

DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

**THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS ON THE DISSEMINATION OF
INFORMATION: TVET COLLEGE STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES**

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AUGUST 2025



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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, Namhla Zama Rwairwai, do hereby affirm that unless otherwise specified, this dissertation titled “**The impact of social media platforms on the dissemination of information: TVET College students’ perspectives**” is the product of my own work, and it has not been submitted to any other tertiary institution for a degree award or other purposes and all the authors whose work contributed to this study have been accordingly referenced.

I hereby give consent for this dissertation to be made available for inter-library loan, photocopying, and made available to outside interested organisations and students.

_____ 15 August 2025

Signed by:

Ms. Namhla Zama Rwairwai

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the cherished memory of my late mother, Mrs. Rwairwai. She left us a year before I registered for this master's program, a time when I could not have imagined embarking on this academic journey. Pursuing further studies was never part of my plans at that time, as I was content with what I had, or so I thought. Little did I know, I was missing out on an entirely new world of knowledge, growth and opportunity.

I decided to enrol in this program as a mean of keeping busy, to cope with the deep grief that consumed me after her passing. It was a decision born from the need to heal, and surprisingly, it became a source of focus and purpose. In many ways, it helped me navigate the challenging emotions I was facing.

This accomplishment is as much hers as it is mine. May her spirit continue to guide me, and may I honour her memory through every step I take in this journey.

ABSTRACT

The study examined the impact of social media platforms on information dissemination from the perspectives of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) College students, focusing on their access, interaction and dissemination of information. Descriptive and inferential statistical methods were employed to analyse the data, providing both a broad overview of social media usage trends and a deeper understanding of the factors that influence how information is shared and received on social media platforms. Simple random sampling was used to extract 271 respondents for the study from a population of approximately 842 respondents at a selected TVET college. The quantitative research approach was adopted, and questionnaires were used as the main data collection instrument, for which the psychometric properties of validity were established using content and construct validity, as well as pilot testing. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (IBM SPSS Statistics version 29) was used to analyse the quantitative data. The quantitative findings indicated that TVET college students are influenced by social media platforms, with the majority of students indicating that it is important to re-share information posted on social media by other users. In addition, findings suggested that most students do not partake in the sharing of false information on social media. Moreover, the study established that most students use social media to know what is happening around the world. The findings also identified WhatsApp as the most frequently utilised platform for accessing information. The findings further revealed varying perspectives on the nature of information shared on social media by the students, with some participants expressing concerns about credibility and accuracy, while others acknowledged the value of social media, and some exhibited scepticism regarding controversial content and misinformation. Lastly, the study identified a significant relationship between gender and the usage of social media. The study underscored the need for strategic interventions by social media companies to enhance the educational potential of these platforms and to mitigate the spread of misinformation. It recommends digital literacy initiatives, responsible sharing practices, collaboration with influencers, increased transparency, promotion of corrective behaviour and diversification of information sources.

Key words: social media, information dissemination, student perspectives, TVET College, impact

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

API	Application Programming Interface
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
GIF	Graphic Interchange Format
iOS	iPhone Operating System
KZN	KwaZulu- Natal
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UGT	Uses Gratification Theory
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
UTVET	uMgungundlovu Technical Vocational Education and Training
SA	South Africa
SNS	Social Networking Sites
X	Formerly Twitter

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Oyighan and Okwu (2024:3) conducted a study in Nigeria and found that social media platforms have revolutionised the dissemination of information by enabling real-time communication, wide reach and user-generated content. These scholars further discovered that social media platforms facilitate the rapid spread of current affairs, opinions and advertisements, hence it shapes public perception and behaviour.

Disseminating information is an effective method of locating information in extensive fields, gathering it from sources, organising it for the intended communication medium and its audience, and then consistently distributing and updating users with pertinent information, a concept described by (Al-Oraiqat, Ulichev, Meleshko, AlRawashdeh, Smirnov and Polishchuk, 2022: 2464). A study in Austria by Aïmeur, Amri and Brassard (2023:31) provides a linkage that such may be through different platforms such as social media, which is a group of online platforms and technologies that allows users who are individual and organisations and subscribers to create profiles; allow the visibility of visual and audio features; establish relationships between users; and permit information sharing amongst them, as described by Rost (2023:112) in his study.

However, these platforms also present significant challenges, including misinformation and online division. The ease of sharing content allows false information to spread quickly, and processes often underpin biased perspectives, limiting exposure to diverse viewpoints, a finding from Adesope and Musa (2023:51)'s research in Nigeria. Additionally, the lack of proper regulation and fact-checking on social media further complicates the issue of trust in the information shared (Adesope and Musa, 2023: 55).

Society has seen the technological advancement of social media dominating varied aspects of human life. The trend in its usage is increasing daily with the emergence of social network sites for interaction and sources of information-sharing platforms. Studies by Jiang, Liu, Liu, Liu, Chen and Xu (2021: 14), and Muhammed and Mathew (2022: 272) have shown the positive outcome of social media in terms of information sharing and responses to the information being shared promptly. The findings of the study by Abbas, Jusoh, Mas' od, Alsharif and Ali (2022:

2) in Malaysia display the optimistic benefits of sharing information on social media as a focal point to adequately react to the shared information. A quantitative descriptive study conducted in Indonesia by Haryanti, Margianti, Prihantoro and Ohorella (2021: 312) also highlights the importance of social media as an instrument that produces and conveys information swiftly to those who prefer it. In addition, information sharing on social media helps make people feel more knowledgeable. However, concerns also exist about the uncertainty associated with social media usage, the credibility of information shared, the sources of information being shared, and how the recipients perceive and process these messages. According to Bimber and Gil de Zuñiga's (2020: 700), a study conducted in the United State of America, these scholars noted the lack of gatekeeping mechanisms in social media when compared with traditional news media. Furthermore, social media platforms are seen as high-risk spaces for conveying false information (Van Bavel *et al.* 2021: 84). Evidence from the quantitative study carried out by Buchanan (2020: 2) in the United Kingdom highlights the use of social media to convey false information in crises situations beyond that, social media platforms are being used to divulge information that leads to the recipients' inability to make an informed decision. For example, Tembo (2023) in South Africa highlighted that during the South African Rugby World Cup win, falsified information on social media purporting the declaration of a public holiday, which emanated from a joke alluded to by the President. This resulted in some people being absent from the workplace and the possibility of students not attending to their educational matters as people processed the joke as being authentic on social media platforms. Given that students form a more significant number of social media users for learning, entertainment and knowledge creation and generation, they are prone to similar outcomes. Hence, how students use social media platforms, to what level, how they share information, what type of information is being shared and how they process and internalise that information is vital in this research space.

This chapter presents the investigation of the study on the impacts of the disseminated information through social media. The investigation is from the perspective of students in the higher education spectrum. This chapter provides a general overview of the study, the background to the study, problem statement, research objectives and questions, significance for the study, and a brief research design are covered in this chapter. Furthermore, it presents the preliminary literature review and a brief research design. Lastly, the chapter concludes by outlining a structure of the entire research study.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Social media platforms have swiftly become indispensable communication channels among students in the dissemination, and consumption of information, as evidenced from a Nigerian study conducted by (Hilary and Dumebi, 2021: 502). Over the recent years, the rise in social media usage has transformed how students engage with information, shifting from mere recreational use to becoming a primary window through which TVET College students view the world beyond their immediate environments. This transformation introduces complexities regarding the credibility and perception of information shared on these platforms. Empirical research by Bashir, Malik, and Mahmood (2021: 482) in Pakistan highlights that students actively leverage social media platforms not only for academic purposes but also for aspects such as information validation and keeping abreast of current affairs, and for entertainment. Despite these advantages, a qualitative inquiry within the South African context conducted by Bangani (2021: 102391), alongside a United Kingdom study by Phengsuwan, Shah, Thekkummal, Wen, Sun, Pullarkatt, Thirugnanam, Ramesh, Morgan, James and Ranjan (2021: 3), illuminates the detrimental consequences associated with social media usage, particularly the frequency of fake news and misinformation. Such misleading content is disseminated with a stronger orientation toward spreading rather than containment, a tendency that is concerning given the high consumption rates among young social media users, including students.

Further substantiating these concerns, De Coninck's (2021: 1) quantitative investigation spanning eight countries; namely Belgium, Canada, England, the Philippines, Hong Kong, New Zealand, the United States, and Switzerland which calls attention to the challenges surrounding the credibility and impact of social media information on informed decision-making. This is particularly significant for the safety, knowledge, and opinions of students who rely heavily on these platforms. Given these considerations, the present study endeavours to investigate the impact of social media platforms on the dissemination of information, with a focused lens on the perspectives of TVET College students. Through this inquiry, the study aims to elucidate how this demographic understand the complexities of social media information environments, assesses content credibility, and is influenced in its information consumption patterns, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on information literacy and media influence in higher education contexts.

1.3 AIM OF THE STUDY

The study aims to investigate the impact of social media platforms on the dissemination of information from the perspectives of TVET College students.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How are TVET college students influenced by social media platforms?
- How do TVET college students react to and process information shared on social media platforms for decision- making?
- What do TVET college students mostly use social media platforms for?
- Which social media platforms are used the most by TVET college students?
- How do TVET college students perceive the nature of information shared on social media platforms? and
- What are the influences of gender on social media usage by TVET college students?

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To explore how TVET college students are influenced by social media platforms;
- To investigate how TVET college students react to and process information shared on social media platforms for decision-making;
- To identify what TVET college students mostly use social media platforms for;
- To identify which social media platforms are used the most by TVET college students;
- To examine the perspectives of TVET college students on the nature of information shared on social media platforms; and
- To investigate the influence of gender on TVET students' social media usage.

1.6 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The rapid rise of social media use among students in higher education, particularly within TVET Colleges, has essentially transformed how information is accessed, shared, disseminated and interpreted. The basis of this study seeks to explore the multifaceted impact of social media platforms on the dissemination of information from the perspectives of TVET College students. It aims to examine how these students engage with social media as a channel for obtaining information that is relevant, timely, and pertinent to their contexts.

Given the increasing reliance on social media for information exchange, there is a critical need to understand both the opportunities and challenges presented by these platforms. This study intends to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by providing an in-depth analysis of students' experiences and perceptions regarding social media use for information dissemination. Furthermore, it aspires to offer evidence-based recommendations to students, educational institutions, social media companies, practitioners, and policymakers to enhance the effective, responsible, and critical use of social media as an informational resource within TVET environments and beyond.

1.6.1 The significance and contribution of the study

This research will provide insights into how TVET college students perceive and utilise social media as a primary source of information. It will shed light on the effectiveness of social media platforms compared to traditional media in reaching this demographic. The findings can highlight the importance of digital literacy amongst TVET College students. Understanding how they navigate social media for information can inform the development of awareness that enhances critical evaluation skills and responsible information consumption.

The findings can further inform communication strategies for organisations, institutions and the public looking to effectively leverage social media for information sharing, ensuring that messages reach and resonate with target audiences. By examining perceptions of credibility, the research can shed light on how students evaluate the reliability of information on social media, contributing to discussions about misinformation and trust in digital spaces. Understanding the role of social media in information dissemination amongst young adults can have broader implications for society, particularly regarding how misinformation spreads and the need for effective communication strategies in a digital age.

This study could pave the way for further research on the long-term impacts of social media on information dissemination across various societal contexts, contributing to a growing body of knowledge in media studies, communication studies, education, and further exploring how social media affects public discourse and access to information. Moreover, the study can contribute to understanding social media role in shaping societal norms, behaviours, and the public sphere. Furthermore, the study may uncover effective practices in utilising social media for information dissemination, offering guidelines for users, organisations, marketers and communicators on crafting compelling content.

1.7 SCOPE AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is limited to the Midlands Campus of the uMgungundlovu TVET College based in Pietermaritzburg city, a capital city of the Province of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. This quantitative study focuses on students only and does not include management, academic lecturers, support staff and other stakeholders of the college.

1.8 STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

This research study is made up of five chapters. Below is an overview of each chapter.

Chapter One – Introduction and background to the study

Chapter One introduces and provided the background to the study, discussed the research problem, and provided the aim and objectives of the study. It further provided the rationale for the research, research questions and objectives. This chapter also gave insight into how the dissertation will be sorted and organised.

Chapter Two – Literature review

This chapter provides a theoretical framework for the study. It also reviews existing literature by discussing the impact of social media in the dissemination of information. The chapter defines the evolution and phases in the adoption of social media, concepts and characteristics of social media, with a strong focus on social media in the modern society. The Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) is applied to understand why and how users engage with social media as well as its outcomes.

Chapter Three – Research methodology

This chapter outlines the research design, approach and methodology used for this study. It further explains the data collection methods and the research instruments selected to conduct the study. Furthermore, the chapter discusses in detail the target population, the recruitment procedure used, reliability and validity of the research instrument, data analysis and the ethical considerations of the research.

Chapter Four – Research findings, analysis and discussion

Chapter Four presents and discusses the findings from the data collected. The first section consists of the preliminary biographical information from the participants and the descriptive

statistics. The second section presents inferential statistics drawn from the themes that emerged from the dataset. The chapter further discusses the research findings and linking them to the existing studies and literature.

Chapter Five – Conclusion and recommendations

Chapter Five provides the conclusion to the research study by summarising the findings and presents recommendations to social media users, social media companies and other relevant stakeholders based on the findings of the study. This chapter concludes by highlighting areas for future research studies as recommendations.

1.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the background and motivation for conducting the study, as well as the rationale for investigating the impact of social media in the dissemination of information. To integrate the understanding of the impact of social media on students, this opening chapter first gave an overview of the study and its context. The problem statement, the study's theoretical framework, the research questions and objectives, and the research design were briefly provided in equal measure in this chapter. Through a critical examination of existing research, the following chapter presents a comprehensive review of the relevant literature by establishing scholarly context for this study and the in-depth perspectives of the theoretical framework supporting the present investigation.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter introduced and gave the background to the study and emphasised the significance of the study. In this chapter, the theoretical framework that underpins the study is discussed and how the framework links to the study, and the literature regarding the effects of social media on students is reviewed using research from other academic scholars who have previously conducted studies relating to this topic. The focus centres on the evolution of information disseminated on social media platforms. Specifically, the role of social media platforms within the context of a selected Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) College, Midlands Campus situated in the province of KwaZulu-Natal is explored. This literature review delves into the utilisation of social media as a vital conduit for disseminating information. The researcher aims to investigate how social media influence students; how they react to information shared through social media; what social media platforms are mostly used by students and what they use it for; and lastly, the perceptions of students on the nature of information shared on social media. Given the significant role that students of higher educational institutions play in disseminating and receiving information through social media, the researcher conducted a comprehensive analysis of existing research, theoretical frameworks, and empirical studies to shed light on the strengths, limitations and best-practices associated with the role of social media in information dissemination. The findings aim to provide valuable insights for students of higher education, higher educational institutions, the public and future researchers.

Despite the growing body of literature on social media's role in information dissemination, there remains a distinct scarcity of context-specific studies that focus on the perspectives of TVET College students within South Africa, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal. This represents a demographical, literature, and population gap, as much of the existing research either generalises across higher education broadly or concentrates on mainstream or traditional Universities, often neglecting the unique educational, socio-economic, and technological contexts that shape information dissemination and consumption behaviors from students of vocational settings. Moreover, there is a limited understanding of how the distinctive dynamics of social media use among TVET students affect not only the reception but also the practical

dissemination of information. Addressing these gaps is crucial for developing a solid and multifaceted understanding of how social media functions within underrepresented educational contexts. By focusing on TVET College students in KwaZulu-Natal, the researcher can uncover specific needs, behaviors, and challenges that are often overlooked in broader studies. Closing these gaps contributes to a more equitable discourse that values diverse educational environments and populations.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.2.1 Use and Gratification Theory (UGT)

The theoretical framework underpinning this study is the Use and Gratification Theory. Understanding how, why and with what purpose people use the media in their daily lives is the aim of the Use and Gratification Theory. The theory goes on to explain what people do with the media after they have consumed it, and what they are getting out of it. According to Omodu, Nlemanyanya, Nsereka and Dike (2024: 20), a quantitative study conducted amongst Nigerian students on this theory found that students choose to consume certain types of media because they think that they are going to get special benefits from these choices. The Use and Gratification theory developed by Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch in 1974 suggests that people select, use media and content to meet their psychological, social, information needs and desires, as set out in the theory.

A study conducted in Nigeria by Akin-Odukoya, Okunade, Ogbonna and Falobi (2025: 115) outlines the five fundamental assumptions that the Uses and Gratifications Theory is based on. The first one is communication behaviour directed and motivated by the end goals, which in this research is the total influence of social media consumption. Secondly, people are in an active position when it comes to selecting media platforms that satisfy their specific needs and wants. In the essence of this research, they navigate different social media channels and select whichever best suits their needs. Thirdly, people can define their communications motives and interests as media use is driven by individual, social and psychological factors. The fourth fundamental is that media compete with other modes of communication, particularly in-person communication, for selection and application in the fulfilment of needs and aspirations. Today, because much of the media consumed is mobile, competition is more urgent than ever as media is accessed via mobile devices such as text messages, social networks and apps, competing for one's attention even when with another person. The fifth assumption is that when it comes to

choosing communication alternatives, people are affected by several social and psychological factors in general.

2.2.2 Use and Gratifications Theory in social media

From a South African qualitative study's point of view, findings by Kwinana (2023: 81) suggest that individuals actively select and use social media platforms according to their specific needs, such as communication, interaction, distributing and receiving information, entertainment, self-expression, education, socialisation and relaxation.

In this sense, a Turkish quantitative study by Kircaburun, Alhabash, Tosuntaş and Griffiths (2020: 547) outlines that when students use social media for specific purposes, they get a certain gratification from this use, and there can be negative or positive outcomes of using social media platforms. Moreover, social media audiences and users have the advantage and freedom to actively seek for information and many messages that are of interest and benefit to them where they may or may not make conscious decisions after consuming it, as mentioned in a Thailand study by (Shieh and Nasongkhla, 2024: 3). Similarly, this study will outline the influence of social media on students when disseminating information.

2.3 THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL MEDIA

2.3.1 Definition and Evolution of social media

The concept of social media has evolved over time to reflect technological improvements and changes in user behaviour. A study in the United State of America by Van Bavel, Robertson, Del Rosario, Rasmussen and Rathje (2024: 312) describes social media as “a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 that allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content”. Users can utilise social media platforms to produce and share content, interact with others, and participate in online communities.

The definition corresponds with that of a Nigerian quantitative study by Eze, Ruhode and Iwu (2021: 256), where social media is referred to as internet platforms that allow users to share user-generated material and communicate with others. However, a Canadian study by Kumar and Gruzd (2019: 145) states that the concept has grown and evolved to include a wider

spectrum of digital activities and platforms, an evolution that comes with both positive and negative effects.

Social media was initially connected with social networking sites (SNS) such as Friendster and Myspace, which appeared in the early 2000s. Findings of a USA study by Gottlieb and Dyer (2020: 154) suggest that in these sites, users will construct personal profiles, interact with acquaintances, and share messages and media on these platforms. As individuals obtained the opportunity to engage and share content online, the social media revolution began rapidly and gained freedom, convenience and created anonymous characters amongst some online users.

According to a qualitative study in Kosava by Musahu, Kabashi, Shkurti, Sofiu and Gjirkokaj (2025: 27), the introduction of Web 2.0, a term fully developed in the early 2000s, but its concept introduced between 1993 and 1995, shaped the evolution of social media. Web 2.0 ushered in a new era of user participation and interactivity, in which people became active contributors rather than passive users of online material. A study conducted in Russia by Temnikova and Vandsheva (2022: 274) indicates that this transition resulted in the establishment of platforms emphasising user-generated content and encouraged social interactions.

Green, McMillan, Munn, Sole and Eady's (2020: 18) study conducted in Australia suggests that social media platforms like Facebook, which emerged in 2004, and Twitter, which began in 2006, accelerated the evolution of social media. These platforms included features such as news feeds, status updates and sharing capabilities, which according to Steinhauer (2021: 136) increased user involvement, participation and facilitated the quick dissemination of information. Users could now contribute news items, photographs, videos and links in addition to personal updates, resulting in a dynamic and integrated online environment. AL-Zoubi (2023: 235) affirms that the evolution of social media has also been influenced by the rise of mobile technologies and smartphones. The emergence of social media-specific mobile apps makes it easier for users to access and connect with social media whilst on the go.

A study conducted in India by Jain, Sahoo and Kaubiyal (2021: 2159) mentions that this resulted in an exponential increase in the number of users and the amount of content being shared. Furthermore, the concept of social media has spread beyond traditional social networking sites. YouTube, which debuted in 2005, revolutionised content sharing by allowing users to submit and find videos. Instagram, launched in 2010, specialised in photo-sharing, but platforms such as Pinterest and Tumblr allowed users to collect and share visual content and

ideas (Dhingra and Mudgal 2019). According to Sanasi, Trabucchi, Pellizzoni and Buganza (2021), the growth of social media has also resulted in the development of specialised platforms for professional networking, such as LinkedIn, as well as platforms for sharing quick updates and multimedia material, such as Snapchat and TikTok.

With the advent of new technologies and trends in recent years, the concept of social media continued to advance, this is according to Alves de Castro, O'Reilly and Carthy's (2021: 38), a systematic research conducted in Ireland. Live streaming, augmented reality filters and virtual reality experiences are progressively being integrated into social media platforms, allowing users to participate and interact in new ways (Heldt, 2020: 1003). Social media has expanded from its initial description as online platforms for social networking and content sharing to include a wide range of digital activities such as communication, information exchange, entertainment, education and commerce (Green *et al* 2020). It has become an indispensable component of modern life, revolutionising how people connect, share and interact with content and with one another (Dhingra and Mudgal, 2019).

2.3.2 Phases in the adoption of social media

Social media usage has grown from being a cutting-edge tool for communication to becoming a commonplace part of everyday life for billions of people globally. A quantitative Indian study by Punjabi, Aruna, Prasad, Labhane and Badhusha (2024: 37) suggests that social media usage has had a profoundly revolutionary effect on many facets of business, communication and society in recent years.

Research by Vidani and Jaiswal (2024: 10) also in India indicates that creating a social media profile gives one access to engage in online communities that are catered to one's interests and aspirations by interacting with others and sharing experiences. Creating an account usually entails a simple procedure meant to onboard new users quickly and safely. Marketingprofs (2025) outlines the phases of social media adoption as summarised in the three phases below.

Test Adoption (first phase): This phase is where potential users create their social media presence. Appropriate URLs and account IDs are requested to create and log into the account.

Focused Adoption (second phase): In this level, potential users are now entirely new users, and they are eager to perceive the content they have signed up for.

Operational Adoption (last phase): At this point, other potential users join in when they see their counterparts and peers citing social media as their source of information. It is at this point that participation increases, and more information is being disseminated for consumption.

2.3.3 Characteristics of social media

Several fundamental traits are shared by social media channels. A study conducted in India by Shukla, Misra and Gupta (2023: 156) mentions that for starters, social media channels enable user-generated content, allowing people to develop and publish their own content. Secondly, social media platforms encourage social interactions by allowing users to connect, converse and collaborate with one another. Thirdly, to increase user involvement, these platforms frequently include features such as profiles, news feeds and sharing capabilities. Finally, social media is distinguished by its openness and accessibility, with anybody with an internet connection is able to engage. According to Soh, Talaifar and Harari (2024: 9), a study in the USA indicates that social media platforms share several important traits that define their nature and set them apart from other kinds of media and communication. Kazmi (2025) outlines universal features that every social media app or platform should have in order to provide the best possible user experience, namely:

2.3.3.1 User-Generated Content

User-generated content drives social media networks. Unlike traditional media, where content is developed and distributed mostly by professionals, social media allows individuals to create and publish their own content. Text, photographs, videos, links and other forms of multimedia can be shared by users, allowing them to express themselves and share their own experiences.

2.3.3.2 Social Interactions

Social media platforms are intended to facilitate social interactions and user connections, providing individuals with tools and capabilities that allow them to engage in conversations, connect with others and establish connections. Comment, like, share and direct messaging features enhance engagement and foster a sense of community.

2.3.3.3 Online Communities

Online communities built on shared interests, hobbies or affiliations are common on social media platforms. These communities bring like-minded people together to engage in debates,

share expertise and collaborate. Users can create virtual places for connection and participation by joining groups, forums, or pages dedicated to specific themes.

2.3.3.4 Profiles and Personalisation

Users of social media are often able to build personal profiles, which are computerised representations of people that highlight their interests, background and preferences. Users can personalise and express themselves by customising their accounts with images, bios and other personal characteristics.

2.3.3.5 Newsfeeds and Timelines

Many social media platforms offer content to users through newsfeeds or timelines. These feeds collect and curate content from users' social networks and the accounts they follow. Users receive a personalised and dynamic stream of updates, such as postings, photos, videos, livestreams and news articles, via newsfeeds.

2.3.3.6 Sharing and Virality

Sharing is an essential feature of social media. Users can readily share content, their own or that of others, with their social connections or broader audiences. The ability to share information, trends and viral material on social media platforms helps the quick transmission of information, trends and viral content.

2.3.3.7 Accessibility and Openness

Social media platforms are designed to be user-friendly to a wide range of people, are usually free to use and are available on a variety of devices such as smartphones, tablets, laptops and desktops. Social media platforms are accessible to anybody with an internet connection, allowing people from all walks of life and locations to participate and engage.

2.3.3.8 Real-Time Communication

Social media allows for real-time contact and fast updates. Users can interact with content and other users in real-time by posting, commenting and interacting with them. This allows for rapid feedback and engagement. Social media's real-time nature contributes to its dynamic and fast-paced environment.

2.3.3.9 Analytics and Data Insights

Analytics and data insights are provided by social media platforms to individuals profiles, businesses and companies. Users can learn about the performance of their content, such as engagement metrics, reach and audience demographics. These analytics can be used mainly by businesses and influencers to assess the performance of their social media campaigns and make data-driven decisions.

These characteristics of social media have changed the way individuals connect, share information and interact with content, transforming social media into an essential aspect of modern communication and society.

2.3.4 Social media in modern society

Kozak (2020: 385) conducted a study in Ukraine and stated that social media has evolved into a powerful weapon in modern society, revolutionising people's methods of connecting, communicating and sharing information. According to Azzaakiyyah (2023: 3), an Indonesian qualitative study highlights that the concept of social media relies upon the use of digital platforms and technology that allow users to share, connect and create with other users through content and virtual communities. Social media consists of numerous online platforms and services that enable social interactions, content sharing and networking. According to Green *et al* (2020: 16), social media is becoming a significant aspect of modern communication.

The emphasis on social interactions is one of the fundamental characteristics of social media. These platforms provide users with tools and features that allow them to connect with others, have conversations and establish connections. According to Ambarkar and Akhare's (2020: 46) study in India, social media stimulates communication whether through likes, comments, shares or direct messaging; creates a sense of community and facilitates communication between individuals who may be geographically distant but share common interests, backgrounds or goals.

A Bangladeshi study by Saha and Guha (2019: 37) found that the emergence of social media has been intimately linked to technological and internet advancements. In a study by Santos, Batista and Marques (2019: 125) in Portugal, the researchers discovered that the growth of Web 2.0, which was defined by user participation and interactivity, paved the way for the creation of social media platforms. According to Bolander and Locher (2020: 1), social media grew in

popularity and user base tremendously as internet connectivity became more accessible and affordable.

There are respective types of social media platforms, each with its own set of aims and user requirements. Social networking sites (SNS) such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are designed to link people and develop social ties as referred to in a study in Japan by (Sakurai, Nemoto, Mastunaga and Fujiwara, 2021: 11). Microblogging services, such as Twitter, allow users to share brief updates and links, whereas content-sharing platforms allow users to contribute longer updates, and links like YouTube and Pinterest allow users to share and discover various forms of media content (Chifu and Savu, 2020: 20).

According to Saha and Guha (2019: 36), social media has had a major and far-reaching impact on society. It has transformed communication by allowing for quick and worldwide connectivity. Individuals can stay in touch with friends and family, meet new people and participate in communities of interest. Social media has also evolved into a significant instrument for information exchange, with news and updates spreading quickly and frequently in real time.

A study conducted by Punjabi *et al.* (2024: 36) indicates that social media has become an essential component of digital strategies in the realms of business and marketing, and it has altered how businesses interact with their customers, allowing for more direct and individualised connection. It is also an effective tool for increasing brand awareness, boosting traffic, and even generating revenue. Businesses can utilise platforms like Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn and TikTok to target specific demographics, assess campaign efficacy in real time, and even employ user-generated content to create trust (Sakurai *et al.* 2021: 9). Furthermore, social media influencers and content creators have emerged as powerful individuals who have influenced users' behaviour, whilst driving trends. They have direct access to large audiences, and their recommendations can feel more personal and genuine than traditional advertising. These influencers may generate trends and impact purchasing decisions in ways that resonate with their audiences. Kumar and Gruzd (2019: 19) states that this is done whether through product evaluations, lifestyle suggestions or simply sharing ordinary moments.

However, a comprehensive study by Albulayhi and El Khediri (2022: 17) highlights that social media platforms present significant challenges, particularly concerning the disclosure of personal information and data. Issues of privacy and security are paramount, as users may encounter threats such as online harassment, hacking, cyberbullying, and hate speech, problems

largely facilitated by the anonymity and widespread accessibility inherent to these platforms. Gottlieb and Dyer (2020: 641) highlights that misinformation, fake news and echo chambers are issues that call the authenticity and dependability of information disseminated on these platforms into question.

2.4 TYPES OF SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS WITH ITS CONCEPTS

One of the study's objectives is to investigate the most used social media platforms by students of the TVET College. It is pertinent to outline all the types of social media platforms that are options to the questions that seek to identify the most used social media platforms. Below, each selected platform is clarified in specifics, including its configuration, concepts, features and significances. Outlining these platforms in greater length will assist to understand the reasons why a certain social media platform is the most used than another, from having preferred features to the most popular, easily accessible and inexpensive.

Figure 2. 1: The six types of social media channels that are options to one of the research questions



alamy

Image ID: 267M82T
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Source: Alamy (2021)

2.4.1 WhatsApp

A systematic review of publications by Spain researchers, Suárez-Lantarón, Deocano-Ruíz, García-Perales and Castillo-Reche (2022: 9) found that WhatsApp is a widely used messaging application that enables users to make voice and video calls, send text and voice messages and share media such as photos, videos, documents and locations. Mwinzi (2023: 44) conducted qualitative case study research in Kenya and mentions that WhatsApp is designed for smartphones and other mobile devices, as well as desktop computers through its web and desktop apps, and enables users to communicate in real-time.

WhatsApp's simplicity, wide range of features, cross-platform availability (iPhone Operating System (iOS), Android, Web, Desktop) and strong focus on privacy and security have made it one of the most popular messaging apps globally, with billions of users relying on it for personal communication, business interactions, and staying connected with friends and family. WhatsApp.com (2025) outlines WhatsApp's main functions in general and its characteristics, namely:

Messaging: WhatsApp's primary function is instant messaging. Users can send text messages, emojis and stickers to individuals or groups of contacts.

Voice and video calls: WhatsApp supports voice and video calls over the internet, enabling users to make free calls to other WhatsApp users globally, regardless of their location.

Media sharing: Users can share photos, videos, graphic interchange format (GIF's), documents (such as PDFs and Word files), and voice messages with their contacts or groups.

End-to-end encryption: WhatsApp messages and calls are secured with end-to-end encryption, ensuring that only the sender and recipient can access the content. This provides a high level of privacy and security.

Group chats: Users can create group chats, making it easy to communicate with multiple people simultaneously.

WhatsApp web and desktop: WhatsApp can be used on a computer through the WhatsApp Web interface or a standalone desktop app, syncing messages and content between the mobile app and the computer.

Status updates: WhatsApp Status allows users to share photos, videos and text updates that disappear after 24 hours. These updates are visible to selected contacts or all contacts, depending on privacy settings.

Business features: WhatsApp offers tools specifically designed for businesses, such as WhatsApp Business and WhatsApp Business Application Programming Interface (API). These features include business profiles, automated responses and messaging statistics to facilitate communication with customers.

Voice messages: Users can send voice messages using the microphone button on the App. This feature is particularly useful for quick communication or when typing is inconvenient.

Location sharing: Users can share their real-time location with contacts, making it easy to coordinate meetups, share travel updates or live location for security purposes.

2.3.2 Facebook

According to the Meta website (2025), Facebook (Meta) is a social networking website where its users can post comments, share photographs and videos, and post links to news or other interesting content on the web, chat live and watch short-form videos after becoming a user with full account IDs. Zimba and Gasparyan (2021: 68) state that Facebook is currently the most popular social media platform globally.

Facebook was created in 2004 as a school-based social network at the Harvard University. It was created by Mark Zuckerberg along with Eduardo Saverin, Andrew McCollum, Dustin Moskovitz and Chris Hughes. It was not until 2006 that Facebook opened to anyone 13 years or older and took off, rapidly overtaking MySpace as the most popular social network in the world, this is stated in the Kazakhstan study by (Sultanbayeva, Kulsariyeva, Lozhnikova, Kalibekuly and Tolegen, 2025: 39). The study findings of this research discovered that Facebook is most popular amongst users over 55-64 years of age (17.0% of women and 17.3% of men) in Kazakhstan.

Facebook's success stemmed from its broad appeal to both individuals and businesses, as well as its integration with other websites through a unified login system usable across multiple platforms. By 2006, it was accessible to anyone aged 13 or older with a valid email address. Today, a Vietnam study conducted through qualitative and quantitative methods by Khoa, Vi, Tien, Anh and Ngoc (2025: 21) discovered that Facebook is the world's largest social network, with more than 2.7 billion monthly active users worldwide, making it the largest social media network in the world.

Facebook is a user-friendly application and is open to everyone. Even the least tech savvy people can sign up and begin posting on Facebook. Although it started out to keep in touch or reconnect with long-lost friends, it rapidly became the aspect of every-day life that one can interact with online communities. Hamdan's (2021: 669) study conducted in Jordan states that with Facebook, it is simple to share photos, text messages, videos, status posts and feelings on Facebook. The site is entertaining and a regular daily stop for many users. Facebook does not

allow adult and nudity content, unlike some social network sites. When users transgress and are reported, they are banned from the site. A USA qualitative study by Habib, Pearman, Young, Saxena, Zhang and Cranor (2022: 4) suggests that Facebook offers adjustable privacy settings, allowing users to safeguard their personal information from being accessed by third parties.

2.4.3 Instagram

Instagram is a popular social media platform owned by Meta (formerly Facebook). A South African mixed approach study by Lekgothoane and Kaminer (2024: 363), which also focused on South African University students, indicates that Instagram was launched in 2010 and over the past year, it has since grown into one of the most widely used social networking services worldwide.

Blystone (2024) outlines that Instagram revolves around sharing photos and videos. It allows users to upload content, apply filters, and share them either publicly or with pre-approved followers. Instagram's importance lies in its ability to blend visual storytelling with powerful marketing capabilities, fostering community engagement, driving sales and influencing digital trends in today's interconnected world.

Instagram has developed into a powerful tool for corporate promotion, influencer marketing and maintaining relationships with friends and communities through visual storytelling, in addition to being a platform for personal expression as Haenlein, Anadol, Farnsworth, Hugo, Hunichen and Welte (2020: 2) suggests in a study they conducted.

The following are key aspects of the concept of Instagram highlighted by Blystone (2024):

Visual sharing: Instagram is primarily focused on visual content. Users can upload photos and short videos (up to 60 seconds) to their profiles.

Filters and editing: The platform offer various filters and editing tools that allow users to enhance their photos before sharing them.

Stories: Instagram Stories are temporary posts that disappear after 24 hours. They can include photos, videos, text and interactive elements like polls and questions.

Feed: The main feed of Instagram displays posts from accounts that a user follows. It is curated based on algorithms that prioritise content likely to be of interest to the user.

Explore page: The Explore page suggests posts and accounts based on a user's interests and interactions, helping users discover new content.

Direct messaging: Users can send private messages, photos and videos to each other through Instagram Direct.

Instagram TV: Instagram television (IGTV) allows users to upload longer videos (up to 10 minutes for most accounts, and up to 60 minutes for larger accounts) that can be accessed through a dedicated tab or the IGTV app.

Shopping: Instagram has integrated shopping features that allow businesses to tag products in their posts, making it easier for users to discover and purchase items.

Analytics and insights: Instagram provides users with insights into their account performance, including metrics such as engagement, reach and demographics of their followers.

Community and engagement: Instagram fosters a community of users who interact through likes, comments and shares, creating opportunities for social connection and networking.

2.4.4 X (formerly Twitter)

The concept of X is outlined by Buffer.com (2025), is that Twitter, now known as X is a social media platform that focuses on real-time communication and short-form content. It allows users to share and discover information, ideas, opinions and updates in the form of tweets, which are text-based messages limited to 280 characters (formerly 140 characters).

Twitter serves as a platform for real-time communication, information sharing, networking, social activism public discourse, and ability to facilitate public conversations make it a powerful tool for news dissemination, networking, social activism, brand promotion, and personal expression. Its unique blend of brevity, immediacy and global reach has made it a significant tool for individuals, organisations, journalists, influencers and brands worldwide. The concept of Twitter revolves around real-time microblogging and social networking. Hetler (2025) outlines the key concepts that define X, namely:

Tweets: Tweets are the core unit of content on Twitter. They can include text, photos, videos, GIFs, links and polls. Tweets are publicly visible by default but can also be set to private (protected tweets) to restrict visibility to approved followers only.

Timeline: The Twitter timeline displays a chronological feed of tweets from accounts that a user follows. Tweets appear in reverse-chronological order, with the most recent tweets appearing at the top.

Retweets and likes: Users can retweet (repost or forward) tweets posted by another user, amplifying content across the platform. Likes indicate appreciation for a tweet and are publicly visible.

Hashtags: Hashtags (#) are used to categorise tweets and make them discoverable to a wider audience interested in specific topics or trends. Clicking on a hashtag brings up a feed of tweets using the same hashtag.

Mentions: Users can mention other users in tweets by including their username preceded by the "@" symbol (e.g., @username). This notifies the mentioned user and links to their profile.

Trending topics: Twitter highlights trending topics and hashtags that are popular or widely discussed at any given moment. Trends are based on geographic location and user interests.

Direct messages: Users can send private messages to each other through Twitter's Direct Message (DM) feature. DMs can include text, photos, videos, GIFs and links.

Verified accounts: Twitter verifies the authenticity of certain accounts of public interest (for example, celebrities, public figures, brands) with a blue checkmark badge. Verified accounts help users distinguish legitimate sources of information.

Live video: Twitter enables users and organisations to broadcast live video streams through its platform, allowing real-time interaction with followers.

Analytics: Twitter provides analytics tools for users and businesses to track engagement metrics such as impressions, clicks, retweets and follower demographics.

Twitter spaces: Twitter Spaces is a feature for hosting live audio conversations. It allows users to create and participate in audio-only chat rooms on various topics.

2.4.5 YouTube

A study conducted in South Africa by Mthembu and Khoza (2024: 29) using a mixed method approach mention that YouTube is a popular video-sharing platform where users can upload, view and share videos. It was founded in February 2005 by Chad Hurley, Steve Chen and Jawed Karim, and later bought by Google in November 2006.

YouTube allows a wide variety of content, including music videos, tutorials, vlogs, educational videos, entertainment clips, and more. A thematic review study carried out in the United Arab Emirates by Shoufan and Mohamed (2022: 4) suggests that YouTube has become one of the most visited websites globally, serving as a platform for both professional and amateur content creators to reach a vast audience. YouTube's influence on digital culture and media consumption is significant, shaping trends in entertainment, news dissemination and social interaction online.

According to Buf and Ștefăniță (2020: 75), the concept of YouTube revolves around the idea of creating a platform where users can easily upload, share and view videos online. YouTube has evolved from a simple video-sharing site to a multifaceted platform that plays a crucial role in digital media, entertainment, education and social interaction on a global scale. Youtube.com details YouTube's several key characteristics that made it distinct, namely:

User-generated content: YouTube democratised video creation and distribution by allowing anyone to upload videos. This opened opportunities for individuals and organisations of all sizes to share their content globally.

Accessibility and ease of use: The platform is user-friendly, making it simple for both creators and viewers to navigate and interact through videos. This contributed to its rapid growth and widespread adoption.

Social and community features: YouTube incorporated social elements such as comments, likes, shares and subscriptions, fostering a sense of community amongst users. This engagement helped build a loyal audience base and encouraged interaction between creators and viewers.

Content diversity: YouTube hosts a wide range of content, from entertainment and educational videos to news, music, gaming and more. This diversity allows users to find content tailored to their interests and preferences, further enhancing its appeal.

Monetization and partnership: YouTube introduced monetization options such as advertising revenue sharing with creators, sponsorships and memberships. This has incentivised creators to produce high-quality content and build sustainable careers on the platform.

Global reach: YouTube's accessibility on various devices and its availability in multiple languages have contributed to its global reach. It has become a significant cultural and media platform worldwide, influencing trends and discussions across different demographics and regions.

2.4.6 TikTok

TikTok is a social media platform primarily focused on short-form video content. It allows users to create and share videos ranging from 15 seconds to 3 minutes in length. Overall, TikTok's concept centres around providing an engaging and accessible platform for users to express themselves creatively through short videos, fostering a dynamic community driven by trends that empowers creativity and entertainment. A mixed method Thailand study by Rugrien and Funk (2022: 12) emphasises that an innovative approach to content discovery and user engagement has positioned TikTok as a leading player in the social media landscape.

The concept of TikTok revolves around several key principles that have contributed to its rapid rise and popularity, outlined by Meltwater.com (2024):

Short-form videos: TikTok revolutionised social media by popularising short-form video content. Users can easily create and consume videos that are quick, entertaining and often highly creative.

Content creation tools: The platform provides users with a variety of tools and features such as filters, effects, music tracks and editing capabilities. These tools empower users to produce professional-looking videos with minimal effort.

Algorithm-driven feed: TikTok's "For You" page utilises a sophisticated recommendation algorithm. It curates content based on user preferences, interactions and trends, allowing videos from both popular creators and lesser-known users to go viral.

Diverse content categories: TikTok hosts a wide range of content, including lip-syncing, dance challenges, comedy skits, do it yourself (DIY) tutorials, educational content, and more. This diversity ensures that there is something for everyone, contributing to its broad appeal.

Global community and trends: TikTok has a massive and engaged user base worldwide. It facilitates global trends and challenges that quickly spread across the platform, creating a sense of community and shared cultural experiences.

Influencer culture: Similar to other social platforms, TikTok has popular influencers who have gained significant followings and influence. These influencers often collaborate with brands, participate in sponsored campaigns, and monetize their content.

Music integration: Music plays a central role on TikTok, with users frequently creating videos set to popular songs or soundtracks. This has contributed to the platform's influence on music trends and discovery.

2.5 HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Selane and Odeku (2024: 297) states that higher education in South Africa assumes a pivotal role in shaping the nation's future by imparting individuals with the knowledge, skills and qualifications necessary for personal growth and national progress. The South African higher education system encompasses a variety of institutions that cater to a diverse array of academic, technical and vocational pursuits. According to Shukla *et al.* (2023: 156), a noteworthy component of this system is TVET education, which are TVET colleges.

In South Africa, various types of educational institutions exist, including universities, universities of technology, comprehensive universities and TVET colleges (DHET, 2024). Below is a table presenting summarised information about the different types of higher education institutions in South Africa.

Table 2. 1: Types of higher education institutions in South Africa

Institution Type	Focus and Programs Offered	Notable Examples
Universities	Universities provide a wide array of academic programs encompassing fields such as the arts, sciences, engineering, business, and health sciences.	University of Cape Town; University of Pretoria; University of the Witwatersrand.
Universities of Technology	Universities of Technology emphasise applied sciences, engineering and technology-related fields. They often collaborate closely with industries and emphasise practical education.	Cape Peninsula University of Technology; Durban University of Technology; Tshwane University of Technology.
Comprehensive	Comprehensive Universities amalgamate features of traditional universities and Universities of Technology. They offer a broader spectrum of programs, including liberal arts, sciences and various applied disciplines.	University of Johannesburg; Nelson Mandela University; University of South Africa.
TVET Colleges	TVET Colleges specialise in vocational and technical training, providing students with practical skills for employment. Their programs range from National Certificates (Vocational) to courses focusing on occupational and practical skills.	Further Education and Training Colleges (FETs); Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges; False Bay College; eThekweni College; uMgungundlovu College.

Source: DHET (2024)

2.5.1 TVET education and TVET Colleges

In accordance with Zulu and Mutereko (2020: 385) a South African study, TVET Colleges in South Africa play a crucial role in combatting unemployment and poverty whilst simultaneously contributing to the nation's economic development by producing skilled artisans. These colleges are structured to accommodate approximately 2.5 million students by the year 2030, as stated in the report compiled by Chidi, Tsie, Dieltiens and Fredericks (2024:

14) on TVET Colleges, commissioned by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and funded by the National Skills Fund (NSF).

In addition, TVET colleges offer a diverse array of programs, with a strong focus on specific trades and industries such as welding, electrical engineering, hospitality, and automotive mechanics. Their curriculum is designed to provide students with both theoretical knowledge and practical skills to excel in their chosen professions. Furthermore, TVET colleges collaborate closely with industries to ensure that their programs remain current and relevant to the evolving job market. This collaboration includes input from industry experts, scholarships, internships, apprenticeships, learnerships and work-integrated learning opportunities. TVET education provides a direct path to employment, with many graduates securing jobs immediately after completing their programs. This aids in reducing unemployment rates and addressing skills shortages. Importantly, TVET colleges promote inclusivity and widened access to higher education, offering opportunities for individuals who may not have pursued traditional university education to acquire valuable skills and qualifications that enhance their employability.

Moreover, TVET programs align with the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), ensuring that qualifications obtained from TVET colleges are standardised and recognised across the country, enhancing the credibility and value of TVET education. TVET education and colleges contribute significantly to workforce development in South Africa, providing practical skills and qualifications that drive economic growth and open pathways to meaningful employment (DHET, 2024).

2.5.2 Current status and prospects of TVET Colleges

While TVET education and colleges offer substantial benefits, challenges persist, including funding limitations, outdated infrastructure and the perception that vocational education is inferior to academic education. Addressing these challenges and strengthening TVET education necessitates the ongoing investment in resources, modernization of facilities and awareness campaigns highlighting the value of vocational skills.

Despite substantial education budgets aimed at addressing resource inequality, disparities persist. According to a South African study by Motala and Carel (2019: 70), causes of poor education include differences in teacher qualifications, inadequate infrastructure funding, insufficient physical resources, and ineffective management and leadership. Inequality in

learner performance between affluent and disadvantaged schools remains, with poverty often correlated with poor performance. To alleviate or reduce poor-quality education in lower socio-economic communities, efforts should concurrently address social equity and educational equity.

A Chinese study by Shi and Sercombe (2020: 3) found that students from impoverished backgrounds are more educationally vulnerable than those from affluent communities. In a South African context, Spaul, Pampallis, Ardington, Sapire and Isaac (2022: 44) state there is a substantial historical inequality in learner performance, teaching and learning resources, and socio-economic status across provinces. For instance, Limpopo and Eastern Cape have a high percentage of no-fee schools, which are often associated with lower-quality education. Wealthier schools and colleges tend to attract highly qualified educators. Factors contributing to poor learner performance and a lack of relevant vocational skills include systemic inequalities. Opesemowo and Adekomaya's (2024: 73) qualitative study conducted in South Africa emphasises that addressing these issues requires a strong commitment to reform the public education system.

2.5.3 Social media usage in educational institutions

According to a study conducted in India by Thapliyal, Thapliyal and Thapliyal (2024: 364), the study that reviewed the advantages, challenges and best-practices of social media use in the educational landscape indicates that rapid communication and social media should be prioritised in order to promote clearer communication and reduce uncertainty.

According to an online article by Naidu (2018) in University World News website, university officials in South Africa are embracing new technologies and recognising the significance they play in engaging staff, students and stakeholders. A report quotes Professor Tshilidzi Marwala, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Johannesburg (UJ): “they are addicted to Facebook, X, LinkedIn, Instagram, and so on. As vice chancellors, we must go where our students and employees are. We should communicate as much as possible through all forms of media”.

Professor Adam Habib, who was the Vice-Chancellor of Wits University at the time, told the outlet that Twitter allowed him to connect with the wider university community, including students, faculty, administrative staff, and alumni. He further continued to say “for example if the air conditioning in the law library fails, someone will tweet about it, I take it up and that is

significant, and something I value, such brought me closer to the stakeholders of the university and the communities we serve” he said.

College students, according to Ansari and Khan (2020: 2), are not fully aware of social media academic benefits. Social media platforms are mostly used for social connection, according to students and the general public. On students and academic setups, it serves as a virtual classroom in which the lecturer stays the instructor. Purvis, Rodger and Beckingham (2020) state that the dearth of empirical data from within higher education institutions supporting the use of social media platforms for academic reasons promotes students’ conceptions of social network sites as an academic support medium.

2.5.4 Importance of social media usage by students

Abbas, Aman, Nurunnabi and Bano (2019: 1683) in a study conducted from a Pakistan’s university mention that students’ lives now revolve around social media, which has an impact on them in a variety of ways that can be both beneficial and detrimental. The following are some key aspects highlighting the importance of social media for students:

Social media platforms allow student users to interact and communicate instantly with professionals, teachers and peers around the world. This can improve resource sharing, academic topic discussions, and project collaboration. Students can access a vast amount of educational content, resources and tutorials on platforms like YouTube, LinkedIn and educational forums. This can supplement formal education and provide diverse perspectives.

Building up to more benefits of social media is information sharing and awareness, this is according to (Dwivedi, Ismagilova, Rana and Raman, 2023: 2). Social media is a useful tool for rapidly disseminating information. Students can remain informed about scholarly and academic trends, current events and affairs, and opportunities such as seminars, internships and scholarships. These scholars also mentioned networking and career growth as benefits of social media use for personal branding and professional network building. LinkedIn and other similar platforms are useful for finding professional prospects, connecting with alumni, and doing job searches.

A Mexican study by Findlay Mendoza (2022: 87) mentions another benefit, that social media has the potential of enhancing creativity and expression. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok and

blogs allow students to express their creativity, showcase talents and receive feedback. This can boost confidence and encourage the exploration of new ideas, which may perfect their linguistics. Cultural exchange and diversity are in the list of benefits as students can engage with peers from diverse backgrounds, cultures and countries, fostering cross-cultural understanding and empathy. Chukwuere (2021: 3) conducted a quantitative study in South Africa and found that social media further empowers students to raise awareness about social issues, participate in activism, and mobilise support for causes they care about.

While the study acknowledged the value and benefits of social media for students, it is important to be aware of the possible drawbacks as well, like being distracted from schoolwork; becoming the target of cyberbullying; receiving false information; and experiencing mental health problems due to addiction and comparison. Consequently, Shihab (2024: 4) mentions that even if social media has many advantages, it is critical that students utilise it sensibly and strike a balance between their personal and academic lives.

2.5.5 How social media platforms influence students

The influence of social media platforms on students has emerged over the years and has become a significant aspect of the educational setting, especially as these digital tools are increasingly being integrated into the daily practices of students. This finding is supported by a qualitative study by Al-Hail, Zguir, and Koç (2024: 16) from Qatar that explored digital learning opportunities and challenges in higher education institutes. Social media platforms such as WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram continue to serve and pose as important tools for accessing, sharing, and collaborating on academic content, an effect which, according to a Nigerian quantitative study by Umoh (2024: 103), positively influences student engagement and learning outcomes. The researcher further suggests that these platforms facilitate collaborative learning, enabling convenient knowledge exchange and providing visual and practical demonstrations beneficial for vocational skills development. For example, WhatsApp groups act as centres for academic coordination and peer support, while YouTube offers step-by-step vocational tutorials that complement formal and visual instruction.

Even so, a systematic literature review by Samala, Rawas, Criollo-C, Fortuna, Feng, Prasetya, Uluçay, Jaya, and Hidayat (2024: 526) outlines concerns regarding the cognitive effects of extensive social media use. Their research indicates that fragmented content can cause

ambiguities in the intended communication, and further states that the occurrence of unverified information on social media challenges students' ability to critically assess the credibility of sources, potentially fostering misinformation and undermining digital literacy. This is further supported by a quantitative research study by Ojukwu and Saidu (2025: 4) that examined strategies to challenge misinformation, disinformation, and fake news among students in Nigeria.

A qualitative USA study by Wijetunge, Flake, and Jayadas (2025: 15), which investigated how creative engagement on social media platforms influences the self-esteem and confidence of students, revealed that social media also impacts students' emotional and social well-being. Peer influence through interactive platforms changes different aspects, including academic motivation and self-esteem, where social comparison can either stimulate positive actions or contribute to worry and lower self-confidence, a finding confirmed by a mixed-method study that utilised both quantitative and qualitative approaches by (Tong and Shakibaei, 2025: 08).

This dynamic is particularly noticeable in TVET contexts, where students often juggle educational commitments with work, vocational practicals, or resource constraints. The effects of social media vary by platform: WhatsApp is primarily used for realistic communication, whereas TikTok and Instagram increasingly provide short and engaging educational content. While these formats can enhance motivation and accessibility, they risk oversimplifying complex academic material.

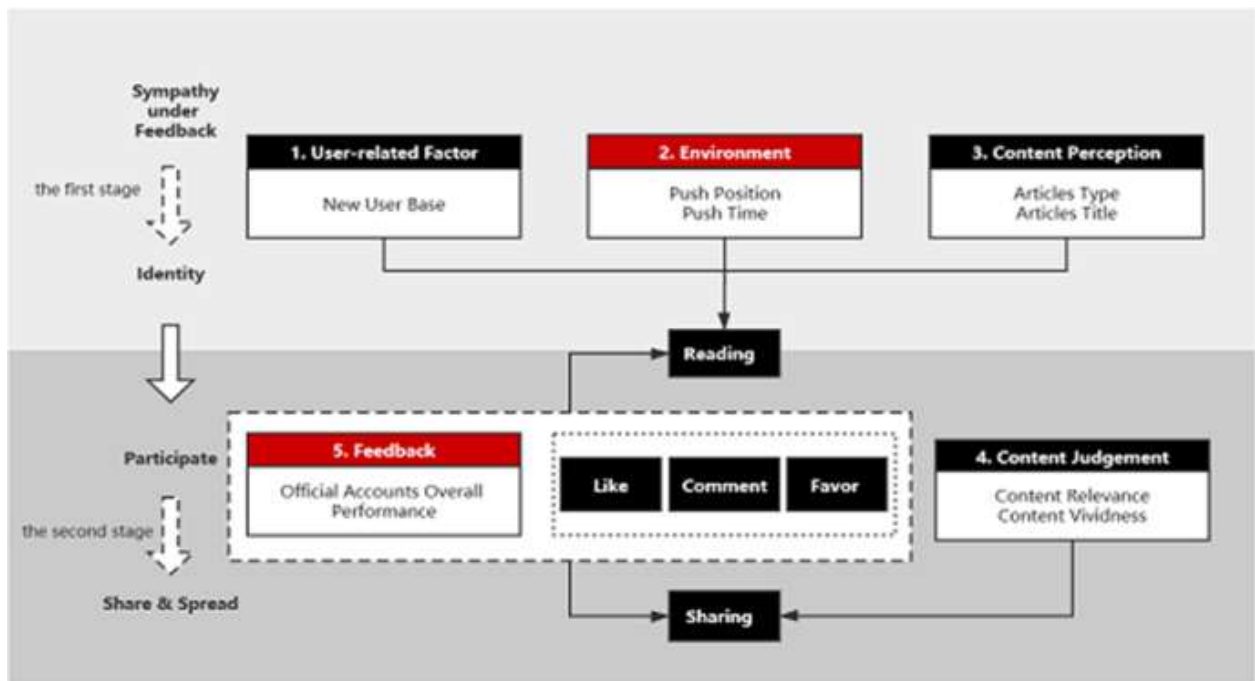
A Canadian study by Upadhyay (2023: 26) reports that social media contributes to informal learning and knowledge sharing by exposing students to diverse perspectives and career-oriented narratives, shaping their academic ambitions and decision-making beyond formal instruction. While social media enhances access to knowledge and supports collaborative and visual learning tailored to vocational education, a study conducted by Zhao (2024: 215) in China using a mixed-methods approach aimed to investigate students' perceptions, experiences and challenges related to its use for collaborative learning. The study also examined the factors influencing its effectiveness in vocational educational settings and reveals that it simultaneously poses challenges such as distraction, superficial learning, and emotional strain.

2.6 INFORMATION SHARING ON SOCIAL MEDIA

2.6.1 Information dissemination on social media

A Belarus study by Wang and Alexandrovna (2025: 106) states that dissemination, also known as the diffusion of information on social media, is a communication process that allows a concept, behaviour or technological advancement to spread gradually through specific channels from one individual, group or adoption unit within the social system over time through certain channels. The existing interrelated literature on information dissemination in social media can be classified into two stages as illustrated below:

Figure 2. 2: Modelling Framework



Source: Yang, Zhang, Cheng and Zhao (2023: 1472)

This model of social media dissemination behaviour aims to identify more complete elements influencing the process of information dissemination and to characterise it from a more holistic perspective.

Users' role in the dissemination process is highlighted in the first stage. Gong, Wang, Liang, Hu and Zhang's (2023: 2) study from China mentions that since user participation makes social media an important channel of information dissemination, users are at the core and become the entry point on information dissemination in social media. Additionally, Lin, Liao, Li and Liu (2024: 228) also conducted a study in China and indicate that the way individuals subscribe to content on social media platforms is essential to the spread of knowledge. Subscription

behaviour, for example, is crucial in the early stages of information distribution because it creates subscriber networks. The extent of information diffusion is mostly determined by the number of followers or subscribers to an account.

Yang, Zhang, Cheng and Zhao's (2023: 1482) this study from China highlights that the features of content and the spread of information through social media are examined in the second stage. Sharing is a common way that people on social media distribute content. Researchers Tellis, MacInnis, Tirunillai and Zhang (2019), and Shahbaznezhad, Dolan and Rashidirad (2021: 50) have discovered that users' sharing behaviour is significantly influenced by the content emotion, message visibility and information value. Moreover, there are interaction effects between content attributes and creator-related aspects.

2.6.2 The nature of information sharing on social media

Information sharing activities are associated with knowledge-sharing activities. Information sharing is an imperative element to support knowledge management between those involved and those it intends to involve. Hu and Noor (2024: 2) conducted a study in Malaysia, which mentions that this makes information sharing activities necessarily similar to knowledge-sharing activities. Information shared on social media varies from those that are crisis to non-crisis information. For crisis information and critical events, social media communication serves several purposes, from information collection to coordination, dissemination, planning, management, building relationships and issuing awareness where applicable. According to Al-Quran's (2022: 148) study conducted in Germany, evaluating the challenges and opportunities of traditional media versus social media, the researcher reported that social media is used as much as traditional media. Social media is such an important tool for crisis information, communication and management services. The public actively seeks out crisis information and exchanges views with others, while public participation in crisis or disaster responses on social media is not new. Social media hypothetically intensifies the influence of the public's response.

Social media on non-crisis information and general interaction provides room for dialogue with individuals, exchanging knowledge. A Switzerland study by Zachlod, Samuel, Ochsner and Werthmüller (2022: 1666) suggests that the content generated on social media can be analysed by the affected population for improved decisions and to stay informed about any subject matter that might be of interest at the time. Information and communication technology is crucial in the field of information sharing as social media sites are commonly used by citizens as a communication channel for sharing messages about general issues. To re-emphasise the importance of social media as a resource, this is derived from the fact that it has become a part

of daily life. According to Ahmed, Ahmad, Ahmad and Zakaria (2019: 73), the digital convergence of people, information and resources during crises is increasingly taking place on social media platforms and has been well-documented in various papers in the field of informatics.

2.6.2.1 General information for knowledge purposes

A qualitative analysis study in Israel by Scharlach, Hallinan and Shifman (2024: 6660) reveals that social media platforms host various types of information, catering to diverse interests and purposes.

Quantitative methods were used to carefully look at written, visual and audio data from online groups in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the study by Nser, Alhrahshah, Alshalabi, Jarrah and Khasawneh (2024: 150) in the UAE, and outlined the types of information that contribute to the diversity and richness of social media content, offering different user preferences and needs. These scholars mention the most common information on social media as being personal updates, where Individuals share their thoughts, activities and life events with friends and followers, which enables people to react by commenting, liking and re-sharing their content.

- News and events are amongst the content shared the highest on social media as users discuss news stories, events and developments in real-time whenever there is a newsworthy bulletin on current affairs.
- Entertainment content such as memes, videos, jokes intended to entertain users, vlogs and clips are the most consumed content by teenagers and people of early youth.
- Other content found on social media is advertisements and promotions. This is consumed in the comfort of users' home and they no longer have to physically shop for sales. Businesses and individuals promote products and services aimed at potential buyers. Reviews and recommendations as users provide feedback on products, services, movies, and books is information located on social media.
- Lately, from the global pandemic to date, there had been an extreme rise in educational content through social media. From tutorials, how-to guides, educational videos and

articles on a wide range of topic, Nser *et al.* (2024: 152) mention some of the general information social media consumed by its users.

Ciunova-Shuleska, Palamidovska-Sterjadaska and Bogoevska-Gavrilova (2022: 31) cite other types of common information found on social media mostly consumed by late youth and other people of mature ages, namely lifestyle content, which includes health and wellness tips, advice and discussions related to physical and mental health. Furthermore, discussions related to sports updates and events are also popular, as are trend tips and discussions related to fashion, beauty and lifestyle choices. Lastly are recipes, culinary tips, restaurant reviews and food-related discussions.

2.6.2.2 Crisis Information on social media

Two prominent characteristics of new media, including social media, that greatly attract users are their lack of need for professionalism and their unregulated nature, making them unchecked sources of information. The widely acknowledged feature of new media and especially social media, that “everyone can produce content”, initially appeared as a platform for free expression and a means to enhance democracy. However, as more individuals contribute and share information, this has become an impediment to accessing reliable information. The notion of questionable information associated with internet-derived data now applies to social media as well (Mahamad, Ambran, Azman and de Luna, 2021: 10).

In today's digital era, social media has emerged as a potent communication tool, particularly during times of crises. Every day, data uploaded to the internet for various purposes is stored in easily accessible databases and utilised by search engines.

In a study by Feng, Ritchie, Blumenthal, Parsons and Zhang (2023: 4) conducted in the USA using mixed methods of qualitative and quantitative research evaluating trust and accuracy of information on social media, the research reveals that the abundance of online information has made it increasingly challenging to access accurate, consistent and trustworthy data.

Koltay's (2021: 524) study in Hungary highlights the protection of freedom of expression from social media platforms presents that while social media and its tools are often seen as platforms for free expression, the lack of control and legal ambiguities have made social media a breeding ground for disinformation. Manipulation, a significant concern in the digital era, frequently

occurs on social media, with various false content being disseminated by millions of users, sometimes knowingly and other times without verifying the source or the information's reliability.

2.6.3 Student's reaction and processing of information shared on social media platforms

The presence of social media in students' lives shapes how they receive, interpret, and utilise information, profoundly impacting their decision-making processes, a literature review qualitative study from Indonesia by Purnama and Asdlori (2023: 47) details. As social media platforms serve as an additional source for academic, social content and messaging, it is imperative to understand the complex and interesting ways students react and process this information obtained through social media. A quantitative study from Jordon by Yaseen, Mohammad, Ashal, Abusaimh and Sharabati (2025: 6) reveals that these reactions are influenced by a multifaceted interplay of emotional engagement, social dynamics, and differing levels of digital literacy, which collectively challenge the assumption that students always critically engage with online content.

Nwodo (2025: 137), in a systematic literature review conducted in the USA, highlights that cognitive shortcuts dominate student evaluations of social media information due to the overwhelming volume and rapid flow of content. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, X, and Facebook deliver information largely in short, engaging formats that encourage quick assessments based on likes, shares, or endorsements by trusted fellow users and peers. This tendency increases cognitive load, prompting students to rely heavily on heuristics rather than deep processing to make sense of the information. Furthermore, unstructured and excessive social media use contributes to media-induced task switching, which disrupts focused attention and undermines effective information processing. Ma, Au, and Ren (2020: 595) argue that while such heuristic-based judgments improve processing efficiency, they significantly reduce accuracy and depth of knowledge. Certainly, Carillo and Horning (2021: 37) empirical evidence show that many students rarely use sophisticated verification strategies like lateral reading or cross-referencing various sources, instead depending on the superficial credibility signals provided by visual design or social evidence.

Moreover, social influence significantly shapes how students' process information. Drawing from social cognitive theory, which suggests that individuals learn behaviors through observation and imitation, it becomes clear that peer endorsements and trending content serve

as powerful forces in shaping information acceptance. A study from USA by Kitchens, Johnson and Gray (2020: 1627) further suggest that these effects are often reinforced by algorithmically curated echo chambers, which limit exposure to diverse viewpoints. This phenomenon raises important concerns that student decision-making becomes narrow, shaped more by group norms than by critical evaluation, thereby constraining both the quality and breadth of their judgments.

Emotional factors further complicate how students respond to social media content. Emotionally charged posts whether inspirational, humorous, or fear-inducing capture attention and enhance memorability. A Chinese study by Chen, and Xiao (2022: 2) outlines that such posts often motivate action without thorough rational consideration. Central to moderating both cognitive and emotional influences is digital literacy, which encompasses the capacity not only to access but also to critically evaluate and produce digital content. Students with high level of digital literacy are more likely to question unverified claims, seek alternative perspectives, and postpone judgement until multiple sources are consulted.

Platform-specific features play a crucial role in shaping how information is processed. A Chinese quantitative study by Li, Chen and Man (2024: 3) suggests that visual-centric platforms like Instagram and YouTube leverage images, videos, and infographics that make content more engaging and memorable but also more prone to manipulation and misinterpretation. The design and interface of these platforms often influence perception, often privileging form over substance, encouraging students to respond more to presentation style than to the actual quality of content.

2.7 THE INFLUENCE OF GENDER ON SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE

Social media has revolutionised how people communicate, interact and express themselves. A book chapter compiled by Manago, Santer, Barsigian and Walsh (2021: 150) in the United States has revealed that factors such as age, culture and gender play a significant role in shaping how people use these platforms. Of these, gender is a key sociocultural factor that influences how individuals engage with social media and impacts their behaviour in digital spaces. This section explores existing research on the impact of gender on social media use, focusing on the differences between male and female users regarding usage frequency, platform preferences,

self-presentation, gender-specific engagement patterns, and the influence of social media on gender identity.

2.7.1 Gender differences in social media platform preferences

Gender plays a key role in shaping social media usage patterns, with different preferences between men and women. Koester and Marcus (2024: 9) indicates that men are more inclined to use platforms centred around gaming, professional networking or short-form content, like Twitter and Reddit. In contrast, research by Smith (2020) through Pew Research Center highlights that woman are more drawn to visual platforms like Instagram, Pinterest and Facebook, where they can share personal experiences and engage in social interactions.

The Pew Research Center (2018) study on social media usage also found that men typically use social media for informational purposes, such as consuming news and entertainment, while women are more likely to use it for maintaining personal relationships. The research emphasises how platform choices often reflect gendered social norms and interests. For instance, an Australian study by Petersfield (2024: 1) mentions that women's use and preference for social media platforms like Instagram is often associated with curating an idealised version of themselves. In Laor's (2022: 3) study conducted in Israel, it was found that men are more likely to use platforms like Twitter for sharing news, opinions and professional updates.

The relationship between gender and social media usage also reflects broader societal norms and expectations. A study carried out in Jordon using a mixed approach by Zibin, Al-Sabatin and Altakhaineh (2025: 4) indicates that these patterns suggest that gendered preferences in online behaviour are influenced by a mix of socialisation processes, personal interests and the affordances of that platform.

2.7.2 Content creation and engagement: Gendered behaviour

Gender is significant in shaping the content that people create and share on social media. Men and women differ in how they approach content creation, self-presentation and engagement. Women are more likely to share personal content, such as photos, status updates and experiences, often aiming to foster connections with others. This is revealed by Sheldon, Antony and Ware (2021: 2) in their study in the USA. This aligns with traditional gender expectations that emphasise emotional expression, social relationships and community-

building for women. As a result, women typically use social media as a space for interaction, emotional support and self-expression.

On the other hand, men's social media content is typically more focused on providing information and showcasing performance. An experiment examined the judgment of men based on how often and what they post on social media in the USA and UK, conducted by Edelblum and Warren (2024: 575), indicated that men are more inclined to share posts about their accomplishments, personal hobbies and external aspects like their careers or recreational activities, or opt not to share anything at all because of the perceived neediness and the frequent-posting femininity stereotype. This difference can be linked to societal norms around masculinity, which often emphasise individual achievement, control and independence.

Scholars Merino, Tornero-Aguilera, Rubio-Zarapuz, Villanueva-Tobaldo, Martín-Rodríguez and Clemente-Suárez (2024: 1397) mention in their study in Spain that in terms of participation, women are more likely to join in debates, respond to remarks and engage in supportive behaviour, while men's engagement is often more transactional, with a focus on information exchange rather than emotional support. Such differences are highlighted in an online survey by Fosch-Villaronga, Poulsen, Søråa and Custers (2021: 25) focusing on how gendered expectations influence not just the content that individuals post, but also how they interact with others on social media platforms, and respectively on X.

2.7.3 Social media and self-presentation

Social media self-presentation refers to how people manage their online identities and display themselves to affect and influence how others view them. Self-presentation on social media is another area where gender differences are noticeable, as mentioned by Goffman's (2023: 251) research study. Research conducted in France by Sokolova, Kefi and Dutot (2022: 16) through 700 Instagram users online suggests that women are more likely to engage in practices of self-objectification, especially on platforms like Instagram, where appearance and aesthetic are central to the platform's culture. A qualitative study focusing on Japanese woman by Ando, Giorgianni, Danthinne and Rodgers (2021: 358) attest that woman often curate their content with a focus on physical appearance, which can lead to greater pressure to conform to beauty standards and societal expectations of femininity.

Men's self-presentation tends to emphasise traits associated with traditional masculinity, such as power, strength and success. Studies have shown that men are more likely to post content

that highlights achievements, hobbies and status symbols, such as cars or gadgets. Chan's (2022: 98) UK study confirms that such tendencies in self-presentation align with traditional gender norms, with women's social media activity often reflecting emphasis on attractiveness and social connectedness, while men's activity reflects their need to project power and dominance.

2.7.4 Influence of gender on platform preferences

Quantitative research by Alnjadat, Hmaid, Samha, Kilani and Hasswan (2019: 392) in the United Arab Emirates indicates that women tend to engage more with visually focused platforms like Instagram and Facebook, where the focus is on building communities and expressing themselves. These platforms facilitate the sharing of personal stories, educational material, and even professional accomplishments in a casual manner. On the other hand, men are often drawn to platforms that centre around entertainment and technical content, such as YouTube, Twitter and gaming sites. These platform preferences are confirmed in a qualitative study by Papademetriou, Anastasiadou, Konteos and Papalexandris (2022: 263) in Cyprus reflects not just individual tastes, but also align with societal norms about masculinity.

A study by Krasnova, Veltri, Eling and Buxmann (2017: 270), conducted through a survey of 488 users examining the social media habits of young people in educational settings, found that women often use Facebook to stay connected with peers, while men were more likely to use LinkedIn for professional networking. In the context of TVET education, this suggests that female students may use social media to foster collaborative educational spaces and maintain connections with their peers, while male students may be more focused on industry-specific networking or exploring career opportunities.

2.8 CONCLUSION

The Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) was applied as the grounding theory to understand why the variables in the study use social media and how the distribution of information through social media impacts them. This chapter's literature review has provided a comprehensive understanding of how social media impact students in the distribution of information within the specific context of a chosen TVET College. The extensive range of research examined throughout this review emphasises the significant role played by social media platforms and its users in both facilitating and amplifying the dissemination of information. The chapter further provided background on the settings of higher education and training and its traits, as well as the concepts and types of social media. From the reviewed literature, it is evident that these

platforms are instrumental in shaping the responses and views of users. Moreover, this review has brought to light the various complex challenges that arise in this context, including the risks of disseminating inaccurate information and the necessity for rapid and well-thought-out responses. As students navigate an increasingly digital landscape, it becomes essential to harness the potential of social media while proactively addressing its potential drawbacks. Ultimately, this literature review laid the groundwork for comprehending the intricate dynamics at the crossroads of social media and information dissemination, offering valuable insights that can guide future research and practical implementations.

The following chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the research methodology adopted in this study. It systematically outlines the research design, methodological approach, and target population, followed by a detailed description of the data collection method, recruitment procedure, and research instrument utilised. Furthermore, the chapter addresses issues of reliability and validity, explains the data analysis techniques employed, and discusses the ethical considerations that guided the research process.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter reviewed the literature and outlined the theoretical framework that underpin the study. This chapter presents the research methodology and design employed for this study. According to Kalyan (2024: 11), research methodology is a set of systematic approach used by the researcher to determine how to conduct the study to comprehend and investigate the area of research and phenomena. It is structured to provide a clear and systematic account of the research design, methodological approach, and target population. In this chapter research design is presented first to provide a total methodological structure for the study. The chapter then details the specific procedures followed for data collection, including the recruitment strategy and sampling techniques employed.

A thorough description of the research instrument is provided, highlighting its development, structure, and relevancy to the research objectives. In addressing methodological consistencies, the chapter discusses the measures undertaken to ensure the reliability and validity of the data, thereby enhancing the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. Subsequently, the data analysis procedures are explained, with an explanation of the analytical techniques used to interpret the data in alignment with the research questions. For the integrity of the whole study, the chapter concludes with addressing ethical consideration and assurance, including informed consent, confidentiality, and the protection of respondents' rights throughout the study.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Hunziker and Blankenagel (2024: 141), a research design is an organised method used by a researcher to answer their research questions or hypotheses and further guides the researcher on specific measures in research design. It outlines the procedures, methods and techniques that will be employed to collect and analyse data. A well-designed research study ensures that the data collected are valid, reliable and generalisable to the population being studied. The underlying reasons of designing research are outlined by Ghanad (2023: 3800), namely that the research design allows the researcher to establish procedures and organise the logistics required to conduct the research. Subsequently, it ensures the study's neutrality and correctness by adhering to quality procedures.

Samanth (2024: 7) states that descriptive design data is gathered using surveys, observations or old documents to give an overview of the current situation. It seeks to characterise traits within a population or phenomenon. Therefore, a descriptive research design is used in this study, which further followed a quantitative methodological approach. This approach aligns with the study's theoretical framework, the Use and Gratification Theory (UGT) developed by Blumler and Katz (1974) which emphasises understanding the inspirations behind media usage and the gratifications individuals pursue and attain through media consumption. The UGT links closely with the descriptive research design and quantitative methodological approach used in this study.

UGT highlights that individuals are active media users who consciously select and use media to satisfy specific cognitive, affective, social, and psychological needs. This perspective complements and requires a research design that captures these motivations and behaviors as they transpire in real-world contexts, which aligns well with a descriptive research design. This design systematically describes the characteristics and patterns of media use, making it suitable to explore the diverse gratifications sought and obtained by users. Further to this, since UGT focuses on measurable gratification outcomes, quantitative methods are ideal to objectively quantify these dimensions and test hypotheses related to user motivations and satisfaction levels. The descriptive design captures *what* and *how* aspects of media consumption as framed by UGT, while the quantitative approach measures the degree and types of gratifications achieved.

3.2.1 Research Approach

Chigbu, Atiku and Du Plessis (2023: 4) mention that researchers select or merge approaches to suit their specific research questions and contexts. These scholars further elaborate that selecting the appropriate research approach helps researchers choose the most suitable methods and instruments for addressing their research questions. The research approach is crucial for guiding the research process, determining appropriate methods, ensuring accuracy and validity, enhancing credibility, facilitating comparisons and replication, and addressing diverse research questions. Schoonenboom (2023: 2) identifies two commonly used approaches in research, namely quantitative and qualitative research approaches.

Quantitative research involves collecting numerical data that can be analysed statistically (Schoonenboom, 2023: 3). It is frequently applied to quantify relationships, measure results and outcomes, or test hypotheses. Rana, Gutierrez and Oldroyd (2023: 11203) indicate in their research that commonly used methods in this approach include experiments, surveys and organised observations. On the other hand, Lim (2024: 6) states that qualitative research concentrates on exploring and understanding phenomena in-depth by comprehending occurrences. This researcher further articulates that qualitative research entails gathering non-numerical data through observations, interviews and text analysis. This approach is valuable for gaining insights into complex social or cultural phenomena.

In this study, after the researcher fully comprehend the research approaches with its methods, the quantitative research approach with a method of self-administered questionnaires was selected to investigate the impacts of social media on the dissemination of information from the perspective of the students. This approach was identified as the most suitable to address the research questions.

3.3 TARGET POPULATION

In research conducted by Stratton (2021: 373), it is stated that the group from which the sample is drawn is known as the target population. Subsequently, it is not rational to investigate the entire population. A set of people or elements that fit specific requirements or have characteristics fit for a research study are referred to as the target population, as this researcher further elaborates. The selected campus has 842 registered students (population) as from the beginning of the 2024 academic year. These statistics were obtained from the head of student administration (uMgungundlovu TVET College, 2024).

3.3.1 Inclusion criterion

According to Dekkers, Carey and Langhorne (2022: 202), the inclusion criterion in research is a key element for selecting who will participate in the study from the identified target population. Inclusion criteria for this study are the 2024 academic year registered students at the following levels: National Certificate: Vocational (NCV), (N4) National Certificate: NQF Level 5, (N5) National Certificate: NQF Level 5, (N6) National Certificate: NQF Level 5 and (N6 Diploma): NQF Level 6.

3.3.2 Exclusion criteria

Exclusion criteria refer to the study's potential participants or respondents who do not fit the inclusion criteria. They have certain traits that will contribute to the aim of the study not being completely achieved, as mentioned in Yadav's (2022: 685) research. Students below the age of 18 were excluded from this study, as individuals under this age are typically enrolled in TVET college settings. Under South African law, pupils under the age of eighteen are considered legally minors and are not entirely capable of acting on their own without support from parents or legal guardians. For this reason, they were excluded from this study.

3.3.3 Sampling technique

Cash, Isaksson, Maier and Summers (2022: 1) state that in research, sampling is the process of choosing a selection of subjects and individuals from a larger population to study and estimate the characteristics of the whole. Ahmed (2024: 2) attests that in sampling, selecting a representative group from a larger population for market research or opinion polling is involved. Pandey and Pandey (2021: 44) further indicate the importance and principle of sampling as an important component of research methodology that allows researchers to draw significant conclusions and findings about populations whilst managing constraints such as time, cost and practicality.

According to a study by Kothari (2020: 60), sampling strategies are classified as probability or non-probability. This scholar's study progressively highlights that probability sampling is a process of randomly selecting samples from a population where an equal selection opportunity for each element of the population is maintained. Non-probability sampling is defined as a selection process where samples have unequal opportunities.

Comprehending the aspects of these strategies, the researcher employed a probability strategy in which every unit in the population had a known chance (probability) of being selected into the sample. This means that each member of the population has a non-zero probability of being chosen for the sample, ensuring that the sample is representative of the population, according to Sharma (2023: 7) in the study they conducted using probability sampling.

Research by Shrivastava, Singh, Gurjar and Kushawaha (2024: 49) highlights the principle of probability sampling that enables researchers to draw reliable statistical conclusions about the population from the sample. Probability sampling offers a strong basis for extrapolating the results of the sample to the broader population with a known degree of confidence, and the

selection process is objective. According to Rahman, Tabash, Salamzadeh, Abduli and Rahaman (2022: 42), under a probability sampling strategy, there are several techniques or methods a researcher could utilise to select the sample.

Rahman *et al.* (2022: 47) outline and table several types of probability sampling methods, including the advantages of using each, namely:

Simple Random Sampling: In simple random sampling, each selection is made independently of the others and each member of the population has an equal probability of being chosen. When the population is easily accessible and regular in character, this simple method of sampling is frequently employed.

Stratified Sampling: Based on specific features, the population is divided into discrete sub-groups (called strata) from which random samples are then taken. This method guarantees that the sample size of each sub-group corresponds to its size within the population.

Systematic Sampling: Each person in the population is selected at random to be a part of the sample after a starting point has been determined. Although this approach is effective and simple to use, bias may be introduced if the population exhibits a periodic pattern.

Cluster Sampling: The population is split into clusters, and a random sample of the clusters is chosen. Every individual in the selected clusters is a part of the sample. When the population is naturally grouped or geographically dispersed, this method is useful.

Multi-stage Sampling: This method blends two or more methods of sampling. Cluster sampling, for instance, might be used to choose groups, and simple random sampling could be used to choose individuals within those groups.

The technique used in this study is the simple random technique, referred to by Rahman *et al.* (2022: 47) as where each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected for inclusion in the sample and every possible sample of a given size has the same chance of being selected. In their research, Noor, Tajik and Golzar (2022: 78) state that this ensures that the sample is representative of the population and minimises bias. It is one of the most straightforward and widely used sampling techniques.

3.3.4 Selection of the sample and sample size

According to Kothari (2020: 61), sample size is the total number of individual or elements that are nominated to complete a study. In addition, Giri (2024: 167) states that the sample size refers to units that were selected and from which data were gathered. The researcher also indicates that the sample size must be sufficiently complex to enable the researcher to make inferences about the population. Therefore, this was considered sufficiently large to select the sample size from.

The selected campus had 842 registered students (population) as at the beginning of 2024 academic year. The figure was obtained from the head of student administration (uMgungundlovu TVET College, 2024). Using the Yemane formula shown below, the minimum number of necessary samples to meet the desired statistical figure can be achieved.

$$n = \frac{N}{(1 + Ne^2)}$$

n = sample size required

N = population size

e = alpha level, e = 0,05 when the confidence interval is 95%

$$\begin{aligned} n &= \frac{842}{1 + 842 (0,05^2)} \\ &= \frac{842}{1 + 2,105} \\ &= \frac{842}{3,105} \\ n &= 271 \end{aligned}$$

Therefore, for this study, the sample size equated to n= 271 respondents (students), as measured and considered appropriate.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION METHOD

The data collection method is a selected choice amongst many methods, and actions related to gathering data and analysing it based on targeted variables in an established, methodical plan that enables participants to provide relevant answers to questions and evaluate the results, this is according to (Rassel, Leland, Mohr and O'Sullivan, 2020: 303).

Malik (2025: 83) states that data can be gathered from the two types of data categories, namely primary and secondary data. Data gathered directly from individuals or through first-hand

experience is referred to as primary data. Qualities of this type of data are that it has not been published before, as suggested by Dehalwar and Sharma (2024: 8), and that it is the most trustworthy, authentic and objective data. Instruments commonly used to gather primary data can include but are not limited to experiments, questionnaires, focus group, interviews, and observations, amongst others.

In contrast, Baldwin, Pingault, Schoeler, Sallis and Munafò (2022: 2) suggest that in secondary data, data is collected from sources that already exist. This type of data can be collected by reviewing, but is not limited to, textbooks, records, biographies, newspapers, reports, data archives and journals.

For this research study, data was collected using the personal method highlighted by Ghanad (2023: 3796), through hand-delivered self-administered questionnaires that consisted of 40 questions in total. This instrument was used because it was the most appropriate for the collection of quantitative data as per the research design and approach of the study.

3.5 RECRUITMENT PROCEDURE

Prior to commencing the data collection process, a notice alerting the students of uMgungundlovu TVET College Midlands Campus about the study to be carried out within their campus was posted on school noticeboards. The content in the notice was also to further request students to consider participating in the study. Students who showed interest in participating in this study were issued a letter of information (*Appendix B*) which provided detailed information pertaining to the study, and a consent form (*Appendix C*) to obtain their written permission for participating. A questionnaire (*Appendix A*) with 40 question statements was provided to those who agreed to participate and signed the consent forms.

3.6 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

According to Sukmawati (2023: 119), the research instrument refers to whichever tool or device is used to collect data for a research study. Depending on the type of data required and the nature of the research, these devices can take numerous forms. The researcher further identifies those forms as the questionnaire, interviews, observations, experimental, survey and document analysis.

Masud and Baskaran (2025: 145) specify that choosing the right tools for a research project is essential to guarantee the validity and dependability of the data gathered. When selecting the appropriate instruments for their research, researchers frequently must consider elements including the study's objectives, the population under investigation, and the technique used to collect data.

This study collected data using self-administered questionnaires consisting of closed-ended questions developed by the researcher. Fife-Schaw (2020: 344) mentions that a questionnaire is a set of inquiries centred around a specific topic, and that the researcher requests the participants to respond by filling them out.

The questionnaire was designed and aligned to the objectives and research questions of the study. The instrument was drafted in the English language, which is a medium of instruction at TVET Midlands Campus. The questionnaire attached (*Appendix A*) is divided into two sections. Section A consisted of biographical data, and Section B sought to respond to the research questions. The questionnaire required the respondents to select from a predetermined possible answer on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The respondents were given a time-frame until the end of the academic day to complete and return the questionnaires, with 10-15 minutes to read and fill each questionnaire as the researcher was on site.

3.7 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF DATA

To be objective, one must remain unbiased and refrain from prejudice in all aspects of the study process. To maintain the integrity of the research, Ojoboh and Igben (2024: 38) indicate that researchers should strive to reduce their own biases in the study design, data collection, analysis and interpretation processes.

Pesämaa, Zwikael, Hair Jr and Huemann (2021: 219) state that in research, transparency should be maintained, which should entail openness and clarity in reporting all aspects of the research process. Furthermore, Pesämaa *et al.* (2021: 219) highlight that a researcher should be able to provide comprehensive descriptions of their methods, procedures and findings, allowing others, including those participating in the study, to assess the accuracy and credibility of the study.

3.7.1 Reliability

The measure of stability and consistency of the study findings are referred to as reliability. The goal of research is to create experiments and metrics that yield reliable findings when carried out again in comparable circumstances. The concept of reliability in research is highlighted by Kennedy (2022: 18), who further stated that this guarantees that results are reliable and unaffected by chance. Babu and Kohli (2023: 400) state that estimates of the degree to which assessments are planned and free of imbalanced inaccuracy are the main focus of reliability. Trustworthy instruments can be employed with the assurance that transient and contextual factors are not probing. The scholars further state that trustworthy devices are concrete and perform well in a variety of scenarios at different times. Vu (2021: 4) states that it is widely accepted that after a concept is operationally defined and its measure has been presented, the ensuing measuring device should be valid and dependable.

According to Isoraite and Aktas (2023: 428), when composing measurements, reliability is an essential concept that may not be omitted. This study used internal consistency reliability. Internal consistency reliability is the degree to which test materials remain consistent during the whole experiment. Trabelsi, Saif, Driller, Vitiello and Jahrami (2024: 4) indicate that when all the substances that are tried are associated or amount to the same things, internal consistency results. Three distinct techniques are used to test the reliability of internal consistency, namely split-half, Kuder-Richardson and Cronbach's alpha, Abideen, Kolade and Adekunle (2022: 99) highlighted the technique in their research.

Amirrudin, Nasution and Supahar (2021: 224) mention that by identifying how every test substance is similar to every other test substance and to the entire test, Cronbach alpha assesses the dependability of internal consistency.

This statement is supported by Alkhadim's (2022: 4) research that Cronbach's Alpha is how test items relate to each other and to the test, approximating the dependability of internal consistency. The scholars add that when there are more than two options on a test, such as a Likert scale with five possible answers, Cronbach's Alpha is to be used. For this study, reliability was established by Cronbach's Alpha.

Piedmont (2024: 1) states that there are various types of reliability coefficients, with Cronbach's alpha (α) being one of the most widely used. When test items are standardised, Cronbach's alpha reflects the average correlation between them; if not standardised, it is based on their average covariance. This measure was employed in the reliability analysis to evaluate

the internal consistency of the results and determine whether similar outcomes would be obtained with a larger sample. A Cronbach’s alpha value of 0.7 or above is considered strong, indicating that the findings are likely to be replicable in a broader population. The alpha coefficient was computed for all question sets using the same scale within each section.

Table 3. 1: Reliability of the research instrument – Cronbach’s Coefficient Alpha

Dimension	Number of items	Cronbach Alpha
Social media influence	4	0.740
Reaction and processing of information shared on social media for decision-making	7	0.812
What social media is mostly used for	7	0.714
Most used social media platforms	6	0.763
Perspectives on the nature of information shared on social media platforms	12	0.726

Source: Author’s Own (2025)

The reliability of the measuring instrument was evaluated using Cronbach’s Coefficient Alpha (α) as illustrated in the table above (Table 4.4). The alpha values appear to be acceptable, indicating good internal consistent scoring for these sections of the research instrument.

Evidently, the instrument measuring the influence of social media platforms on TVET college students ($\alpha=0.740$), reaction and processing shared information for decision-making ($\alpha=0.812$) has a very high degree of reliability, extent of use of social media platforms and what it is mostly used for ($\alpha=0.714$), most used social media platforms ($\alpha =0.763$), perspectives on the nature of information shared on social media platform ($\alpha =0.726$). The use of the instrument for the measurement of information processing for decision-making has a very high level of inter-item consistency ($\alpha=0.812$).

3.7.2 Validity

The research instrument used to collect data was thoroughly evaluated for its validity, ensuring that it accurately measures what it intends to measure (Connelly, 2022: 64). To ensure the validity of the research instrument, a pilot study was conducted prior to the main data

collection. The pilot study involved a smaller sample that was representative of the target population. This preliminary test of the instrument allowed for the identification and rectification of any issues related to the clarity, phrasing or relevance of the questions. It also provided an opportunity to assess the time required to complete the instrument and the participants' ability to understand the questions effectively.

Validity was measured using content and construct validity. According to Obilor and Miwari, (2022: 60), content validity refers to the extent to which a test or measurement tool accurately represents the entire domain it aims to assess. It ensures that the items or questions included in the test or measurement tool are relevant and represent all the concepts being measured. Construct validity was utilised in this research. Trafimow (2022: 2) refers to it as the degree to which a test or measurement tool truly measures the theoretical construct or concept it is intended to measure, and not extraneous or unrelated factors. It entails demonstrating that the test accurately represents the underlying construct and distinguishes between related but distinct concepts.

The instrument was first reviewed by the supervisors and relevant committees [1. Department Review Committee (DRC), 2. Faculty Review Committee (FRC), and approved by 3. Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC)] who are experts in the field to assess whether it adequately covered all relevant aspects of the topic under investigation. Their feedback was used to confirm the instrument, ensuring that it captured all necessary variables for the research.

Table 3. 2: Validity of the research instrument

Type of Validity	Method of Testing	Findings from Pilot Study	Action Taken
Content Validity	Review of instrument by supervisors and committees	Supervisors and committees confirmed that the instrument covered all relevant areas.	Minor revisions to question wording were made based on committee's feedback.
Construct Validity	Correlation between instrument items and theoretical constructs.	Items were consistent with the theoretical constructs being measured.	Alignment was made. on a few questions to better capture complex constructs

Source: Author's Own (2025)

Table 4.3 presents the types of validity used on the research instrument. After administering these types of validity, validation of the research instrument was completed.

3.7.3 Pilot Study

Bujang, Omar, Foo and Hon (2024: 2) refer to the pilot study as a small-scale preliminary investigation that assesses the viability, validity and reliability of measurement tools like questionnaires, which is conducted prior to a full-scale research project.

Murali and Charlesworth (2024: 6) highlights the benefit in conducting a pilot study that it assists with refining the research design and increases confidence in the study design and procedures before investing in a larger-scale project. It also provides an opportunity to identify and address any concerns or uncertainties early in the research process and ensures that data is collected accurately and efficiently during the main study, this is according to (Bond, Lancaster, Campbell, Chan, Eddy, Hopewell, Mellor, Thabane and Eldridge, 2023: 2). The general objective of a pilot study is to improve the questionnaire by eliminating and correcting unclear phrases and statements. Kunselman (2024: 900) states that a pilot study can assess whether the items accurately capture the constructs of interest and whether participants understand and respond to them as intended.

Overall, Morin (2023: 487) indicates that pilot studies play a crucial role in enhancing the quality and success of the entire research projects by enabling researchers to refine and improve their methods, identify potential glitches, and ensure the validity and reliability of their findings. This aspect of the research was adhered to by randomly selecting twenty-eight (28) homogeneous individuals, who were not part of the main sample, to take part in a pilot study for testing the questionnaire. This allowed for necessary revisions to be made before the final version was administered to the main sample group.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

The questionnaires were gathered and labelled numerically in order to ensure accurate capturing of the data. Thereafter, data was cleaned in preparation for capturing data in the dataset for statistical analysis. A Microsoft Excel spreadsheet was used to record the collected data, and the most recent version of SPSS, version 29, was used to statistically analyse the data.

Research by Stoudt, Vásquez and Martínez (2021: 4) mentions that the methodical process of organising, modifying, modelling and assessing raw data is known as data analysis, with the goal to glean insights and knowledge from the information gathered. Daniels and Minot (2025) highlight that it is critical to analyse and interpret obtained data as it provides comprehensive responses for the research objectives. In this study, two types of quantitative analysis are utilised, namely descriptive and inferential statistical procedures, were equally used to analyse the primary data.

Descriptive statistical analysis is an effective statistical method for compiling, analysing, characterising and presenting a set of survey data, as Dong (2023: 16) states in research conducted. In this study, the descriptive statistical technique, specifically the frequency distribution analysis was used to examine the respondents' answers to individual survey items of demographic data and research objectives 1 to 4.

Methods for drawing conclusions and interpretations about the population and links between variables are known as inferential statistical techniques. These methods are highlighted in Alem's (2020: 10) research and are also used in the study. They involve the analysis of sample data to derive conclusions or forecasts about the larger population from which the sample was taken. This study utilised two types of inferential data analysis, namely the Principal component analysis and the Chi-square analysis.

According to Greenacre, Groenen, Hastie, d'Enza, Markos and Tuzhilina (2022: 100), Principal Component Analysis (PCA) is a multipurpose statistical method used to condense a data table organised by cases and variables into its most significant elements. It helps transform complex spectral datasets into understandable insights by detecting consistent patterns in the data while preserving as much information as possible. This method was applied to analyse Research Objective 5.

Before the Principal component analysis could be done in this study, two tests were performed, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test. The KMO indicates whether the data is adequate for successful and reliable extraction whilst Bartlett's test with a p-value $<.05$ indicates that items are sufficiently correlated. Shrestha (2021: 6) outlines that these two tests are necessary to qualify the data for factor analysis and Principal component analysis.

The second inferential data analysis used is the Chi-square analysis, a statistical test invented to deal with significant differences in contingency tables. Aslam and Smarandache (2023: 1) indicates that it is commonly used to determine if there is a significant association between two

categorical variables. In this study, it was used to observe whether frequencies in the table deviate significantly from what would be expected under the assumption of independence between the variables.

According to Malapane and Ndlovu (2024: 90), the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test is a method for comparing the distributions of two independent groups. These scholars further highlight that the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test is used to determine whether the sample is normally distributed, and to test the goodness-of-fit of a given set of data to a theoretical distribution.

For this study, it was discovered that the sample is not normally distributed, hence a Chi-square test, which is a non-parametric test, is used.

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

3.9.1 Ethical Procedure

Hasan, Rana, Chowdhury, Dola and Rony (2021: 2) state that ethics are acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, values and conduct to be considered by the researcher during the study investigation. Tariq (2025: 247) cites the Belmont Report that identifies three basic ethical principles for conducting research with human subjects, commonly called the Belmont Principles, namely respect of persons, beneficence and justice. These principles highlight the conduct of the researcher in that it should align with expected and accepted standards which should reflect respect; be free from any risks and harm; consider the right to privacy; and obtain permission from the respondents.

The investigator adhered to all ethical principles and guidelines stipulated by the Durban University of Technology's Ethics Committee, commonly known as the Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC), and ethical clearance was issued (*Appendix F*) as **Research Ethics Clearance Number: IREC 042/24**. Permission to conduct the study was requested in writing from the Institution where the respondents are from (*Appendix D*), and gatekeeper's permission was received (*Appendix E*).

3.9.2 Confidentiality and Anonymity

Confidentiality is valuing that certain information should be kept private or secret, restricted from other parties and only accessible to those who the person has given consent to, this is

according to (Hwang, 2023: 3). It further ensures that sensitive information remains protected, and safeguards individuals' privacy, security and confidence.

Anonymity refers to the state of being unknown or hidden, or the condition of having one's identity concealed or anonymous, a definition suggested by (DeGloma, 2023: 9). It is frequently applied in circumstances where people want to engage and participate but do not wish to divulge any personal information. A study by Subedi (2025: 13) suggests that in research where anonymity is guaranteed, participants remain anonymous by using pseudonyms or avoiding sharing identifiable details about themselves.

For this study, written consent was obtained from each respondent, who was assured of anonymity and confidentiality. The identity of the person and personal information of the respondents were not included in the questionnaire.

3.9.2.1 POPI Act 4 of 2013 Consideration

The Protection of Personal Information (POPI) Act was adhered to when the study was conducted, as one of its aims is to promote the protection of personal information (South African Government, 2014). The researcher abides by the regulations of the Act by protecting the personal information of those who participated in the study.

3.9.3 Informed consent to participate in the study

Haneef and Agrawal (2024: 30) describe informed consent as an essential ethical guideline in research which guarantees that subjects are completely aware of the nature of the study, any possible risks or benefits if applicable, and their rights before consenting to take part. Tauginienė, Hummer, Albert, Cigarini and Vohland (2021: 407) state that it is imperative to tailor the informed consent form to the particular study and participant cohort, while ensuring that it is clearly written and has eloquent and comprehensible writing. Before respondents sign the consent form, researchers should also be accessible to address any concerns and offer more information as needed.

Arellano, Alcubilla and Leguízamo (2023: 12) outline the general features of what should be included in an informed consent form, namely an explanation, the anticipated duration of the subject's participation, the methods to be followed, a statement of the research's goal and importance, and an identification of any experimental procedures. A declaration detailing the

level of confidentiality that will be maintained for records, together with information on who can access research records and how they will be kept are also provided.

A contact statement that includes the researcher's phone number and email address, as well as the contacts of the institution they are from or are representing, are presented so that participants can ask questions or voice any concerns they may have about the research. A statement that participation is completely optional, that people may opt out at any moment, and that refusal to engage is acceptable is also made. Lastly, a space for participants to append their signature and date are provided on the consent form, indicating their agreement to participate.

For this study, participation was voluntary and informed consent in the form of a written and signed approval from the relevant participants was ensured and obtained. The sample of the consent form is enclosed as an appendix (*Appendix C*).

3.9.4 Data storage and dissemination

Hardcopy questionnaires are used, and data obtained from students will be stored in a safe and lockable cabinet. Captured data will be stored in a pass-warded file on the computer. The data will be retained safely for five years after the study has been concluded. Thereafter, hardcopies of questionnaires will be shredded, debris from shredding will be ignited, and electronic data will be deleted and wiped out from the computer server.

3.9.5 Permission to conduct the study

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the UTVET College Principal who delegated the Deputy Principal to authorise permission. The approval is in the form of a letter known as the gatekeeper's letter, attached as *Appendix E*.

3.9.6 Delimitations of the study

The constraints that a researcher must operate within during a research investigation are known as delimitations. Akanle, Ademuson and Shittu (2020: 112) describe the potential research restrictions. The study was limited to TVET College students and cannot be applied to students at other higher education institutions. Nevertheless, the results may serve as a foundation for identifying common themes for more research, and it may be suggested to do research with target audiences other than uMgungundlovu TVET (UTVET) students. The study also focused

on six social media platforms, namely Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp and TikTok as the main sources of information.

3.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter outlined the comprehensive research methodology used in the study. It explained the empirical research phases that were followed, from the research design to the target population, sample size and the procedure followed in collecting data. The sampling method, measuring instruments employed and the data analysis relating to the study were also discussed. The chapter went into additional details on the ethical procedures of the study and concepts of validity and reliability and how these contribute to ensuring that the study is valuable to the variables of the study and social media companies. All these aspects covered in this chapter were detailed and comprehensively linked to the study. In the following chapter, the data analysis and interpretation of the findings are presented, accompanied by critical discussions that aligns the results with existing scholarly literature.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSIONS OF THE RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the quantitative data obtained from the research study respondents. A total of 271 questionnaires were dispatched to the respondents. Eventually, data was collected from 241 respondents, representing an 88.91% active response rate, while 11.09% represents the non-response rate. The data was then coded in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and later exported into SPSS (version 29). The presentation and analysis of the results were done as per the stated research objectives. The chapter presented the demographics of the respondents followed by the results on how TVET college students are influenced by social media platforms. The chapter proceeded with the presentation of the results on how TVET college students react to and process shared information on social media for decision-making. It further presented the results on what TVET college students mostly use social media platforms for. In addition, the chapter presented the results on the type of social media mostly used by TVET college students. It proceeded to examine the perspectives of TVET college students on the nature of information shared on social media platforms. The chapter concluded by presenting the results based on the influence of gender on TVET students' social media usage.

The research objectives that guided the quantitative data analysis are as follows:

- I. To explore how TVET college students are influenced by social media platforms;
- II. To investigate how TVET college students react to and process information shared on social media platforms for decision-making;
- III. To identify what TVET college students mostly use social media platforms for;
- IV. To identify the social media platforms that are most used by TVET college students;
- V. To examine the perspectives of TVET college students on the nature of information shared on social media platforms; and
- VI. To investigate the influence of gender on TVET students' social media usage.

4.2 SAMPLE RESPONSE RATE

In total, 271 questionnaires were dispatched to respondents and 241 were returned which gave an 88.91% response rate. The remaining 30 potential respondents could not take part in the survey. Table 4.1 below shows the active and non-active response rate of the respondents.

As mentioned in Chapter 3 in detail, validity was ensured as the research instrument used to collect data was thoroughly evaluated for its validity, ensuring that it accurately measures what it intends to measure through a pilot study that was conducted prior to the main data collection.

Reliability was established by Cronbach’s Alpha being calculated for all questions, which have the same scales in each section. Cronbach’s alpha was also calculated as part of the reliability test to assess how consistent the results were and will get similar results to generalise if the sample size was increased.

Table 4. 1: Response rate

Total sample	271	100%
Active response rate	241	88.91%
Non-response	30	11.09%

Source: Author’s own (2025)

Table 4.1 above shows that 241 respondents represented the 88.91% response rate whereas 30 respondents represented 11.09% non-response rate. The next section of the chapter presents the demographic characteristics of the sample.

4.3 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

Table 4.2 presents the demographic information of the respondents, namely their gender, age, race and education background. The demographic characteristics of the sample are presented in the table below.

Table 4. 2: Demographic information of the respondents

Biographical Characteristics	Category of Demographic Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Males	82	34%
	Females	159	66%
Age groups	18-20 years	21	8.7%
	21-25 years	83	34.4%
	26-30 years	50	20.7%
	31-35 years	47	19.5%

	36-40 years	29	12%
	41-45 years	11	4.6%
Race	African/Black	239	99.2%
	Coloured	1	0.4%
	Other	1	0.4%
Education level	NCV	67	27.8%
	N4	62	25.7%
	N5	62	25.7%
	N6	29	12%
	N6 Diploma	21	8.7%

Source: Author's Own (2025)

From Table 4.2 above, males comprised 34% of the sample, with the remaining 66% being females. With regard to age, only 8.7% were between the ages of 18-20 years; 34.4% were between the ages of 21-25 years; about 20.7% were between the ages of 26-30 years; 19.5% were between the ages of 31-35 years; 12% were between the ages of 36-40 and the remaining 4.6% of the respondents were between the ages of 41-45 years respectively. Approximately 99.2% of respondents were African/Black, 0.4% were coloured and the remaining 0.4% fell in 'other' races. Furthermore, 27.8% of the respondents had NCV, 25.7% had N4, another 25.7% had N5, 12% had N6 and the remaining 8.7% of the respondents had an N6 Diploma.

4.4 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

A descriptive study is a research method that aims to provide an accurate portrayal of a situation or phenomenon. It focuses on observing and describing characteristics without interference. These studies are often used to gather information about what exists rather than why or how it exists, according to Ghanad (2023: 3799).

A descriptive study was used to answer objectives 1- 4 of the research, which are:

- To explore how TVET college students are influenced by social media platforms;
- To investigate how TVET college students react to and process information shared on social media platforms for decision-making;

- To identify what TVET college students mostly use social media platforms for; and
- To identify what social media platform are used the most by TVET college students.

These were assessed by asking the respondents to respond to various aspects of the items using a 1-to-5-point Likert scale. The results were processed using descriptive statistics and illustrated from (Table 4.3 to Table 4.6), and from (Figure 4.1 to Figure 4.8).

4.4.1 How TVET College students are influenced by social media platforms – objective 1

The first objective of this study was to elicit responses from the respondents on how TVET college students are influenced by social media platforms. The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statements using a five-point Likert scale: SD = strongly disagree, 1; D= Disagree, 2; N= Neutral, 3; A = Agree, 4; SA =strongly agree, 5. The questions regarding this objective can be found in section B of the research instrument (Appendix A, questions 5.1 - 5.4).

Table 4. 3: Descriptive statistics: Social media influence

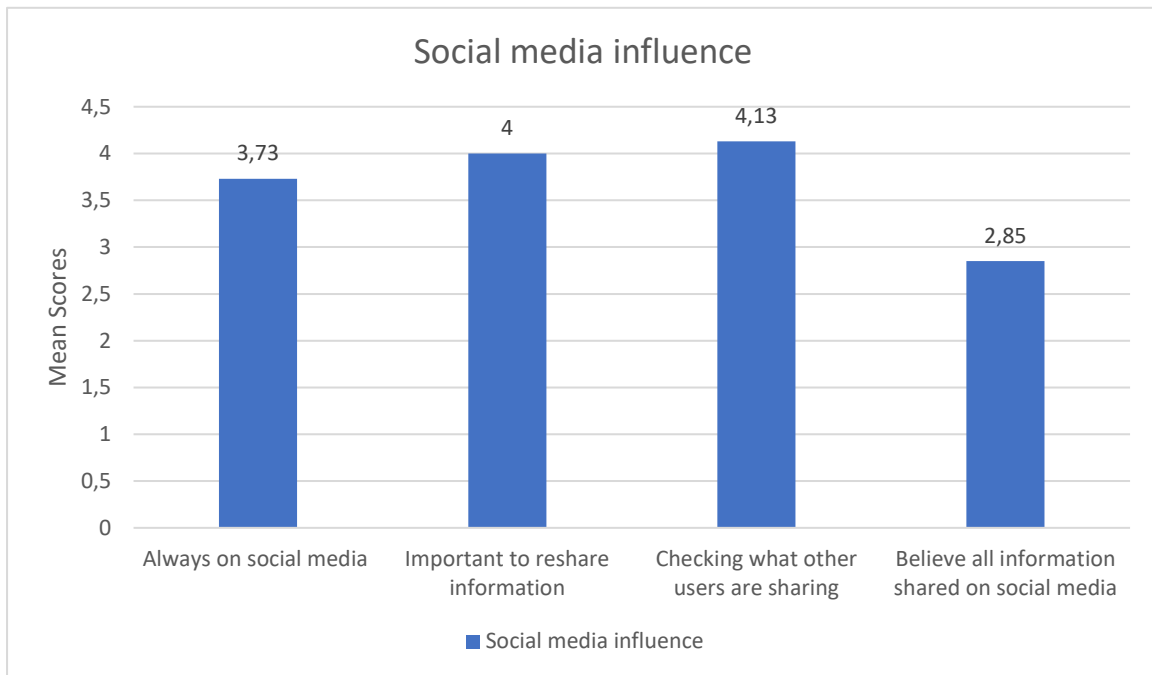
Dimension	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
I am always on social media contributing to the sharing of information	3.73	1.14650	1	5
I believe it is important to reshare information posted on social media by other users	4.00	1.01653	1	5
I am always on social media checking what other users are sharing	4.13	1.02419	1	5
I believe all information shared on social media.	2.85	1.15347	1	5

Source: Author’s Own (2025)

From Table 4.5, it is evident that checking what other users are sharing on social media had the highest mean score (Mean = 4.13), closely followed by the importance of re-sharing information posted on social media by other users (Mean = 4.00), always on social media contributing to the sharing of information (Mean = 3.73) and lastly, believing all information shared on social media (Mean = 2.85).

The results, based on the mean score values, are graphically presented in Figure 4.1 below.

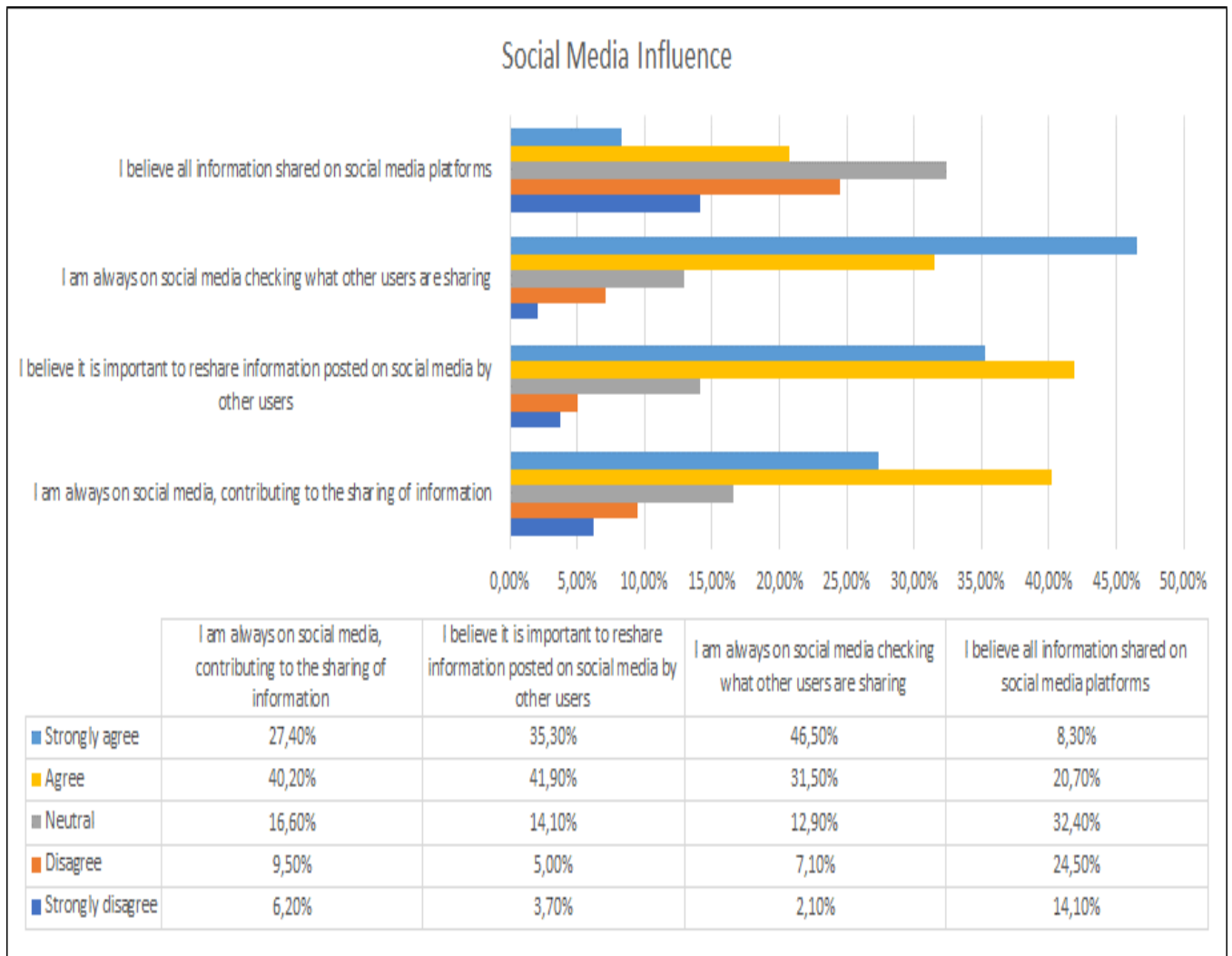
Figure 4. 1: Graph on social media influence



Source: Author's Own (2025)

The implication of the results depicted in Figure 4.1 showed that checking what other users are sharing was the strongest, while believing in all information shared on social media was the weakest. To assess exactly where the improvement lies, frequency analyses were undertaken in terms of how TVET college students are influenced by social media platforms. The results are depicted in Figure 4.2 below.

Figure 4. 2: How TVET college students are influenced by social media platforms



Source: Author’s Own (2025)

The results illustrated in Figure 4.2 indicate that 6.2% strongly disagree and a further 9.5% disagree that they are always on social media contributing to the sharing of information. Another 16.6% neither agreed nor disagreed that they are always on social media contributing to the sharing of information and 40.2%, which constituted the majority, agreed and 27.4% strongly agreed that they are always on social media contributing to the sharing of information.

Approximately 3.7% strongly disagree and 5.0% disagreed that they believe it is important to re-share information posted on social media by other users; 14.1% neither agreed nor disagreed that they believe it is important to re-share information posted on social media by other users; while the remaining majority (41.9%) agreed and 35.3% strongly agreed that they believe it is important to re-share information posted on social media by other users.

Furthermore, 2.1% strongly disagreed and 7.1% disagreed that they are always on social media checking what other users are sharing. Another 12.9% neither agreed nor disagreed that they are always on social media checking what other users are sharing, while 31.5% agreed and 46.5% strongly agreed that they are always on social media checking what other users are sharing.

Approximately 14.1% strongly disagreed and 24.5% disagreed that they believe in all information shared on social media platforms, and 32.4% neither agreed nor disagreed. Furthermore, 32.4% neither agreed nor disagreed that they believe in all information shared on social media platforms. Moreover, 20.7% agreed and 8.3% strongly agreed that they believe in all information shared on social media platforms.

4.4.1.1 Discussion of results for Objective 1

This objective discussion analyses how students are influenced by social media platforms, focusing on four key dimensions as emerged from the descriptive statistics as shown in figures 4.1 and 4.2. These are:

- Checking what other users are sharing on social media,
- The importance of re-sharing information,
- Always on social media platform, and
- Believing in all information shared on social media platforms.

These four dimensions are discussed below.

- **Checking what other users are sharing on social media**

In this study, checking what other users are sharing on social media had the highest influence on TVET college students. The first dimension explores the extent to which students are constantly on social media, checking what others are sharing. Findings by Swart (2023: 507) in a qualitative study conducted in Netherlands suggests that there is a high level of engagement, with many participants indicating that they frequently check social media platforms to keep abreast on other users' views. Similarly, Littman-Ovadia and Russo-Netzer (2024: 6) have highlighted in the qualitative study they carried out in Israel the extensive nature of social media in young adults' lives, with constant connectivity becoming the norm. In addition, Littman-Ovadia and Russo-Netzer (2024: 6) discovered that "fear of missing out"

(FOMO) and the desire for social validation drive this constant engagement. However, according to Brewer, Schoenebeck, Lee and Suryadevara (2021:18), research findings in USA suggest that some users are moving away from active participation toward the passive consumption of content, and while engagement is high, the nature of engagement differs.

Furthermore, Sharma, Lee and Johnson's (2022: 6) qualitative research in the USA presents the concept of "doom-scrolling", which may be the matter with the above research findings, in which users are excessively consuming undesirable news and information, which may cause anxiety and stress. This feature of constant engagement needs to be considered when evaluating the overall impact of social media.

- **Importance of re-sharing information**

The findings of the study revealed that the importance of re-sharing information on social media had the second highest influence on TVET college students. The second dimension examines the perceived importance of re-sharing information posted by other users. Findings indicate a mixed approach in responses. While some respondents viewed re-sharing information as a crucial way to disseminate information and connect with others, others were more cautious, expressing concerns about the spread of misinformation. Wang and Fussell's (2020: 3) study in the USA agrees on this participatory culture, which emphasises the role of re-sharing in creating online communities. They found that re-sharing is often seen as a form of endorsement and a way to signal affiliation with certain groups or opinions.

Conversely, Pröllochs and Feuerriegel's (2023: 16) research in Germany argues that the ease of resharing can also contribute to the rapid spread of false or misleading information. Their research highlights the need for media literacy education to equip students to critically evaluate the information they encounter online before re-sharing. The findings of a mixed research approach in the USA by London Jr, Li and Sun (2022: 979) indicate that the motivation behind resharing differs depending on the platform and the type of content, and further indicate that resharing personal updates might be for social reasons, while resharing news articles might be motivated by a desire to inform or persuade.

- **Always on social media contributing to sharing of information**

This dimension had the third highest influence in the study and explores students' active participation in contributing to the sharing of information. Study results reveal a range of participation levels, with some students actively creating and sharing content, while others primarily consume and re-share. This resonates with the research findings of a qualitative South African study by Adjin-Tettey and Garman (2023: 14) on the "1-9-90 rule", which suggests that only 1% of users actively create content, 9% contribute through sharing or commenting, while 90% primarily consume content.

However, a researcher from Sweden, Terceiro (2024: 11) conducted a qualitative study focusing on Brazilian professionals who actively produce content in Portuguese, and who argues that this rule might be an oversimplification as the lines between creating, sharing and consuming are increasingly blurred in the age of interactive social media. In respect of this, this researcher highlights the rise of "prosumers", users who both produce and consume content.

- **Believe in all information shared on social media platforms**

In this study, believing all information shared on social media had the least influence on TVET college students. The final dimension investigates students' beliefs about the influence of information shared on social media.

While some respondents acknowledged the potential for social media to influence their opinions and behaviours, others expressed scepticism about the reliability of information shared online. This aligns with Lucaser and Acedera's (2025: 131) research in the Philippines on social media literacy, which emphasises the importance of developing critical thinking skills to evaluate online information. They found that students who possess higher levels of social media literacy are more likely to question the credibility of sources and less likely to be influenced by misinformation. Having stated this, Kandula's (2023: 4) study in Sweden explores the concept of "filter bubbles", claiming that social media algorithms can create echo chambers where users are only exposed to information that confirms their existing beliefs, therefore perpetuating biasness and limiting access to various perspectives.

Nair and Bhagat (2024: 8) conducted a study on the influence of influencers and micro-influencers on social media users' behaviour in India and found that particularly in areas such as consumer choices and lifestyle trends, their findings suggest that social media users are often more influenced by peers and relatable figures than by traditional celebrities.

The analysis of this study aim focuses on the various ways that social media platforms influence students. While constant engagement, resharing and active contribution are prominent elements of students' online experiences, their impact is moulded by factors such as the nature of engagement, the motivation behind sharing, and the level of social media literacy.

4.4.2 How students react to and process information shared on social media for decision-making: Objective 2

The second objective of the study elicited the views of the respondents regarding how TVET college students react and process shared information on social media platforms for decision-making. There were seven items or questions under this section. The respondents indicated the extent to which they agree or disagree with the questions using a 5-point Likert scale, and the results of the study showed that the respondents adequately responded to all the questions. The questions regarding this objective can be found in Section B of the research instrument (Appendix A, questions 9.1 - 9.7).

Table 4. 4: How students react to and process information shared on social media for decision-making

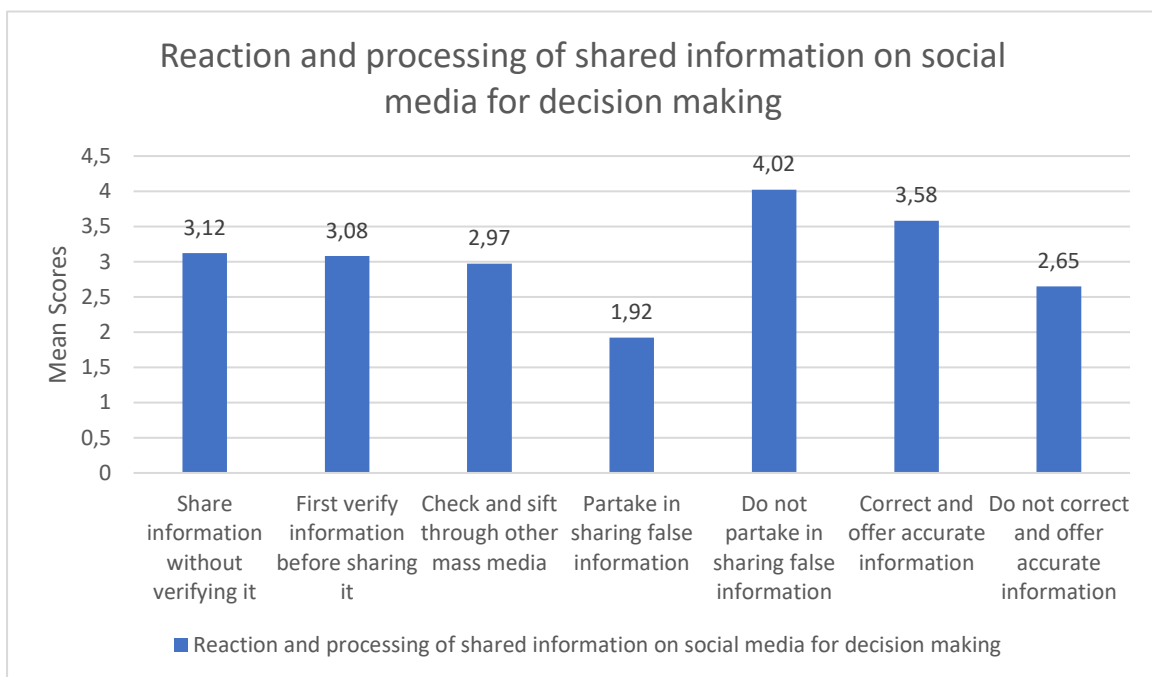
Dimension	Mean	Std Dev	Min.	Max.
I share information I receive on social media with other users without verifying it	3.12	1.35325	1	5
I first verify information before I share it with other users on social media	3.08	1.32838	1	5
I check and sift through other mass media and mainstream media and share it with social media users	2.97	1.31466	1	5
I partake in sharing false information on social media	1.92	1.15741	1	5
I do not partake in sharing false information on social media	4.02	1.06350	1	5
I correct and offer accurate information to other users on social media when I notice they have shared false information	3.58	1.26628	1	5

I do not correct and offer accurate information to other users when I notice they had shared false and inaccurate information	2.65	1.34941	1	5
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Source: Author's Own (2025)

As shown in Table 4.6, it is evident that not taking part in sharing false information had the highest mean value (Mean = 4.02), followed by correct and offer accurate information to other users (Mean = 3.58), share information without verifying it (Mean = 3.12), first verify information before sharing it (Mean = 3.08), check and sift through other mass media (Mean = 2.97), do not correct and offer accurate information (Mean = 2.65), and lastly, partake in sharing false information (Mean = 1.92).

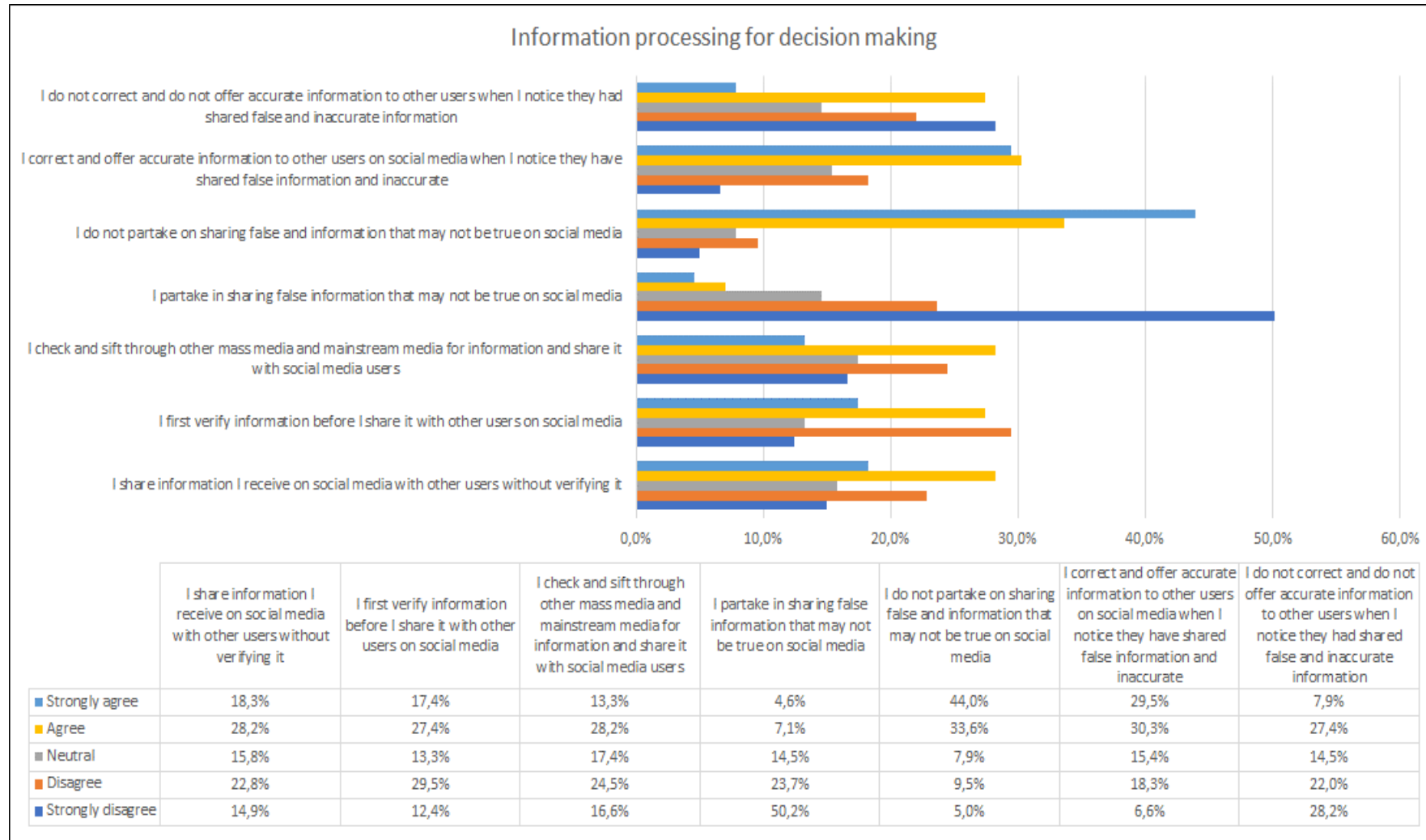
Figure 4. 3: How students react to and process information shared on social media for decision-making



Source: Author's Own (2025)

In order to assess where the improvement lies, frequency analyses were undertaken in terms of information processing for decision-making.

Figure 4. 4: How students react to and process information shared on social media for decision-making



Source: Author's Own (2025)

The results in Figure 4.4 show that 14.9% strongly disagree and 22.8% disagree that they share information on social media without verifying it; 15.8% neither agreed nor disagreed that they share information on social media without verifying it; 28.2% agreed and 18.3% strongly agreed that they share information on social media without verifying it.

About 12.4% strongly disagreed and 29.5% disagreed that they first verify information before sharing it with other users on social media; 13.3% neither agreed nor disagreed that they first verify information before sharing it with other users on social media; 27.4% agreed and 17.4% strongly agreed that they first verify information before sharing it with other users.

Approximately 16.6% strongly disagreed and 24.5% disagreed that they check and sift through other mass media and mainstream media; 17.4% neither agreed nor disagreed that they check and sift through other mass media; 28.2% agreed and 13.3% strongly agreed that they check and sift through other mass media and mainstream media.

About 50.2% strongly disagreed and 23.7% disagreed that they partake in sharing false information that may not be true on social media, 14.5% neither agreed nor disagreed that they partake in sharing false information. 7.1% agreed and 4.6% strongly agreed that they partake in sharing false information that may not be true on social media.

Furthermore, 5.0% strongly disagreed and 9.5% disagreed that they do not partake in sharing false information on social media; 7.9% neither agreed nor disagreed that they do not partake in sharing false information on social media; 33.6% agreed and 44% strongly agreed that they do not partake in sharing false information on social media.

Additionally, 6.6% strongly disagreed and 18.3% disagreed that they correct and offer accurate information on social media, 15.4% neither agreed nor disagreed that they correct and offer accurate information on social media, 30.3% agreed and 29.5% strongly agreed that they correct and offer accurate information on social media.

Lastly, 28.2% strongly disagreed and 22% disagreed that they do not correct and offer accurate information on social media; 14.5% neither agreed nor disagreed that they correct and offer accurate information on social media; 27.4% agreed and 7.9% strongly agreed that they correct and offer accurate information on social media.

4.4.2.1 Discussion of results for Objective 2

This discussion analyses the objective research findings regarding how students react to and process information shared on social media for decision-making, based on a ranked scale of seven behavioural dimensions from highest to lowest engagement, as emerged from the descriptive statistics as shown in figures 4.3 and 4.4. The dimensions are:

- I do not partake in sharing false information,
- I correct and offer accurate information,
- I share information without verifying it,
- I first verify information before sharing it,
- I check and sift through other mass media,
- I do not correct and offer accurate information, and
- I partake in sharing false information.

This analysis will explore the implications of these findings, comparing them with existing scholarly perspectives, and highlighting areas of agreement and disagreement. These dimensions are organised based on their ranking and are discussed below.

- **I do not partake in sharing false information**

The top ranked dimension, “*I do not partake in sharing false information*”, suggests a solid desire amongst participants to avoid disseminating misinformation. This is consistent with the increasing awareness of the unfavourable impact of fake news and the ethical considerations associated with spreading falsehoods and is a growing cultural shift towards digital integrity and accountability as highlighted by Li and Chang (2023: 1480) in the study they conducted in the USA. This finding indicates a growing sense of being responsible amongst young social media users. The highest ranking of this dimension may also be interpreted as a positive indicator of digital literacy, where users are increasingly aware of the social harm that misinformation can cause, including public confusion, erosion of trust, and the amplification of divisive narratives. Participants’ reluctance to engage in the dissemination of false content may also be influenced by personal ethical standards and fear of reputational damage. This suggests that moral reasoning plays a critical role in shaping online behavior, supporting the notion that ethical digital is becoming more embedded within social media culture as outlined in a Nigerian quantitative study by (Ekwunife, Emebo, Agha, Onyeneho, Ukeje, Nwachukwu and Uchechi,

2025: 56). Advancing this point, this finding reveals a notable commitment among participants to uphold truthfulness, reinforcing the importance of fostering informed, responsible engagement in digital spaces.

- **I correct and offer accurate information**

The second ranked dimension “*I correct and offer accurate information*” further reinforces the proactive approach some participants take towards combating misinformation on social media. This behaviour demonstrates a commitment to information integrity and a willingness to engage in corrective actions. It reflects a sense of public responsibility and a desire to maintain the accuracy of online discourse. It further agrees with the study findings conducted in 15 countries covering Africa, Europe, Asia, Latin and North America and Oceania by Sehat, Li, Nie, Prabhakar and Zhang (2024: 4) that emphasised the role of active fact-checking and exposing in mitigating the spread of misinformation. The act of correcting misinformation reflects a deep commitment to information integrity and aligns with the norms of responsible digital conduct, an act highlighted by a UK empirical study by (Diepeveen and Pinet, 2022: 13). It further demonstrates that some users not only recognise the presence of misinformation but have developed a sense of civic duty to intervene and provide factual clarity, a gesture that some users still shy away from. Such corrective engagement suggests a deeper level of media literacy and critical thinking, where participants are not merely consumers of information but also active contributors to the quality of online discourse. The willingness to challenge inaccurate content can also be seen as a social corrective mechanism, contributing to the overall collective resilience of online communities against misinformation.

- **I share information without verifying it**

The third-ranked dimension, “*I share information without verifying it*”, reveals a concerning yet insightful aspect of user behavior in digital spaces. Although it did not rank at the top, its position indicates that a significant portion of participants may engage in the dissemination of unverified content. The fact that *sharing without verifying* precedes *verifying before sharing* displays a potential gap between intention and action. While many students may understand the importance of verification, they may not always put it into practice. This could be due to time constraints, the perceived effort involved in the process of verification, or the urge of sharing

information quickly, especially in the fast-paced social media environment. This finding is consistent with Haider and Sundin's (2022: 1180) findings in a quantitative study in Sweden that sampled students on their perception and attitudes, as they highlight the challenges individuals face in discerning credible information online. The finding reflects impulsive nature of social media use, where speed and ease of sharing often override the desire to verify sources or evaluate its credibility. This finding aligns with existing literature from an Algerian study by Madi (2025: 51) highlighting the role of cognitive overload, emotional engagement, and social validation in shaping online behaviors. It may also point to a lack of critical digital literacy among some users, who might not consistently apply verification practices despite understanding their importance.

- **I first verify information before sharing it**

The fourth-ranked dimension, "*I first verify information before sharing it,*" reflects a noteworthy level of caution and responsibility among study participants when engaging with digital content. Its presence among the top findings suggests that a significant proportion of users recognise the importance of verification as a critical step in preventing the spread of misinformation. This behavior indicates a conscious effort to evaluate the credibility of information and source prior to dissemination, a move supported by a qualitative and quantitative study from Sri Lanka by Millagala (2023: 15) aligning with principles of digital literacy and ethical information sharing. This result complements findings related to participants' reluctance to share false information and their willingness to correct inaccuracies. However, the slightly lower ranking of this dimension relative to the proactive correction of misinformation may suggest that while users value information accuracy, they do not always engage in regular verification before sharing. This could be attributed to factors such as time constraints, lack of access to verification tools, or assumptions about the reliability of certain sources, an aim in a Poland study by Majerczak and Strzelecki (2022: 13) that sought to identify the details on how Polish society perceives the problem of fake news and assess the extent to which it trusts content that is published on the internet. The findings highlight the potential effectiveness of media literacy efforts and underscores the need to reinforce verification habits as a standard practice in social media platforms.

- **I check and sift through other mass media**

The third middle- ranked dimension “*I check and sift through other mass media*” outlines that some students actively seek information from diverse sources other than social media. Such behaviour reflects a critical approach to information consumption and a recognition of the potential biases inherent in social media content, a problem statement of qualitative research conducted in the UAE by Nassif (2024: 49) in a study that investigated how young adults, particularly university students, comprehend and navigate the influence of algorithms on social media platforms and examined participants’ awareness, perceptions and strategies regarding algorithmic content curation. This allies with calls for promoting media literacy and encouraging users to engage with a variety of sources to develop a more comprehensive understanding of issues. In the other hand, it reflects proactiveness and sharing quality information coming from verified and credible sources, which in most cases is mass media like the newspapers, as mentioned in a qualitative study by Matanji, Tully, Mudavadi, Diop and Madrid-Morales (2024: 7) that examined how media professionals in Kenya and Senegal respond to misinformation using fact-checking and media literacy strategies, and how they perceive these strategies for mitigating the spread of misinformation.

- **I do not correct and offer accurate information**

The acknowledgment of this sixth-ranked dimension by study’s’ participants “*I do not correct and offer accurate information*” being actively exposed indicates that not all students participate in correcting misinformation. This reveals a passive bearing among some participants regarding the correction of misinformation on digital spaces. While this behavior may reflect a reluctance to engage in confrontational or corrective interactions online, it also raises concerns about users’ willingness to contribute to the accuracy and reliability of shared content. The relatively lower ranking of this dimension suggests that fewer participants identify with this passive approach. This behavior contrasts with higher-ranked dimensions that emphasise proactive correction and verification, highlighting a disparity in user engagement when it comes to upholding information integrity. Deepening this analysis’s finding, explanations for this reluctance include fear of backlash, harassment, and online bullying, perceived lack of authority to correct others, a belief that it is not their responsibility or lack of confidence in their ability to identify and correct false information which are some of the factors

identified by Gurgun, Arden-Close, Phalp and Ali (2023: 1932) in their research. These factors align with prior research by Ecker, Lewandowsky, Cook, Schmid, Fazio, Brashier, Kendeou, Vraga, and Amazeen (2022: 20) indicating that social and psychological barriers often discourage users from intervening, even when they recognise misinformation. While the dimension ranks lower, it signals a gap in digital engagement that, if addressed, could strengthen the overall fight against misinformation.

- **I partake in sharing false information**

Nevertheless, the presence of the seventh and lowest- ranked dimension, “*I partake in sharing false information*” even if representing a smaller proportion of the population, highlights the complex landscape of information sharing and a strong rejection of misinformation-sharing behavior. It suggests that while many students strive for accuracy, a study conducted in China by Tsang and Zhou (2025) agrees that a portion remains prone to engaging in spreading misinformation. This could be due to various factors, including a lack of media literacy, vulnerability to emotional appeals, or deliberate malicious intent to mislead other users. Its position at the bottom suggests that very few participants identify with this practice, reflecting a generally moderate to high level of awareness regarding the negative consequences of spreading false information online. The low endorsement of this behavior can be interpreted as a positive indicator of ethical digital conduct. It further complements higher-ranked dimensions such as “*I do not partake in sharing false information*” and “*I correct and offer accurate information*,” reinforcing a pattern of responsible engagement among the majority of participants. Though, the fact that this dimension was still acknowledged by some study participants, minimally highlights that misinformation-sharing whether intentional or unintentional remains a residual issue and long-term risk to the information shared on social media, an indicator detailed in a UK quantitative study by Buchanan (2020: 3) that investigated the phenomena on why people spread false information online.

Overall, these findings paint a complex picture of student information processing on social media. While a significant proportion of students appear to prioritise accuracy and avoid spreading misinformation, a notable minority engages in behaviours that contribute to the spread of false information. The discrepancy between acknowledging the importance of

verification and practicing it highlights the need for interventions that promote media literacy and critical thinking skills.

4.4.3 Extent of use of social media and what it is mostly used for – Objective 3

The third objective was to identify what TVET college students mostly use social media platforms for. Table 4.5 below presents the results of the study in relation to the objective. The objective comprised seven items or questions and the students responded to these items by indicating the extent to which they agree or disagree. The summarised scoring patterns are presented in the table below. The questions regarding this objective can be found in Section B of the research instrument (Appendix A, questions 6.1 - 6.7).

Table 4. 5: Extent of use of social media and what it is mostly used for

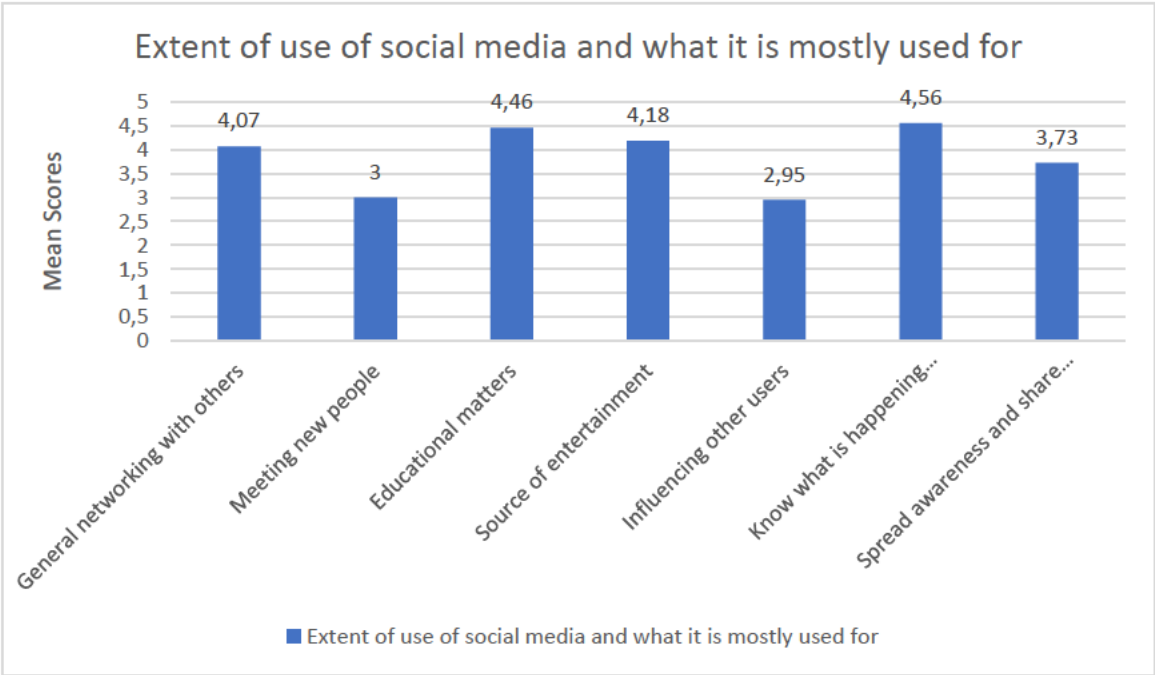
Dimension	Mean	Std. Dev	Min.	Max.
I mostly use social media platforms for general networking with other users	4.07	.94573	1	5
I mostly use social media platforms for meeting new people	3.00	1.2162.	1	5
I mostly use social media platforms for educational matters	4.46	.76320	1	5
I mostly use social platforms as a source of entertainment	4.18	.98600	1	5
I mostly use social media platforms to influence other users	2.95	1.13542	1	5
I mostly use social media platforms to know what is happening around the world	4.56	.77323	1	5
I mostly use social media platforms to spread awareness and share information during crises	3.73	1.08679	1	5

Source: Author’s Own (2025)

As reflected in Table 4.5 above, it is clear that to know what is happening around the world had the highest mean value (Mean = 4.56), closely followed by educational matters (Mean = 4.46), source of entertainment (Mean = 4.18), general networking with others (Mean = 4.07), spread awareness and share information during crises (Mean = 3.73), meeting new people (Mean = 3.00) and lastly, to influence other users (Mean = 2.95).

The results based on the mean score values are graphically presented in the figure below.

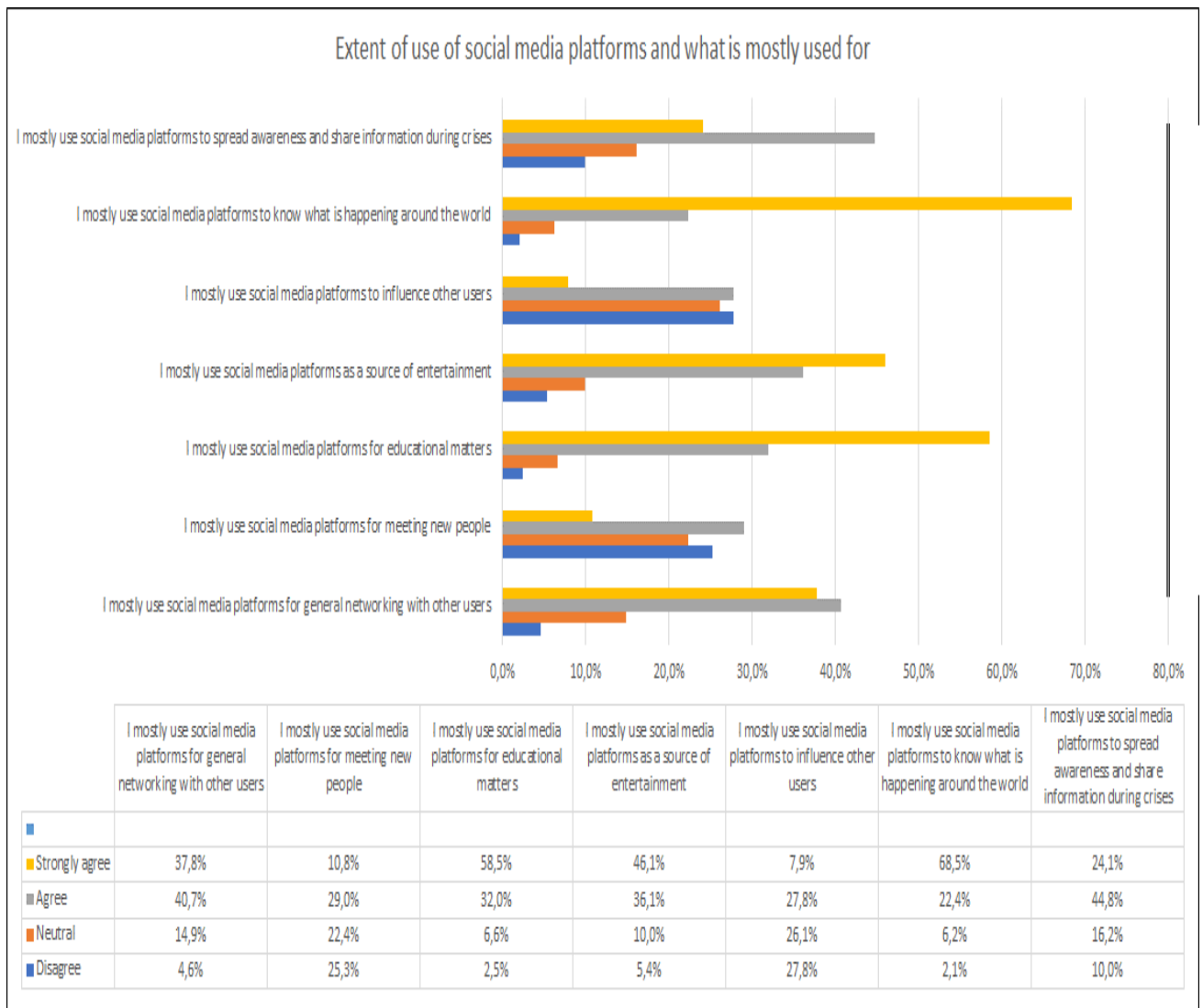
Figure 4. 5: Extent of use of social media and what it is mostly used for



Source: Author’s own (2025)

In order to assess where the improvement lies, frequency analyses were undertaken in terms of identifying what TVET college students mostly use social media platforms for. The results are shown in Figure 4.6 below.

Figure 4. 6: What TVET college students mostly use social media platforms for



Source: Author’s Own (2025)

The results indicate that 2.1% strongly disagreed and 4.6% disagreed that they use social media platforms for general networking with others; and 14.9% neither agreed nor disagreed that they use social media platforms for general networking with other users. Additionally, 40.7% agreed and 37.8% strongly agreed that they mostly use social media platforms for general networking with other users.

Furthermore, 12.4% strongly disagreed and 25.3% disagreed that they mostly use social media platforms for meeting new people; 22.4% neither agreed nor disagreed that they use social media platforms for meeting new people; 29% agreed and 10.8% strongly agreed that they use social media platforms for meeting new people.

Approximately 0.4% strongly disagreed and 2.5% disagreed that they use social media platforms for educational matters, whilst 6.6% neither agreed nor disagreed that they use social media platforms for educational matters. Another 32.0% agreed and the remaining 58.5% strongly agreed that they use social media platforms for educational matters.

Approximately 2.5% strongly disagreed and 5.4% disagreed that they mostly use social media platforms as a source of entertainment; 10.0% neither agreed nor disagreed that they use social media platforms as a source of entertainment; 36.1% agreed and 46.1% strongly agreed that they use social media platforms as a source of entertainment.

Approximately 10.4% strongly disagreed and 27.8% disagreed that they mostly use social media platforms to influence other users, whilst another 26.1% neither agreed nor disagreed that they mostly use social media platforms to influence other users. Furthermore, 27.8% agreed and 7.9% strongly agreed that they mostly use social media platforms to influence other users.

Furthermore, 0.8% strongly disagreed and 2.1% disagreed that they mostly use social media platforms to know what is happening around the world, and 6.2% neither agreed nor disagreed that they mostly use social media platforms to know what is happening around the world. Moreover, 22.4% agreed and the remaining majority of 68.5% strongly agreed that they mostly use social media platforms to know what is happening around the world.

Lastly, about 5.0% strongly disagreed and 10.0% disagreed that they mostly use social media platforms to spread awareness and share information during crises, and 16.2% neither agreed nor disagreed that they mostly use social media platforms to spread awareness and share information during crises. Approximately 44.8% agreed and 24.1% strongly agreed that they mostly use social media platforms to spread awareness and share information during crises.

4.4.3.1 Discussion of results for Objective 3

This study objective explored the extent of social media use amongst respondents and what they mostly use it for. The findings reveal characterised and blended primary uses of social media engagement, with distinct priorities shaping participants behaviour. The use of social media amongst respondents are as outlined below and are further discussed based on their interrelationships and prominence.

- Knowing what is happening around the world, followed by

- Accessing educational matters. This suggests a strong inclination towards information seeking and knowledge acquisition,
- Entertainment emerged as the third most significant purpose, aligning with the established role of social media as a leisure activity,
- General networking with other users ranked fourth, highlighting the social connectivity aspect of these platforms. While less prominent, students also used social media for,
- Spreading awareness and sharing information during crises ranking fifth, suggests that participants use social media moderately to below minimum for crisis management communication,
- Meeting new people ranking second to last suggests that its role in facilitating new connections is perceived as less significant compared to other social functions, and lastly,
- Influencing other users ranking last indicates that persuasive or influential engagement is the least prioritised function, highlighting a preference for information-sharing over agenda-setting.

This distribution of purposes underscores the multifaceted nature of social media engagement amongst respondents, as discussed below:

- **Knowing what is happening around the world**

The prioritisation uses of “*knowing what is happening around the world*” reflects a growing dependence on social media as a primary news source. This aligns with the report by Newman, Fletcher, Robertson, Ross Arguedas and Nielsen (2024: 16) through a survey of more than 95 000 people in 47 countries that revealed new findings about the consumption of online news globally, confirming a shift from traditional news outlets, particularly amongst younger generations in accessing news on what is happening around the world. Social media platforms offer real-time updates and diverse perspectives, potentially contributing to a sense of global awareness during crises and public engagement, this is according to an Australian qualitative case study by (Shahbazi and Bunker, 2024: 3). In contrast, Oladokun, Aruwa, Ottah and Ajani’s (2024: 3) study conducted in Nigeria employed a systematic review of literature that examined the need for fact-checking skills in the era of misinformation and disinformation on social media

and found that lacking such skills raises concerns about the potential for misinformation and the spread of fake news.

- **Using social media for educational matters**

The second highest use based on the findings of the study was “*using social media for educational matters*”. This highlights the increasing integration of social media into the learning process. Ahmad (2024: 91) conducted a study in Malaysia, stating that students are leveraging these platforms to access educational resources and engage in academic content. Capone (2022: 220) conducted a study in Italy that its quantitative results prove that social media can provide a dynamic and interactive learning environment, supplementing traditional classroom instruction. However, Nabung’s (2024: 375) study in Indonesia states that educators and students need to be mindful of potential distractions and ensure that social media is used effectively for educational purposes. Further supporting this dimensions’ findings, is a quantitative and qualitative study by Salim, Daud, and Hanif (2024: 8) in Indonesia during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed that social media platforms like WhatsApp, YouTube, and Instagram became essential tools for teaching across various education levels, this study displays a strong integration of modern studying and digital social media platforms.

- **Source of entertainment**

The third highest use of social media is for entertainment purposes. The prominence of “*entertainment*” as a social media purpose is consistent with its established role in providing leisure and relaxation. Social media platforms offer a wide selection of entertainment options, from videos and music to games and interactive content. While entertainment can be a positive aspect of social media use, Shahid, Yousaf and Munir (2024: 281) in a quantitative study in Pakistan argue that excessive engagement can lead to issues such as addiction, decreased productivity and distraction from work responsibilities or study tasks. Despite this, entertainment continues to play an essential role in social media, encouraging frequent daily use and promoting a sense of community and engagement through shared interests and cultural trends. According to recent statistics by GWI (2025), users spend on average over 2 hours daily on social media, with a significant portion dedicated to consuming entertainment content, highlighting its importance in the digital social experience. Therefore, balancing entertainment use to avoid negative outcomes while maximising its benefits is an ongoing challenge that users need to balance.

- **General networking with other users**

These findings related to the dimension on the use of social media for “*general networking*” suggests a pivotal role in contemporary digital communication, enabling users to connect, maintain, and expand relationships across and beyond social, professional, and geographic borders. Platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, and Instagram have become essential tools for facilitating these interactions, offering diverse features that support both personal connection and professional networking. According to Backlinko (2025), in 2025, over 5.24 billion people actively use social media globally, underscoring the scale and importance of these platforms in everyday life. These platforms facilitate prompt communication for these general social media functions and encourage vibrant communities and social capital building. However, while these indicate a positive use, Budak, Nyhan, Rothschild, Thorson and Watts (2024: 48) in a study in the USA highlights that it is crucial to address the potential risks associated with online interactions for such functions, such as cyberbullying, misleading information and privacy concerns. Inclusive, the general networking function of social media remains indispensable, fostering connection and opportunity while necessitating ongoing attention to its complexities.

- **Spreading awareness and sharing information during crises**

The finding on the use of social media for “*spreading awareness and sharing information during crises*” is an essential dimension of modern crisis communication, leveraging the platforms’ speed and reach to disseminate critical information quickly and extensively. Platforms such as Facebook have been pivotal in recent crises, including natural disasters and public health emergencies, by enabling rapid mobilisation of resources, community support and sources experience of those affected, as outlined by Lee and Ben Romdhane (2025: 7) in a UAE study conducted using experimental design. The use of social media for spreading awareness and sharing information during crises is undoubtedly an essential and convenient tool, offering swift and broad dissemination of critical updates. However, it is important to note that, according to findings from study’s’ participants, this function is not the most frequently used for sharing crisis information which its findings correspond with those of a Botswana qualitative study by Simon (2023: 41) that revealed that Botswana PR practitioners understand social media’s value in crisis communication, but do not take advantage of its full benefits. This

suggests that while users recognise the versatility of social media platforms, they may prefer other channels or combine multiple methods to handle crisis communication effectively.

- **Meeting new people**

The use of social media for “*meeting new people*” emerges as the second to last utilised purpose among the study participants, reflecting complex motivations and varying levels of engagement. This finding aligns with research indicating that social media platforms function as vital tools for initiating and sustaining new social connections, especially among youth, but this purpose is less motivating compared to other social media uses. Evidence from an exploratory mixed-method study of 547 adolescents in Canada by researchers Al-Jbouri, Volk, Spadafora, and Andrews (2024: 11) demonstrates that social media use especially platforms like Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, and YouTube significantly relates to the perceived importance of technology for social connection and friendship closeness. However, the motivation to meet new people specifically remains comparatively less dominant among users, who report using social media more intensively to maintain existing relationships rather than to seek new ones.

An empirical quantitative study from the USA by Ameri, Honka and Xie (2023) investigated friend formation in evolving online networks and discovered that users often rely on algorithmic recommendations and friend-of-friend connections, preferring to extend their social circles incrementally rather than initiating entirely new contacts. This demonstrates a cautious social expansion strategy, possibly attributed to privacy concerns and the perceived effort needed to establish meaningful new connections online. The relatively low priority placed on meeting new people through social media among students may reflect a critical engagement with these platforms, where users balance between leveraging social media for reinforcing existing relationships and cautiously expanding their social networks.

- **Influencing other users**

The least utilised purpose, “*influencing other users*”, suggests that while some students may aspire to be influencers and consuming content from influencers, it is not a primary motivation for most. This finding may reflect a growing awareness of the pressures and complexities

associated with the influencer culture as highlighted in study from the UK by (Bishop, 2021: 3). Supporting this perspective, recent studies show that while social media influencers hold significant persuasive power shaping attitudes and behaviors especially among younger people the phenomenon is not without its disadvantages. For example, a study conducted in UK by the researchers Ekinici, Dam and Buckle (2025: 1203) at the University of Portsmouth illuminates the “dark side” of influencer culture, revealing the impact of unrealistic social comparisons that can discourage active attempts to become influencers. This study argues that these pressures necessitate tighter regulation and greater ethical oversight, indicating that many students may consciously avoid the aspiration of influencing other users due to these complexities. The least utilised purpose of influencing others among students may be explained by an increasing awareness of the ethical, psychological, and challenges tied to influencer culture.

Overall, this study objective reveals that study participants utilise social media for a variety of purposes, with information seeking in order to know what is happening around the world and educational engagement being particularly prominent. While entertainment and social interactions remain important, the findings suggest a growing dependence on social media as a source of news and academic resources. These findings have implications for policy-makers and social media platforms companies themselves, highlighting the need to promote media literacy, responsible online behaviour, and the effective integration of social media into educational settings.

4.4.4 The most used social media platforms – Objective 4

The fourth and last objective analysed using descriptive statistics was to elicit the views of the respondents regarding social media platforms that are used the most by TVET college students. There were 6 questions or items under this objective and the respondents were asked to respond to the questions by indicating the level of their agreement and disagreement using a 5-point Likert scale. The questions regarding this objective can be found in Section B of the research instrument (Appendix A, questions 7.1 - 7.6).

Table 4. 6: The most used social media platform

Dimension	Mean	Std. Dev	Min.	Max.
Facebook has been my most used source of information	4.04	1.20185	1	5

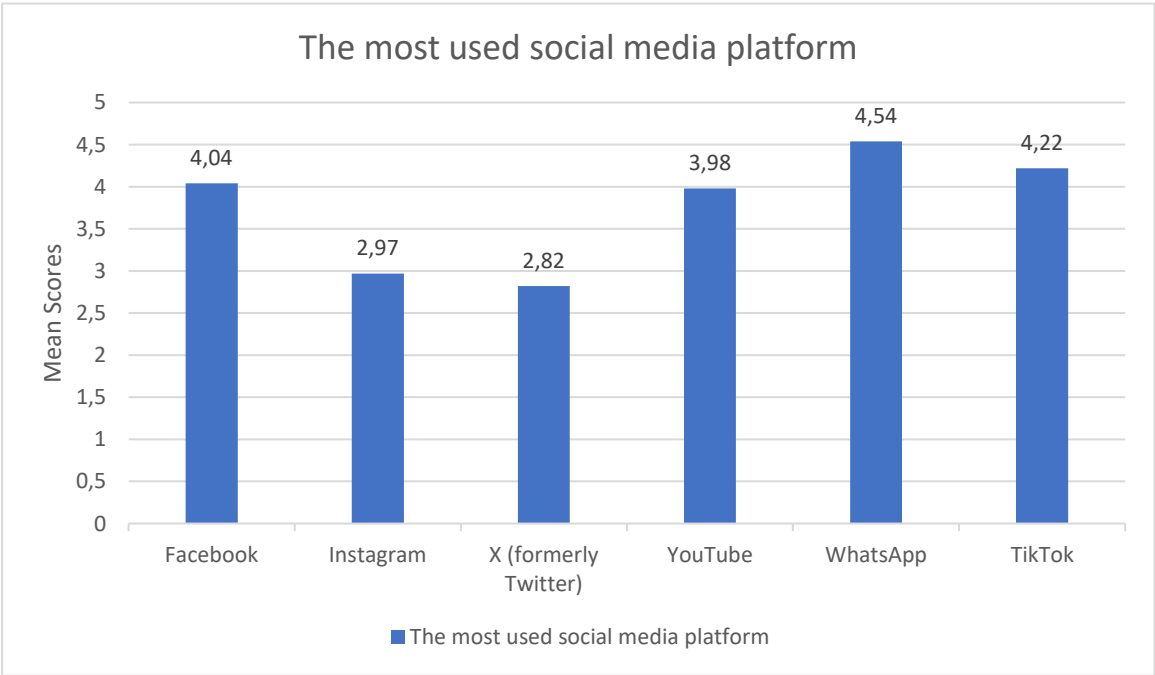
Instagram has been my most used source of information	2.97	1.35215	1	5
X (formerly Twitter) has been my most used source of information	2.82	1.48510	1	5
YouTube has been my most used source of information	2.98	1.42585	1	5
WhatsApp has been my most used source of information	4.54	.88477	1	5
TikTok has been my most used source of information	4.22	1.06611	1	5

Source: Author’s Own (2025)

As reflected in Table 4.6, it is evident that WhatsApp as a source of information had the highest mean value (Mean = 4.54), closely followed by TikTok (Mean = 4.22), Facebook (Mean = 4.04), YouTube (Mean = 2.98), Instagram (Mean = 2.97) and lastly, Twitter (X) (Mean = 2.82).

The results based on the mean score values are graphically presented in the Figure below.

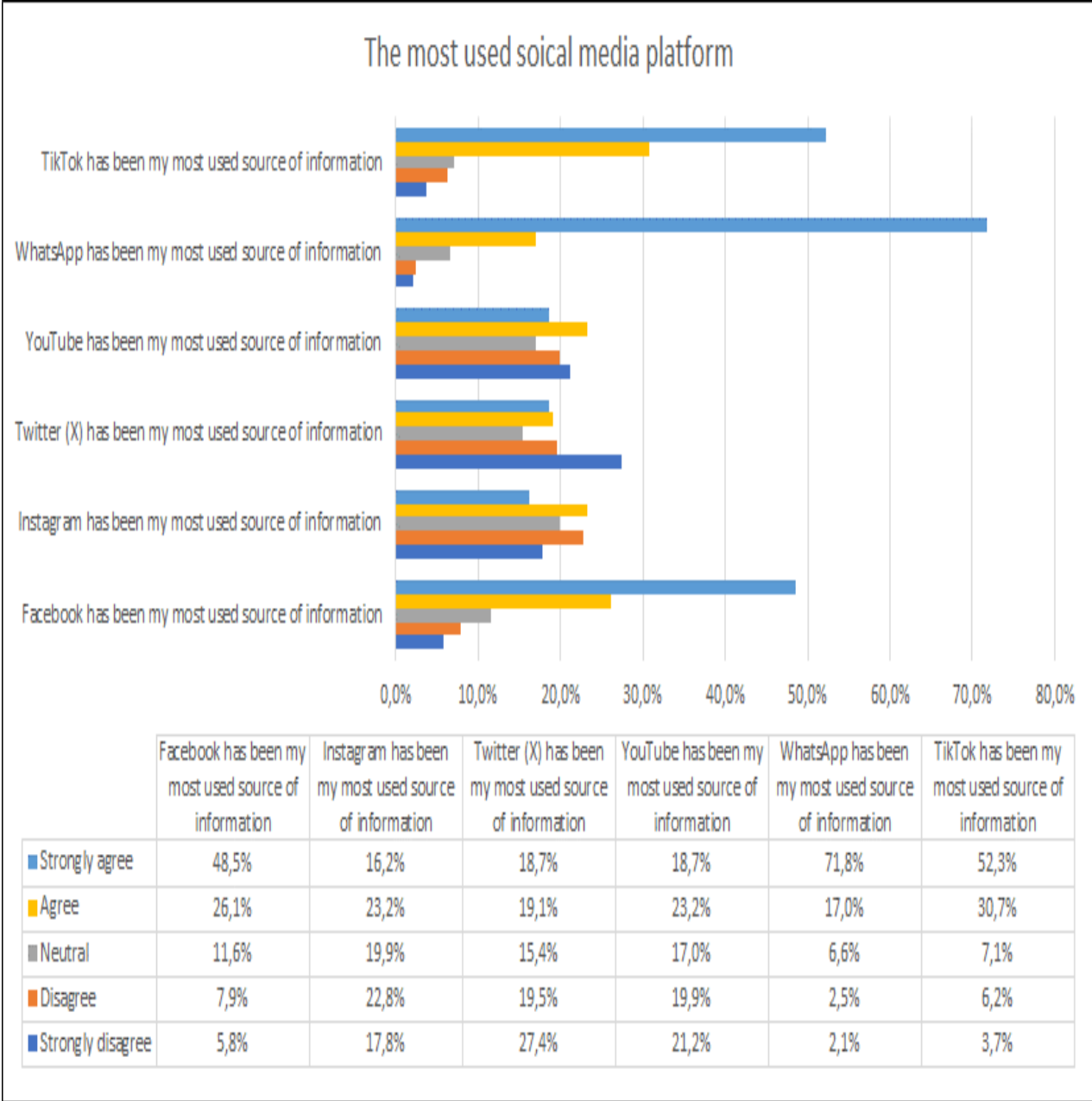
Figure 4. 7: The most used social media platform



Source: Author’s Own (2025)

In order to assess where the improvement lies, frequency analyses were undertaken in terms of identifying what social media platforms are used the most by TVET college students. The results are shown in Figure 4.8 below.

Figure 4. 8: Frequency analysis for the most used social media platform



Source: Author’s Own (2025)

The results shown in Figure 4.8 show that 5.8% strongly disagreed and 7.9% disagreed that Facebook is their most used source of information; 11.6% neither agreed nor disagreed that

Facebook is their most used source of information; 26.1% agreed and 48.5% strongly agreed that Facebook is their most used source of information.

With regard to Instagram, 17.8% strongly disagreed and 22.8% disagreed that Instagram is their most used source of information, 19.9% neither agreed nor disagreed that Instagram is their most used source of information, and 23.2% agreed and 16.2% strongly agreed that Instagram is their most used source of information.

Furthermore, 27.4% strongly disagreed and 19.5% disagreed that Twitter is their most used source of information, 15.4% neither agreed nor disagreed that Twitter is their most used source of information, 19.1% agreed and 18.7% strongly agreed that Twitter is their most used source of information.

Approximately 21.2% strongly disagreed and 19.9% disagreed that YouTube is their most used source of information, 17% neither agreed nor disagreed that YouTube is their most used source of information, 23.2% agreed and 18.7% strongly agreed that YouTube is their most used source of information.

Regarding WhatsApp, 2.1% strongly disagreed and 2.5% disagreed that WhatsApp is their most used source of information, 6.6% neither agreed nor disagreed that WhatsApp is their most used source of information. 17% agreed and 71.8% strongly agreed that WhatsApp is their most used source of information.

Approximately 3.7% strongly disagreed and 6.2% disagreed that TikTok is their most used source of information, whilst 7.1% neither agreed nor disagreed that TikTok is their most used source of information. Additionally, 30.7% agreed and 52.3% strongly agreed that TikTok is their most used source of information.

4.4.4.1 Discussion of results for Objective 4

This objective's discussion analyses the most frequently used social media platforms amongst respondents, focusing on six key dimensions as emerging from the descriptive statistics shown in figures 4.7 and 4.8. These are:

- WhatsApp,
- Facebook,

- TikTok,
- YouTube,
- Instagram, and
- X.

The findings reveal a clear hierarchy of platform preference, with WhatsApp emerging as the most popular and preferred selection, followed by Facebook, TikTok, YouTube and Instagram. X was identified as the least used platform amongst the respondents. The discussion will delve into these findings, exploring possible explanations for the observed patterns and contextualising them within existing studies.

These dimensions are discussed below.

- **WhatsApp**

The dominance of WhatsApp in this study aligns with its worldwide popularity as a messaging application was outlined in a Nigerian qualitative study by (Omipidan and Sanusi, 2024: 145). This study's findings revealed that WhatsApp is an upright primary mode of communication and using WhatsApp daily often gives room for both personal and professional communication. It further confirms that WhatsApp is integral to daily interactions, allowing respondents to connect with friends from different parts of the world effortlessly. Its primary purpose as a communication tool is to facilitate both personal and group interactions, which is most likely responsible for its widespread use. A study carried out in Portugal by Pereira, Morais, Raposo and Gouveia (2024: 62) indicates that WhatsApp's integration with mobile devices and its user-friendly interface further strengthens its position as a global platform for communication. According to this finding, WhatsApp serves as a central hub for maintaining and transmitting social connections amongst the study respondents.

- **Facebook**

The second most popular social media platform amongst study respondents is Facebook, which while still widely used, demonstrates a slight decline in comparison to WhatsApp. This observation resonates with broader trends indicating a shift in user preferences away from traditional social networking sites towards more visually driven platforms. These features likely

contribute to its sustained usage amongst the respondents, although at a lower frequency than WhatsApp.

However, Facebook's continued relevance can be attributed to its diverse functionalities, including community groups, marketplace features, as Ali, Wang, Hussain and Li (2023: 4) state in their quantitative research that aimed to investigate the impact of the virtual society on social capital formation within the Pakistani context.

- **TikTok**

TikTok scaling as the third most popular platform demonstrates the growing popularity of short-form video content. TikTok's algorithm-driven approach to content delivery, combined with its focus on entertainment and creativity, has resonated strongly with a large audience claims a study by Boeker and Urman (2022: 2302) that utilised a sock-puppet audit methodology to test TikTok's algorithm to the platform's content distribution and its success. The study further reveals that TikTok is the fastest growing social media platform with over 1 billion active monthly users, the majority of which is from generation Z.

Its popularity amongst the study respondents implies a preference for engaging with lively and easily consumable content. This finding complements the existing study by Stein (2024: 86) conducted in the USA, highlighting the impact of visual content and algorithmic curation on social media engagement as the most preferred and consumed.

- **YouTube**

YouTube, ranking fourth, maintains its relevance as a platform for video consumption. Its extensive library of content, ranging from user-generated videos to professionally produced shows, appeals to a wide range of interests. A quantitative study conducted in Australia by Rieder, Coromina and Matamoros-Fernández (2020: 3) mentions that the platform's versatility, offering both entertainment and educational content, could explain its continued popularity amongst users.

Maziriri, Gapa and Chuchu's (2020: 121) quantitative research in South Africa has highlighted YouTube's increasing role in education, with many teachers, institutions and independent creators offering tutorials, lessons and educational channels contributing to the rise of YouTube as a learning platform. This growing approach is evidence even to this study's respondents, having ranked fourth as the most used social media platform.

- **Instagram**

Instagram, recognised for its focus on visual sharing, ranked fifth as the respondent's preferred social media platform. A qualitative study conducted in Indonesia by Triantoro and Pramana (2024: 41) reveals that Instagram's appeal stems largely from its emphasis on aesthetics and self-expression through images and videos. While Instagram is amongst popular sites, its lower ranking compared to WhatsApp, Facebook, TikTok and YouTube suggests that visual content, while appealing, might not be the key driver of social media engagement for the respondents in this study.

A quantitative study conducted in Pakistan focused on students to understand the potential increased feelings of anxiety, depression or loneliness linked to overuse or unhealthy engagement with social media platforms, precisely Instagram because of evidence that it is excessively used. The findings of this study by Komal, Shahid, Khan, Hayat and Fatima (2025: 21) suggest the need for and benefits of regular breaks from social media and encourage students to engage in digital detox practices. This can lead to a healthier balance between online and offline activities, fostering better mental health. For this study, Instagram ranking fifth is an indication of potential reservation of digital detox even for this study's respondents.

- **X (formerly Twitter)**

Conclusively, the finding that X is the least used platform even with this study's respondents is consistent with reports of declining user engagement and platform challenges, highlighted by Dujeancourt and Garz (2023: 270) in a study that influenced user engagement with tweets published by 37 German newspapers.

Even though X's algorithm focuses on real-time news and public discourse, while valuable, this may not align with the primary social media needs of this study's respondents, who may prioritise communication, entertainment and visual sharing instead. This decline or a preference of abstaining by users is evidence even on a USA review of sociology of X by Murthy (2024: 182) that presents a slight shift of trends and challenges within X which may impact overall engagements with the platform.

This research objective provides valuable insights into the social media platform preferences of this study's respondents. The dominance of WhatsApp underscores its importance as a

communication tool, while the popularity of TikTok highlights the growing appeal of short-form video content and amusement. The continued usage of Facebook and YouTube, although at lower frequencies, indicates the continued relevance of established platforms with versatility. The lower ranking of Instagram and X suggests a potential shift in preferences towards platforms that prioritise communication, entertainment and specific content formats.

4.5 INFERENCE STATISTICS

4.5.1 Perspectives on the nature of information shared on social media platforms – Objective 5

Factor analysis was employed as an exploratory tool to condense a larger set of items into a smaller set that effectively represents the data and may reflect underlying sub-constructs. The analysis utilised the Principal Components method along with Varimax rotation. The table below presents the KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) test and Bartlett’s test. These tests are necessary to qualify the data for Factor Analysis.

Table 4. 7: KMO and Bartlett’s test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		,721
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	672,947
	Df	66
	Sig.	<,001

Source: Author’s Own (2025)

The KMO in Table 4.7 of .721 indicates that the data was adequate for successful and reliable extraction, whilst Bartlett’s test with a p-value <.05 indicates that items are sufficiently correlated.

Table 4. 8: Principal Component Analysis

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3,544	29,533	29,533	3,544	29,533	29,533	2,084	17,364	17,364

2	1,605	13,375	42,909	1,605	13,375	42,909	1,911	15,922	33,286
3	1,139	9,490	52,399	1,139	9,490	52,399	1,880	15,668	48,954
4	1,007	8,391	60,790	1,007	8,391	60,790	1,420	11,836	60,790
5	,919	7,659	68,449						
6	,789	6,577	75,026						
7	,698	5,815	80,841						
8	,628	5,234	86,075						
9	,556	4,637	90,711						
10	,431	3,590	94,302						
11	,385	3,209	97,511						
12	,299	2,489	100,000						

Source: Author's Own (2025)

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

From the above table, Table 4.8, the cumulative variance that 4 factors are explaining is 60.79%. Furthermore, all these 4 factors have eigenvalues over 1. The first factor accounts for 29.533% of the variation. The focus is now at the rotated loadings table to ascertain which questions are not loading at all on the factors and could hence be eliminated from the dataset, and then to re-run the factor analysis.

Shrestha (2021: 6) suggests that a factor loading of 0.3 or higher is generally considered meaningful. However, due to the large number of items in the scale, it is recommended to use a principle of factor loadings of 0.4 or above for significance. This higher cut-off helps ensure that the number of items is effectively reduced, preserving the main goal of factor analysis and simplifying the dataset into a more manageable and interpretable set of variables. All the questions have loaded and there is no need to delete any questions and re-run the factor analysis.

The Components are given as:

Component 1: Controversy and Misinformation Online (percentage of variance – 17.36%)

The first component is named Controversy and Misinformation Online. This component explains 17.36% of the total variation. The items that loaded onto Component 1 are questions 8.6, 8.8, 8.7, and 8.12 of Appendix A.

- I find information shared on social media full of controversy.
- I feel that sometimes social media is used as a platform for debating shared information.

- I feel that unproven and unverified information shared on social media causes confusion.
- I feel social media is the main contributor to distorting information.

Component 2: Social Media Scepticism (percentage of variance – 15.92%)

The second component is named Social Media Scepticism. This component explains 15.92% of the total variation. The items that loaded onto component 2 are questions 8.5 and 8.11 of Appendix A.

- I do not feel that social media plays an important role in information sharing.
- I feel that social media is not the main contributor to distorting information.

Component 3: Value of social media (percentage of variance – 15.66%)

The third component is named Value of social media. This component explains 15.66% of the total variation. The items that loaded onto component 3 are questions 8.3, 8.1 and 8.4 of Appendix A.

- I feel information shared on social media is transparent and true.
- I feel information shared on social media is valuable.
- I feel social media plays an important role in information sharing.

Component 4: Perceived influence of social media (percentage of variance – 11.83%)

The fourth component is named Perceived influence of social media. This component explains 11.83% of the total variation. The items that loaded onto component 4 are questions 8.10, 8.9 and 8.2 of Appendix A.

- I feel information shared on social media by other users does not contribute to changing my behaviour about the shared content.
- I feel information shared on social media by other users does contribute to changing my behaviour about the shared content.
- I feel information shared on social media is not enough.

4.5.1.1 Discussion of results for Objective 5

This objective explored the respondents' perceptions of social media through a factor analysis, focusing on four key components made up of various dimensions, namely:

- Controversy and misinformation,

- Social media scepticism,
- Perceived value of social media, and
- Perceived influence of social media.

The following discussion describes the findings for each component, emphasising their implications.

- **Controversy and misinformation online (Component 1)**

The factor analysis revealed a strong loading of items related to the frequency of controversy and misinformation on social media platforms. This finding is consistent with a growing body of research that emphasises the issues created by the rapid distribution of false or misleading information online. Respondents expressed concerns about the rapid spread of fake news, and the potential for manipulation and bias through social media. A study conducted in USA by Moravec, Minas and Dennis (2019: 1343) through a behavioural experiment of social media users discovered that it is indeed a growing concern and the study further showed the ease with which disinformation can spread through social networks. The findings underline the public's awareness of this issue and suggest a growing critical consciousness regarding the validity of information from online platforms. Guess, Nagler and Tucker (2019: 6) state that this perception of widespread misinformation can have significant consequences, creating doubts in social media companies and institutions.

- **Social media scepticism (Component 2)**

This component captured a general scepticism towards social media, encompassing uncertainties about the potential for negative social comparisons. Respondents indicated reservations about the motives of social media platforms and the ethical implications of data collection, usage and dissemination. This supports broader social concerns surrounding the negative impacts of information shared on digital and online highlighted by Zhang, Wang, Yongsatianchot, Gaggiano, Suhaimi, Okrah, Kim, Griffin and Parker (2024: 16) in a USA survey study that profiled the dynamics of trust and distrust of social media information.

Furthermore, the scepticism factor also included a sense of dissatisfaction with the curated and often unrealistic interpretations of life presented on social media, reflecting a growing awareness of the potential for social media to negatively impact mental health and well-being,

a finding in Reza's (2024: 72) qualitative study conducted in Indonesia sampling social media users. The findings imply that while individuals may engage with social media, they do so with a degree of critical awareness and caution, acknowledging the potential risks alongside the benefits.

- **Value of social media (Component 3)**

Despite the concerns regarding misinformation and scepticism, the factor analysis also identified a distinct dimension related to the perceived value of social media. This factor encompassed items related to the value of social media for connecting with the outside world, accessing relevant and individuals' newsworthy information, and engaging with the public. This finding concurs with the study by Sun (2023: 9) in China from the students of a Vocational and Technical Collage, highlighting the versatile nature of social media use and acknowledging its potential for positive social impact. Respondents recognised the value of social media for maintaining social connections, particularly for accessing diverse perspectives and information. This suggests that individuals weigh the risks and benefits of social media, recognising its utility while remaining aware of its limitations and potential harms.

- **Perceived Influence of social media (Component 4)**

This factor explored the perceived influence of social media on individual behaviour and social trends. Respondents acknowledged the influence of social media in shaping their opinions and behaviour. This finding is similar to research that employed a qualitative literature review by Swastiningsih, Aziz and Dharta (2024: 622) in Indonesia, which demonstrated the significant role of social media in shaping public opinions and influencing other users on online platforms. These scholars further agree that the perceived influence of social media extends beyond public opinions, involving its impact on cultural trends and even personal identity formation.

The findings of this research objective provide valuable insights into public perceptions of social media, highlighting the complex and often contradictory nature of these views. While concerns about misinformation, scepticism and negative influences are prominent, individuals also recognise the value and utility of social media for connection, information access and social engagement.

4.5.2 To investigate the influence of gender on TVET students' social media usage – Objective 6

The Mann Whitney test was used to investigate the influence of gender on social media usage by TVET students. This test is used to achieve Objective 6.

The hypothesis is stated as:

H₀: There is no difference between males and females with respect to social media usage.

H₁: There is a difference between males and females with respect to social media usage.

Before carrying out this analysis, a test of whether the questions or variables follow a normal distribution was done. The implication of normality is that if the variables or questions are normally distributed, then parametric tests, for example the independent sample t-test, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and certain parametric hypothesis tests, will be permissible to use on the data. However, if the normality assumption is violated, Bishara, Li and Conley (2021: 1165) mention that non-parametric tests such as the Mann Whitney U test is then allowed on the data to test certain hypotheses and infer results. Hence, the Kolmogorov Smirnov test for normality was used.

4.5.2.1 Kolmogorov Smirnov Test

H₀: the tested variables come from a Normal distribution

H₁: the tested variables do not come from a Normal distribution

Table 4. 9: Kolmogorov Smirnov Test

	Test Statistic	Asym p. Sig. (2-tailed) ^c	Monte Carlo Sig. (2-tailed) ^d		
			Sig.	99% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
q5.1	,269	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001
q5.2	,272	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001
q5.3	,266	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001
q5.4	,167	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001
q6.1	,253	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001
q6.2	,192	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001
q6.3	,347	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001
q6.4	,258	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001
q6.5	,180	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001

q6.6	,402	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001
q6.7	,287	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001
q7.1	,274	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001
q7.2	,171	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001
q7.3	,179	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001
q7.4	,181	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001
q7.5	,417	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001
q7.6	,292	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001
q8.1	,237	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001
q8.2	,208	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001
q8.3	,204	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001
q8.4	,315	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001
q8.5	,262	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001
q8.6	,239	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001
q8.7	,250	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001
q8.8	,246	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001
q8.9	,189	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001
q8.1 0	,245	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001
q8.1 1	,233	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001
q8.1 2	,204	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001
q9.1	,207	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001
q9.2	,211	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001
q9.3	,198	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001
q9.4	,289	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001
q9.5	,269	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001
q9.6	,228	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001
q9.7	,195	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001

Source: Author's Own (2025)

At the 5% significance level, H_0 is rejected for the questions whose p-values are less than 0.05 and conclude that the tested variables do not come from a normal distribution. The implication of this is that as far as the scores are concerned, researchers are required to use non-parametric

statistics. Tests such as the Mann-Whitney U test, Chi-Square and the Kruskal Wallis test will be used if necessary. In this case, since the p-values are all less than 0.05, the researcher rejects H_0 and concludes that non-parametric tests on these questions for further analysis will be used.

In order to test the hypotheses, the Chi-square test of independence was used. The Chi-square tests come in two types, namely the chi-square test of independence and the chi-square goodness-of-fit test. The Chi-square test of independence is a test of association between the rows and columns of a contingency table (Lugo-Armenta, Pino-Fan and Hernandez, 2021:5). The Chi-square test of independence also requires the assumption of a minimum of five responses or a frequency of five per cell. If this assumption is violated, then the robust Chi-square test of independence is used. In order to test the following hypotheses, the Chi-square test of independence will be utilised to ascertain whether gender and the questions pertaining to social media are related to each other, or if gender influences the perceptions of the TVET students with respect to social media.

H_0 : There is no difference between males and females with respect to social media usage.

H_1 : There is a difference between males and females with respect to social media usage.

Table 4. 10: Chi-square

	Chi-square (χ^2)	Df	Asymptotic significance (p-value)
q5.1	2,522	4	,641
q5.2	2,292	4	,682
q5.3	2,543	4	,637
q5.4	,705	4	,951
q6.1	3,705	4	,447
q6.2	1,075	4	,898
q6.3	6,102	4	,192
q6.4	5,917	4	,205
q6.5	4,638	4	,327
q6.6	1,354	4	,852
q6.7	2,381	4	,666
q7.1	4,160	4	,385
q7.2	1,945	4	,746
q7.3	2,189	4	,701
q7.4	7,394	4	,116
q7.5	4,294	4	,368
q7.6	4,159	4	,385
q8.1	7,371	4	,118

q8.2	11,861	4	,018
q8.3	2,546	4	,636
q8.4	6,870	4	,143
q8.5	2,052	4	,726
q8.6	1,259	4	,868
q8.7	9,695	4	,046
q8.8	,980	5	,964
q8.9	4,837	4	,304
q8.10	3,078	4	,545
q8.11	5,888	4	,208
q8.12	13,825	4	,008
q9.1	12,635	4	,013
q9.2	2,643	4	,619
q9.3	,888	4	,926
q9.4	7,417	4	,115
q9.5	9,671	4	,047
q9.6	8,094	4	,088
q9.7	4,434	4	,350

Source: Author's Own (2025)

At the 5% significance level, the researcher rejected H_0 for questions whose p-values are greater than 0.05 and concluded that for these questions only, there is no relationship (independence) between gender and the perceptions of TVET students on social media. However, for questions whose p-values are less than 0.05 (shaded in the table above), H_0 was rejected and concluded that there is a relationship (dependence) between gender and the perceptions of TVET students on social media. Gender is related to or has influence on the following questions:

8.2 - I feel information shared on social media is not enough;

8.7- I feel that unproven and unverified information shared on social media causes confusion;

8.12 - I feel that social media is not the main contributor to distorting information;

9.1- I share information I receive on social media with other users without verifying it; and

9.5 - I do not partake in sharing false information that may not be true on social media.

4.5.2.1.1 Discussion of results for Objective 6

This objective reveals significant relationships between gender, males and females in this study, indicating several key perceptions and behaviours related to information consumption and sharing on social media platforms. The discussion of findings provides an insightful exploration of the role gender plays in how individuals perceive and engage with information shared on social media. Through an analysis of findings, it has been observed that gender influences multiple features of information dissemination, including the perceptions of information insufficiency; the trustworthiness of unverified content; and attitudes towards sharing or not sharing potentially false information.

- **Perception on insufficiency of information shared on social media: a gender perspective**

The research indicates gender difference in the perception of information insufficiency on social media. The finding on the statement *“I feel information shared on social media is not enough”* is related to gender, suggesting that one gender may perceive less comprehensive information compared to the other. For example, women having concerns with information insufficiency may also be linked to a larger trend for greater information-seeking behaviour, which includes exploring multiple sources, according to study by Svensson, Johnson and Olsson (2022: 273) in Sweden. The other gender is less likely to express dissatisfaction with the information available on social media platforms, which might reflect opposite information consumption preference. This relates with existing quantitative research by Dedeoglu (2019: 520) highlighting potential gender differences in information-seeking behaviour on social media by Turkey tourists. This difference could stem from contrasting information needs, preferred information formats, or even differing levels of trust in social media as a reliable source.

- **Confusion that emanates from unproven and unverified information**

This objective also found a relationship between gender and the feeling that *“unproven and unverified information shared on social media causes confusion”*. This suggests that one gender may be more concerned about the spread of misinformation. This finding is vital in the

perspective of the growing infodemic, Rovetta and Castaldo (2022: 2) states and that the difficulties of navigating an environment filled with both true and false information. It is important to understand why this gender difference exists, state Wu and Zheng (2023: 24) in a study conducted in China. Possibly, one gender displays greater critical thinking skills when evaluating online information or possesses a higher awareness of the potential for misinformation (Wu and Zheng, 2023: 26). This could be attributed to a greater tendency amongst men to rely on limited sources or less effective techniques of information verification. Research by Nanjundaiah (2023: 255) conducted in India indicates that people who are less cautious in verifying information are more likely to share misinformation without investigating its accuracy. This gender variance in attitudes towards misinformation underlines the need for gender-tailored strategies in reducing misinformation online, which Kasuma, Immanuel and Dewi (2024: 1024) outlined in a quantitative study carried out in Malaysia.

- **Social media's role in information distortion**

This research objective further uncovers that gender is related to the perception of social media's role in information distortion, underlining differences in how males and females might view the sources of misinformation. The statement *"I feel social media is not the main contributor to distorting information"* indicates that a particular gender may be less likely to criticise information distortion predominantly on social media platforms. This proposes that they perceive other elements, such as traditional media, as an influential contributor to the spread of misinformation. Gendered views of media consumption and information distribution may shape how individuals assess the impact of various sources when evaluating the origins of distorted narratives, and females and males may emphasise various forms of media or cultural influences (Aksar, 2024: 18).

- **Information sharing behaviour and gender**

The objective explored the crucial aspect of information sharing behaviour, revealing a gendered difference in the tendency to share information without verification. The statement *"I share information I receive on social media with other users without verifying it"* being related to gender highlights a potential exposure to the spread of misinformation. Understanding this gender difference is critical for developing interventions to promote responsible information sharing practices. This indicates that one gender possibly is more trusting of information shared within their social networks or less aware of the potential consequences of spreading unverified

content. This finding aligns with research conducted by Fehr, Mollerstrom and Perez-Truglia (2024: 3) in a Germany study where gender plays a role on social influence and information diffusion.

- **Resistance to sharing false information**

The research objective also found a distinguished relationship between gender and the statement *“I do not partake in sharing false information that may not be true on social media”*. This suggests that one gender may exhibit a stronger commitment to avoiding the spread of misinformation, emphasising a potentially significant behavioural difference. This positive finding is encouraging and offers hope while indicating that targeted interventions could build upon this existing inclination to promote responsible online behaviour. This trend could serve as a foundation for targeted interventions aimed at reducing misinformation online. By leveraging this existing tendency, initiatives designed to promote digital literacy and responsible social media use could be more effectively tailored, with a specific focus on the gender that exhibits a lower commitment to truthfulness. Kozyreva, Lewandowsky and Hertwig’s (2020: 104) study in Australia sought to confront digital challenges with cognitive tools, further outlining that encouraging such behaviours through educational campaigns and platform policies may contribute to fostering a more informed and ethically responsible online environment.

4.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented and analysed the results through descriptive and factor analysis methods. Demographic information was summarised using descriptive statistics, with categorical variables displayed through frequency tables and bar charts. The hypotheses were examined using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. To test hypotheses, the Kolmogorov Smirnov test and Mann Whitney U test was used. Using descriptive and inferential statistics helped in making it easier to present and analyse the results of the study, and this facilitated understanding to determine the relationships and the differences between the variables.

The analysis provides valuable insights into the complex role social media plays in shaping user behaviour, perceptions and how information is shared. It reveals that social media serves as a platform for both active engagement and passive consumption, with clear trends in how people use it. Most participants turn to social media for sharing information, networking, entertainment

and educational purposes, emphasising its versatility. Platforms like WhatsApp and TikTok dominate as the preferred sources of information, while Facebook continues to maintain its relevance. In contrast, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube are seen as secondary or less popular choices to students. Trust in social media content remains a major concern. While many participants recognise its usefulness for information sharing, scepticism about its reliability is widespread. Only a small percentage strongly believe that social media content is consistently transparent and truthful. The findings also highlight concerns about misinformation, with most agreeing that unverified information leads to confusion and controversy.

Nevertheless, social media continues to facilitate debates and discussions, serving as both a platform for engagement and a source of contention. User behaviour shows a divide in how critically they evaluate content. While some individuals share information without verification, others take steps to verify and correct inaccuracies. However, many users avoid engaging in corrective actions, revealing gaps in accountability and media literacy. The lack of cross-referencing with mainstream media further exacerbates the spread of misinformation, as many users rely solely on social media for information. Overall, the findings underscore the importance of fostering critical thinking and media literacy to address issues like misinformation and accountability on social media platforms. While these platforms have the potential to enhance connectivity, education and discourse, they also present challenges in ensuring the credibility and responsible use of shared content.

This following final chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations resulting from the study. It provides a comprehensive summary of the key findings, highlighting the central insights that emerged from the research. Additionally, the chapter outlines both the theoretical and practical implications of the study, demonstrating its relevance to existing scholarly discourse and real-world applications. Detailed recommendations are proposed based on the findings, offering guidance for users, policymakers, and other relevant stakeholders to the study. Finally, the chapter identifies potential areas for future research, suggesting directions that can further expand upon the current study's contributions and address its limitations.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented, discussed and interpreted the findings of this study. This last chapter provides a detailed and comprehensive conclusion and recommendations of the research study. This concluding chapter offers a comprehensive account of the study's outcomes by presenting its key conclusions and detailed recommendations. It begins with a synthesis of the principal findings, emphasising the core insights gained through the research process. The chapter then discusses the study's theoretical contributions and practical significance, underscoring its value within both academic literature and applied contexts. Informed by the findings, it puts forward a series of targeted recommendations intended to guide relevant stakeholders. Lastly, the chapter delineates avenues for future research, proposing directions that could further address its identified limitations. Social media plays a pivotal role in the lives of TVET college students, shaping not only how they communicate and share information, but also how they interact with other users in the online space. By examining the perspectives of TVET college students, this study provides valuable insights into how social media influences the transmission of information.

5.2 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

This section summarises the key findings that emerged from the study. The study investigated the impact of social media platforms on the dissemination of information: TVET college students' perspectives. The empirical study was conducted using a quantitative data collection technique. Questionnaires were used to gather the perspectives of TVET college students regarding their social media usage and the impact it has on and outside their online spaces which were drawn from 271 respondents. The study aimed to address six research objectives.

The key findings of the study are as follows:

5.2.1 Exploring how TVET college students are influenced by social media platforms:

The findings revealed that TVET college students are significantly influenced by social media. This finding is similar to that of a Malaysian study by Adnan, Ariffin, Hanafi, Husain and Panessai (2021: 87) which focused on students' increased prospective on social media. Social media platforms were perceived as valuable resources for quick and diverse information. The

study found that a majority of respondents are always on social media checking what others are sharing. Moreover, the findings revealed that most respondents believe it is important to re-share information posted on social media by other users.

5.2.2 Investigating how TVET college students react to and process information shared on social media platforms for decision- making: TVET students were found to engage critically with the information shared on social media, often verifying its authenticity before acting on it. Lan and Tung (2024: 13) conducted a qualitative study that explored the awareness of fake news and trust dynamics amongst students of the three Vietnam Universities and discovered a robust awareness on information verification by these students. However, there was also a tendency to believe and share information based on its popularity rather than the credibility of the source, demonstrating the potential risks of misinformation but at the same time highlighting a critical area for improvement in media literacy, and promoting a deeper understanding of how misinformation spreads could be essential in fostering a more informed, responsible approach to social media use.

5.2.3 Identifying what TVET college students mostly use social media platforms for: The most common uses for social media amongst TVET college students included staying connected with educational content and accessing current affairs on what is happening around as the top two. Social media platforms were also used for accessing entertainment, with a notable preference for visual-based content coming through at third place. This is also demonstrated in the quantitative research findings by Al-Rahmi, Shamsuddin, Alturki, Aldraiweesh, Yusof, Al-Rahmi and Aljeraiwi (2021: 19) that focused on University of Malaysia students, which revealed that the majority of the students use social media platforms for educational matters and being kept abreast on occurrences of the students' surroundings and for general use, similar findings to this quantitative study.

5.2.4 Identifying the most used social media platforms by TVET college students: The study found that the most frequently used social media platforms were WhatsApp, Facebook, TikTok and Instagram, with each catering to different aspects of communication and preference. This finding is similar to that of WordStream (2025) on the list it published of frequently used social media, WhatsApp, Facebook, and TikTok being the most used social media platforms. WhatsApp continues to be the most popular platform for messaging, offering users an easy, effective way to stay connected with close people. Facebook, with its large user base, remains a hub for dispensing news and social networking. TikTok has gained popularity,

mainly amongst younger people. Instagram, noted for its emphasis on visual material, remains popular as well. These platforms have influenced how its community communicates, consume content, and connect with the rest of the online world.

5.2.5 Examining the perspectives of TVET college students on the nature of information shared on social media platforms: Students generally viewed the information shared on social media as varied in quality, with a mix of reliable and unreliable content. A quantitative study in South Africa with a focus on two Western African Universities, namely Nigeria and Ghana, by Adjin-Tettey and Amenaghawon (2024: 10) suggests that this echoes a common worry in today's digital community, where the accessibility of information on social media platforms can make it hard to distinguish what is credible and what is not.

5.2.6 Investigating the influence of gender on TVET students' social media usage: The study found some gender-based differences in the use of social media, with female students more likely to use platforms like Instagram and Facebook for socialising and personal expression, while male students were more inclined to use social media for informational and entertainment purposes. A qualitative study in Ghana by Tetteh and Kankam (2024: 11) had a similar finding that social media use and perceived impacts varied between genders, with a focus on pressures and content engagement patterns.

5.3 THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Social media as an interactive and multi-modal communication tool allows users to exchange diverse forms of information. The study explored the Uses and Gratifications Theory, which highlights that individuals use media to fulfil specific needs and desires. In the context of TVET college students, social media platforms serve various purposes, from educational engagement to social and recreational interaction.

The theoretical framework therefore laid a solid foundation for understanding how social media platforms serve as tools for information dissemination and social interaction amongst TVET students, influencing their online space experience and perception.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

Based on the results guided by the objectives, the following practical recommendations should be implemented by social media companies, users and subscribers:

5.4.1 Promote digital literacy and critical thinking: Social media companies should launch educational initiatives to improve users' ability to critically evaluate content. These campaigns should teach skills like fact-checking, identifying credible sources, and recognising misinformation. This recommendation corroborates the qualitative research done in South Korea by Tinmaz, Lee, Fanea-Ivanovici and Baber (2022: 12) that by integrating this practice into the daily life of social media users, this may help individuals become not only savvy users of social media but also critical thinkers who can navigate the complex digital landscape responsibly. This will empower students to make informed decisions and reduce the spread of misinformation.

5.4.2 Encouraging responsible sharing practices: Social media platforms can introduce prompts or reminders encouraging users to verify information before sharing. Warnings for unverified or potentially false content can help users think twice. Ghermandi, Langemeyer, Van Berkel, Calcagni, Depietri, Vigl, Fox, Havinga, Jäger, Kaiser and Karasov's (2023: 241) study conducted in different countries under the United Nations (UN) also encourages this practice, which may inspire responsible sharing practices on social media, and is crucial in maintaining a positive, safe and respectful online environment.

5.4.3 Leverage influencers for positive impact: Social media platforms could partner with influencers and social media enthusiasts to spread awareness about responsible social media use and how to combat misinformation effectively. Leveraging influencers for a positive impact is a powerful way to spread awareness and drive meaningful change on social media. This recommendation aligns with a Finland qualitative study by Lehtilä (2024: 7), that by tapping into the power of influencers, social media platforms can use their wide reach to inspire positive social media practices and curb the spread of misinformation in an engaging and impactful way.

5.4.4 Enhance platform transparency: Social media companies should improve tools for flagging and issue warnings in addressing misinformation, and refine procedures to prioritise credible, high-quality content. Findings of the study by Gwadi and Igbashangev (2024: 33) conducted in Nigeria concur as it suggests that to enhance transparency and address misinformation, social media companies should refine algorithms to prioritise credible, high-quality sources and promote diverse perspectives. Regular transparency reports on how misinformation is handled, along with clear enforcement policies, will build trust with its users.

5.4.5 Promote corrective behaviour: Foster a culture where users feel confident and motivated to correct misinformation. Gamification techniques or recognition for making positive contributions could encourage this behaviour. A study by Capecchi, Lieto, Patti, Pensa, Rapp, Venero and Zingaro (2024: 1768) in Italy supports this recommendation as they state that fostering a supportive, respectful environment through social media for accurate corrections, users will feel motivated to engage in promoting truth and combating misinformation.

5.4.6 Diversify information sources: Encourage users to cross-reference content by relying on multiple platforms, including mainstream media. Partnerships between social media platforms and reputable news outlets could make credible information more accessible. Baker-Dowdell (2021: 108) conducted a qualitative study in Australia which inspires the use of diverse information sources to cross-reference.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This research dissertation has examined the role of social media platforms in shaping the dissemination of information amongst TVET college students, shedding light on both the negatives and positives that these platforms present. Based on the findings of the study, several areas for further research emerge and are suggested as below. These areas will not only build upon the existing knowledge base but also help enhance the understanding of how digital communication tools influence the information access and social interaction of TVET students. The recommendations for future research are as follows:

5.5.1 Expanding the scope to other educational institutions

- **Rationale:** While the current research focuses on a TVET college, a broader comparative study involving students from universities, community colleges and high schools could provide insights into how social media's role in information dissemination differs across various educational settings.
- **Recommendation:** Future research could examine the impact of social media platforms on students' learning experiences and information access in different types of institutions, including universities and vocational training centres. This would help identify the common trends and distinct challenges faced by students across educational sectors.

5.5.2 Investigating the influence of different social media platforms

- **Rationale:** The study might have only explored a subset of social media platforms or aggregated them in a way that overlooks platform-specific differences in information dissemination.
- **Recommendation:** Future studies could delve deeper into the specific characteristics of different social media platforms and how these differences impact information sharing amongst TVET and or other students. It would also be valuable to explore how the usage of these platforms varies by content type (for example., text, video, images) and how this influences students' engagement and comprehension.

5.5.3 Understanding the impact of social media on digital literacy

- **Rationale:** The research could benefit from exploring how students' digital literacy defined as the ability to find, evaluate and use digital information affects their engagement with social media for academic purposes.
- **Recommendation:** Future studies should investigate the relationship between students' digital literacy skills and their ability to navigate social media effectively for educational purposes. It would be useful to assess the role of TVET or other institutions in enhancing students' digital literacy and how social media can be used to complement traditional educational practices.

5.5.4 Investigating the role of social media in shaping career development

- **Rationale:** TVET students are often focused on career-specific skills, and social media may play a role in shaping their career outlook, job opportunities and industry engagement.
- **Recommendation:** Future research could investigate how TVET and or other students use social media platforms to explore career opportunities, network with industry professionals, and stay updated on job market trends. Additionally, it could be valuable to explore the role of social media in facilitating access to internships, scholarships, apprenticeships and employment opportunities.

5.5.5 Evaluating the impact of social media on students' social and emotional well-being

- **Rationale:** Social media platforms can affect students' mental health and social well-being, influencing how they engage with academic content and interact with peers.

- **Recommendation:** Future studies could assess the impact of social media use on TVET students' social and emotional well-being, with a focus on aspects such as anxiety, stress, self-esteem and loneliness. Understanding these factors could help institutions develop better support systems for students to manage the psychological impacts of digital engagement.

5.5.6 Examining the role of social media in crisis communication

- **Rationale:** Social media platforms have increasingly become essential tools for communication during crises, including natural disasters, pandemics and political instabilities.
- **Recommendation:** Future research could explore how TVET colleges or other Institutions of higher learning use social media for crisis communication, and how students perceive the effectiveness of these platforms in delivering critical information during emergencies. This could also include examining students' behaviour during such crises and how they utilise social media to stay informed or support their peers.

5.5.7 Longitudinal studies on social media usage

- **Rationale:** A longitudinal approach could offer insights into how social media use evolves over time and its long-term impact on information dissemination amongst students.
- **Recommendation:** Longitudinal studies tracking social media usage patterns, academic performance and student attitudes over multiple years could provide valuable insights into how digital engagement influences personal development throughout a student's academic career.

5.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is limited to only the six selected social media platforms, which indicates that the study was not specific to all other available social media platforms, networks and sites in South Africa and beyond. A study can be done in future on other specific social media platforms that were not part of this study, like Snapchat, Reddit, WeChat, Telegram and Tumblr.

This study was limited to a single TVET Collage in South Africa, located in the province of KwaZulu-Natal in Pietermaritzburg City, which is uMgungundlovu TVET Collage, and the study was limited to only a single campus, namely uMsunduzi campus. A study may be

conducted utilising other campus or all, and other higher education institutions within the province, country or beyond.

The study was also limited to students only and did not include either the management of the College, support staff and academic staff. It is therefore suggested that a similar study may be conducted with larger and more diverse samples.

It is assumed that the findings from this study may not be generalised to the rest of the provinces and country's institutions of higher learning but only the campus where the study was conducted. This means that the results are not a representation of the entire KwaZulu-Natal and South African student community and that if the same research were to be conducted in the entirety of South African institutions of higher learning, the research results might be completely different from the results in this study.

5.7 CONCLUSION

This study explored the impact of social media on the dissemination of information from the perspective of TVET college students. The study utilised a quantitative research approach and achieved the study's objectives, which examined the influence of social media platforms on TVET students, comprehending their actions and reactions to shared information; identified the primary purposes for their social media engagement; determined the most popular social media platforms; analysed the students' perceptions on the nature of information shared; and explored the role of gender in social media usage.

Social media plays an integral role in the dissemination of information amongst TVET college students, serving as a versatile tool for academic and social engagement. From an educational viewpoint, students are engaging with social media to access information and stay updated on academic resources as well as the general news happening around them. Social media was also found to be used for entertaining purposes. The study has shown that while social media offers numerous benefits, including access to information and the ability to connect with other users, it also poses challenges related to misinformation and the quality of content shared. The findings underscore the importance of fostering digital literacy amongst students to help them critically assess and engage with content on social media platforms. By understanding the benefits and risks associated with social media use, TVET students can make more informed decisions about how they use these platforms.

Gender was found to have a delicate yet important influence on the way TVET students engage with social media. While both male and female students showed similar overall levels of engagement, there were some differences in the types of content they preferred and the platforms they preferred. These findings suggest that gender may shape how students interact with social media.

This study further provided valuable perceptions of how TVET college students interact with social media and demonstrated a high level of engagement with social media amongst these students, contributing to the broader understanding of the relationship between social media usage and information dissemination. Social media, when used responsibly and effectively, can continue being a powerful communication tool for information sharing, and further improving platform features, and empowering users, while reducing the risks associated with misinformation.

The overarching theme of this study is the importance of fostering digital literacy amongst TVET students, which is amongst some of this study's recommendations. As social media continues to be a primary source of information, students need the skills to critically assess and engage with content.

In conclusion, this research highlights the potential of social media as a powerful tool for the dissemination of information amongst TVET students. The findings of this study contribute to the broader understanding of the relationship between social media usage and the dissemination of information, providing valuable insights into how TVET students interact with digital platforms and how these platforms can be optimised for educational purposes.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire

Instructions

1. This questionnaire comprises two sections.
2. You are kindly requested to answer all likert scale statements.
3. Please mark (X) to the relevant pre-recorded response.
4. Please mark (X) for one response only.
5. Do not leave any statement blank.

Section A: Biographical information

1. Please indicate your gender.

1.1	Male	1
1.2	Female	2
1.3	Neutral	3

2. Please indicate your age group.

2.1	18-20 years	1
2.2	21-25 years	2
2.3	26-30 years	3
2.4	31-35 years	4
2.5	36-40 years	5
2.6	41-45 years	6

3. Please indicate your racial group.

3.1	African Black	1
3.2	White	2
3.3	Indian	3
3.4	Coloured	4
3.5	Other	5

4. Please indicate your qualification.

4.1	NCV	1
4.2	N4	2
4.3	N5	3
4.4	N6	4
4.5	N6 Diploma	5

Section B

Social media influence

	ITEM	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
5.1	I am always on social media, contributing to the sharing of information	1	2	3	4	5
5.2	I believe it is important to reshare information posted on social media by other users	1	2	3	4	5
5.3	I am always on social media checking what other users are sharing	1	2	3	4	5
5.4	I believe all information shared on social media platforms	1	2	3	4	5

Extent of use of social media platforms and what is mostly used for

	ITEM	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
6.1	I mostly use social media platforms for general networking with other users	1	2	3	4	5
6.2	I mostly use social media platforms for meeting new people	1	2	3	4	5
6.3	I mostly use social media platforms for	1	2	3	4	5

	educational matters					
6.4	I mostly use social media platforms as a source of entertainment	1	2	3	4	5
6.5	I mostly use social media platforms to influence other users	1	2	3	4	5
6.6	I mostly use social media platforms to know what is happening around the world	1	2	3	4	5
6.7	I mostly use social media platforms to spread awareness and share information during crises	1	2	3	4	5

The most used social media platform

	ITEM	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
7.1	Facebook has been my most used source of information	1	2	3	4	5
7.2	Instagram has been my most used source of information	1	2	3	4	5
7.3	Twitter (X) has been my most used source of information	1	2	3	4	5
7.4	YouTube has been my most used source of information	1	2	3	4	5
7.5	WhatsApp has been my most used source of information	1	2	3	4	5

7.6	TikTok has been my most used source of information	1	2	3	4	5
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Perspectives on the nature of information shared on social media platforms

	ITEM	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
8.1	I feel information shared on social media is valuable	1	2	3	4	5
8.2	I feel information shared on social media is not enough	1	2	3	4	5
8.3	I feel information shared on social media is transparent and true	1	2	3	4	5
8.4	I feel social media plays an important role in information sharing	1	2	3	4	5
8.5	I do not feel that social media plays an important role in information sharing	1	2	3	4	5
8.6	I find information shared on social media full of controversy	1	2	3	4	5
8.7	I feel that unproven and unverified information shared on social media causes confusion	1	2	3	4	5

8.8	I feel that sometimes social media is used as a platform for debating shared information	1	2	3	4	5
8.9	I feel information shared on social media by other users does contribute to changing my behaviour about the shared content	1	2	3	4	5
8.10	I feel information shared on social media by other users does not contribute to changing my behaviour about the shared content	1	2	3	4	5
8.11	I feel social media is the main contributor to distorting information	1	2	3	4	5
8.12	I feel that social media is not the main contributor to distorting information	1	2	3	4	5

Reacting to and processing information shared on social media for decision-making

	ITEM	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
9.1	I share information I receive on social media with other users without verifying it	1	2	3	4	5

9.2	I first verify information before I share it with other users on social media	1	2	3	4	5
9.3	I check and sift through other mass media and mainstream media for information and share it with social media users	1	2	3	4	5
9.4	I partake in sharing false information that may not be true on social media	1	2	3	4	5
9.5	I do not partake on sharing false and information that may not be true on social media	1	2	3	4	5
9.6	I correct and offer accurate information to other users on social media when I notice they have shared false information and inaccurate	1	2	3	4	5
9.7	I do not correct and do not offer accurate information to other users when I notice they had shared false and inaccurate information	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix B: Letter of information



LETTER OF INFORMATION

Title of the Research Study: The impact of social media platforms on the dissemination information: TVET College students' perspectives

Principal Investigator/researcher: Ms. Namhla Zama Rwairwai

Supervisor: Dr. K Sishi, Ph.D

Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study: This study aims to analyse the impact of social media on the dissemination of information: the perspective of students at a selected Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) College in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). Institutions of higher learning have students who are social media users and subscribers. These students form part of a population that contributes on information sharing and receiving on social media.

Greetings: Good day

Introduce yourself to the participants: I am a Masters student at DUT hereby conducting a study for my Masters in Management Sciences, specialising in Public Relations Management.

Invitation to the potential participant: I would like to invite you to participate in the research.

What is Research: Research is a systematic search or enquiry for generalised new knowledge.

To partake in this study, you are encouraged to ask as many questions as you wish because it is important that you comfortable and fully understand the study objectives and what is expected of you as a volunteer participant. You are also welcomed and entitled to discuss the study with family and friends as you under no obligation to commit at this stage.

Outline of the Procedures: This study will use a quantitative research approach, with a random sampling technique preferred where you will have an equal chance to participate in the study. Data will be collected using closed-ended questionnaire. The questionnaire will take 10 to 15 minutes to complete. The questionnaire will be distributed by the myself the researcher. I will personally hand deliver the questionnaire to you. You will have your own session to answer the questionnaire to ensure your comfortability during the process. If you have any questions during the process, you can ask anything to ensure that you understand the study.

Risks or Discomforts to the Participant: There are no foreseen risks and discomforts.

Explain to the participant the reasons he/she may be withdraw from the Study: Participation is voluntary, and you are entitled to withdraw from the study at any time should you wish to do so.

Benefits: The findings of this study will help you understand the impact of information dissemination on social media.

Remuneration: You will not be remunerated for participating in this study.

Costs of the Study: You do not need to pay anything to participate in this study.

Confidentiality: The information that will be obtained from you through the survey will only be accessible to the researcher only. Your confidentiality and anonymity will be preserved, and your personal information will not be included in the study findings. The survey data will be kept in the passworded computer and saved in an encrypted folder that has a password. The data will be stored for a period of five years and thereafter it will be deleted.

Results: I will disseminate a summary of the key findings to you and your management. Findings of the study will also be disseminated through compilation of a journal article.

Research-related Injury: You will not be exposed to any kind of injuries during your participation in this study.

Storage of all electronic and hard copies including tape recordings: Collected hard copies of the questionnaire from respondents will be kept in the safe and lockable cabinet and will be shredded after 5 years. Captured data will be kept in a passworded folder in the laptop and permanently deleted after 5 years.

Persons to contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries: Please contact the researcher Ms. Namhla Rwairwai on 20908116@dut4life.ac.za , my supervisor Dr Sishi at Kusagiphilas@dut.ac.za or the DUT-Institutional Research Ethics Administrator on 031 373 2375. Complaints can be reported to the Acting Director: Research and Postgraduate Support on researchdirector@dut.ac.za

Appendix C: Consent form



CONSENT

FULL TITLE OF THE STUDY: THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS ON THE DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION: TVET COLLEGE STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES

Names of Researcher: Ms. Namhla Zama Rwairwai

Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, **Ms. Namhla Z Rwairwai** about the nature, conduct, benefits, and risks of this study - Research Ethics Clearance
Number: **IREC 042/24.**
- I have also received, read, and understood the above written information (Participant Letter of Information) regarding the study.
- I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.
- In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerised system by the researcher.
- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

Full Name of Participant	Date	Time	Signature / Right
Thumbprint			
I, <u>Namhla Rwairwai</u>	herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.		
Full Name of Researcher	Date	Signature	
Full Name of Witness (If applicable)	Date	Signature	
Full Name of Legal Guardian (If applicable)	Date	Signature	

Appendix D: Request letter to conduct research



13 September 2024

UMgungundlovu TVET College
Central Office
44 Burger Street
Pietermaritzburg
3201

Request for Permission to Conduct Research

Dear Ms. M Peters

My name is Namhla Rwairwai, a registered Master's in Public Relations Management student at the Durban University of Technology. The research I wish to conduct for my Masters study involves analysing the impact of social media in the dissemination of information to the students of the uMgungundlovu TVET College.

I am hereby seeking consent from the College in the form of a gatekeeper's letter to carry out my research from the students.

I have provided you with a copy of my proposal, which includes copies of the data collection tool and consent and/or assent forms to be used in the research process, as well as a copy of the provisional approval letter that I received from the DUT-Institutional Research Ethics Committee (DUT-IREC).

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me: cell number: +27 64 628 8337; email: 20908116@dut4life.ac.za. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Namhla Rwairwai
Durban University of Technology

Appendix E: Gatekeeper's letter



higher education
& training
Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



23 October 2024

The Institutional Research Ethics Committee
Durban University of Technology

Re: Request for Permission to Conduct Research

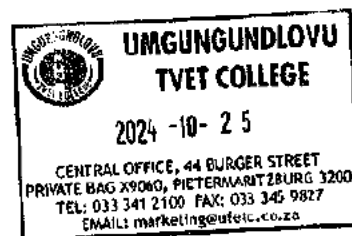
This letter hereby serves to confirm that Ms. Nambila Rwairwai, student number: 20908116, has been granted permission to conduct her research utilizing our students as participants on the research titled: *The impact of social media platforms on the dissemination of information: TVET College students' perspectives.*

We look forward to seeing the outcomes of your research and its potential contributions to our community.

Should you require any further information in relation to this letter and/or permission granted, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned person or office via her secretary, Ms Thobeka Kunene -kunenept@ufeic.edu.za -0710850016

Best regards,

M.M. Peters
Deputy Principal: Academic services



Appendix F: IREC approval



Institutional Research Ethics Committee
Research and Postgraduate Support Directorate
2nd Floor, Berwyn Court
Gate 1, Steve Biko Campus
Durban University of Technology

P O Box 1334, Durban, South Africa, 4001

Tel: 031 373 2375
Email: lavishad@dut.ac.za
http://www.dut.ac.za/research/institutional_research_ethics

www.dut.ac.za

21 November 2024

Ms N Z Rwairwai
Department of Applied Management
Faculty of Management Sciences
Durban University of Technology

Dear Ms Rwairwai

**The impact of social media platforms on the dissemination of information: TVET
College students' perspectives**
Ethics Clearance Number: IREC 042/24

The DUT-Institutional Research Ethics Committee acknowledges receipt of your notification regarding the piloting of your data collection tool.

Kindly ensure that participants used for the pilot study are not part of the main study.

In addition, the DUT-IREC acknowledges receipt of your gatekeeper permission letter.

Please note that **FULL APPROVAL** is granted to your research proposal. You may proceed with data collection.

Any adverse events [serious or minor] which occur in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration must be reported to the DUT-IREC according to the DUT-IREC SOP's.

Please note that any deviations from the approved proposal require the approval of the DUT-IREC as outlined in the DUT-IREC SOP's.

It is compulsory for a student or researcher to apply for recertification on an annual basis. The failure to do so will result in withdrawal of ethics clearance. It is the responsibility of the researcher and the supervisor to apply for recertification.

Please note that you are required to submit a Notification of Completion of Study form together with an abstract to the DUT-IREC office on completion of your study.

Yours Sincerely

Professor P Mashau
Chairperson: DUT-IREC

Appendix G: Rotated component Matrix on gender influence

Rotated Component Matrix^a

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
I find information shared on social media full of controversy	,743	,106	-,014	-,156
I feel that sometimes social media is used as a platform for debating shared information	,672	-,110	,325	,100
I feel that unproven and unverified information shared on social media causes confusion	,661	-,331	,156	,098
I feel social media is the main contributor to distorting information	,587	-,362	,210	-,096
I do not feel that social media plays an important role in information sharing	-,021	,828	-,232	-,019
I feel that social media is not the main contributor to distorting information	-,254	,697	-,060	,060
I feel information shared on social media is transparent and true	,074	,050	,815	,040
I feel information shared on social media is valuable	,211	-,203	,747	-,030
I feel social media plays an important role in information sharing	,226	-,390	,582	,040
I feel information shared on social media by other users does not contribute to changing my behaviour about the shared content	,195	,011	,168	,874


I feel information shared on social media by other users does contribute to changing my behaviour about the shared content	,003	,514	,168	,661
I feel information shared on social media is not enough	,308	-,120	,178	,398

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

Appendix H: Turnitin Report

Dr K Sishi (main supervisor) 

Date: 07/05/2025

ORIGINALITY REPORT			
17%	11%	11%	9%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS
PRIMARY SOURCES			
1	Submitted to Durban University of Technology Student Paper		2%
2	researchspace.ukzn.ac.za Internet Source		1%
3	Submitted to University of KwaZulu-Natal Student Paper		1%
4	hdl.handle.net Internet Source		<1%
5	Submitted to Mancosa Student Paper		<1%
6	Reyneke, Fransonet. "Evaluating Technology-Based Interventions to Enhance the Learning of First Year Statistics Students", University of Pretoria (South Africa), 2024 Publication		<1%
7	Cornell-Mullane, Kaitlynn. "Exploring the Ethics of Social Media in the Counseling Field", Antioch University Publication		<1%
8	Xiaochen Hu, Nicholas P. Lovrich. "Social Media and Criminal Justice", Routledge, 2024 Publication		<1%
9	core.ac.uk Internet Source		<1%
10	www.researchgate.net Internet Source		

Appendix I: Editor's Certificate

EDITOR'S LETTER

Researchers Beyond-Borders (PTY) LTD
Umhlanga, Durban
South Africa
2 May 2025

To whom it may concern

Editing of Masters Dissertation: Namhla Zama Rwairwai (Student number -20908116)

Title of dissertation: The impact of social media platforms on the dissemination of information: TVET college students' perspectives.

This letter serves as confirmation that the aforementioned dissertation has been language edited.
Any queries may be directed to the author of this letter.



Regards

Maleni Pillay
Researchers Beyond-Borders (Pty) Ltd
consult@researchersbeyondborders.com
www.researchersbeyondborders.com