakings or practices that have an impact on ethical conduct of the research must be reported to the ethics committee
3. The Principal Researcher must report issues of ethical compliance to the ethics committee (through the Chairperson) at the end of the Project or as may be requested by the ethics committee
4. The ethics committee retains the right to:
 - i) Withdraw or amend this Ethical Clearance if any unethical practices (as outlined in the Research Ethics Policy) have been detected or suspected,
 - ii) Request for an ethical compliance report at any point during the course of the research.

The ethics committee wishes you the best in your research.

Prof. Trywell Kalusopa (Chairperson, Decentralised Ethics Committee)

Prof. Davis Mumbengegwi (Head, Multidisciplinary

Appendix B

Participant's consent

Dear Participant

1. My name is Ndeutapo Johannes Gottlieb with student number 200815415. I am studying towards a [MA Media Studies] degree at the University of Namibia (UNAM), and I am conducting a survey on Social media use by rural communities in Namibia: A case study of the Anamulenge Constituency of Omusati Region
2. I have selected you to participate in my study, because you belong to the group of people I want to include in my research. I would therefore like to invite you to complete this questionnaire.
3. The research I am conducting has been approved by the UNAM Research Ethics Committee. I would appreciate it very much if you would complete this questionnaire, and I would like to assure you of the following:
 - a. You do not have to fill in this questionnaire if you do not want to.
 - b. You can stop filling in the questionnaire and stop participating at any time if you want to, and there will be no negative consequences for you.
 - c. Your participation is completely anonymous. This means that, even if I ask information that might identify you or if I know you, I am not allowed to make your identity known to anyone. When I report on my questionnaires' data and results, I will not mention any personal information about participants that might identify them.
 - d. All completed questionnaires, data will be stored in a safe and secure place, and only authorised University officials, my supervisor, and I will have access to it. After five years, all the questionnaires and data will be destroyed in an environmentally friendly way.
4. If you have any questions about this questionnaire, or if you do not understand anything, please feel free to ask me, and I will be happy to explain it to you.
5. If you want to know more about the research I am doing, please feel free to ask me, and I will be happy to tell you more.
6. It should take about 30 minutes for you to complete the questionnaire.
7. You can reach me on my cell phone at 0814251449, or send an e-mail to johngouty@gmail.com.

If you want more information about the study you can contact (Ndeutapo Johannes Gottlieb; 0814251449) or Centre for Research & Services at kmbulu@unam.na if you have any further queries about the study or if you have any concerns or complaints that have not been adequately addressed by the research team.

Thank you very much for your willingness to participate in this research!

Please detach this page and keep it.

Please turn over to start filling in the questionnaire.

Appendix C

Survey Questions

1. Age:

Under 20 years _____

21-30 years _____

31-40 years _____

41-50 years _____

51-60 years _____

61 years and above _____

2. Gender:

Female _____

Male _____

3. Occupation:

Employed _____

Self Employed _____

Student _____

Not working _____

4. Highest education level

No formal education _____

Primary _____

Secondary _____

Tertiary _____

5. Do you use social media?

Yes _____

No _____

If the answer is “no” discontinue the survey.

6. How do you access social media?

Cell phone _____

Tablet _____

Phablet _____

Computer _____

Internet Café _____

Others, please specify _____

7. Indicate rate of usage

Regularly _____

Occasionally _____

All the time _____

8. Indicate why you use social media (Tick all that apply)

Keep in touch with friends and family members _____

Education _____

Learning new skills_____

Solving problems_____

Networking and finding career opportunities_____

Connecting with people across the globe _____

Sharing my thoughts and ideas_____

Others, please specify_____

9. Which social media platforms do you use? (Tick all that apply)

Facebook

TikTok

Instagram

YouTube

Twitter

Pinterest

Others, please specify_____

10. Indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Social media assists me to know what is happening in the community.					
Government, regional and constituency leaders keep in touch with us through social media.					
I've learnt new skills through social media.					
I am able to share my thoughts through social media.					
Social media is a distraction.					
Social media has helped me in my trade and business.					

11. What constitutes your overall attitude towards social media?

Favourable _____

Unfavourable _____

Neutral _____

Appendix D

Interview Questions

1. Which social media platforms do you use?
2. Which ones do you prefer and why?
3. What do you use social media for?
4. How easy is it to access social media?
5. Do you also post on social media or are you more of a consumer of other people's post?
6. Comment on the advantages and disadvantages of using social media.

ANNEX 6B: CHECKLIST FOR SUBMITTING FINAL BOUND THESIS/DISSERTATION

CENTRE FOR RESEARCH SERVICES

(to be completed by the student)

Faculty: EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES

School: HUMANITIES, SOCIETY AND DEVELOPMENT

Department: SOCIAL SCIENCES

Degree for: B. MAAR - MASTER OF ARTS (MEDIA STUDIES) registered

Name GOTTLIEB NDEUTAPO of JOHANNES Student:

Student 200815415 Number:

Title SOCIAL MEDIA USE BY RURAL COMMUNITIES IN NAMIBIA: thesis/dissertation:
A CASE STUDY OF THE ANAMULENGE CONSTITUENCY OF
OMUSATI REGION.

Name(s) of supervisor(s): PROF. E.I. AKPABIO

Abstract	Yes	No
Right Colour Binding	Yes	No
Correct Graduation Date	Yes	No
Soft Copy Pdf	Yes	No
Declaration Signed	Yes	No
General Correct Formatting	Yes	No
Ethical Clearance Certificate	Yes	No
Research Permission Letter	Yes	No

GOTTLIEB NDEUTAPO JOHANNES [Signature] 19/09/2025
Name of student Signature Date

All conditions pertaining to the submission of thesis/dissertation have been met.

Name of Coordinator: PRSS Signature Date