

The influence of social media on knowledge-sharing practices among women entrepreneurs in Windhoek, Namibia

Vol. 8 No. 2

December 2023

Anna Leonard

Senior Librarian - Research Support Services, University of Namibia
aleonard@unam.na

Lucy Kiana

Deputy University Librarian, Africa International University, Kenya
lucy.kiana@aiu.ac.ke

Abstract

Rationale of Study – This study investigated the knowledge sharing of entrepreneurs in the realms of social media technology. It explores how social media influences women entrepreneurs' knowledge-sharing and business processes in Windhoek, Namibia.

Methodology – The study adopted a qualitative case study design, using semi-structured interviews to collect data from female entrepreneurs in Windhoek. Twenty woman entrepreneurs were sampled using snowball sampling. A qualitative content analysis was used to analyse the data.

Findings – The study's results show that social media is significant for sharing knowledge and creating and seeking knowledge. Women entrepreneurs apply knowledge shared on social media to advance their business processes and enhance the skills of their workforce. WhatsApp, Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram are the most commonly used social platforms. The study also highlights the potential benefits women entrepreneurs gain from using social media, such as cost-effective marketing and advertising platforms, the ability to engage with a broader population and collaborate with fellow entrepreneurs, the ability to get feedback from customers on services and products, which in turn improve customer loyalty, brand identity and reputation.

Implications – The findings of this study have practical implications for supporting organisations such as libraries in providing training to business enterprises concerning knowledge management and sharing.

Originality – This study adds new insights and perspectives on how women entrepreneurs use information and communication technologies (ICTs) by accentuating social media as a tool for knowledge management in a developing country. The study findings are significant to business enterprises and institutions supporting women entrepreneurs in countries with contexts similar to Namibia's.

Keywords

Social media platforms, women entrepreneurs, business processes, knowledge management, knowledge exchange

Citation: Leonard, A. & Kiana, L. (2023). The influence of social media on knowledge-sharing practices among women entrepreneurs in Windhoek, Namibia. *Regional Journal of Information and Knowledge Management*, 8 (2),149-169.



Published by the

**Regional Institute of
Information and Knowledge
Management**

P.O. Box 24358 – 00100 –
Nairobi, Kenya

1 Introduction

Internet-based technologies have undergone incredible evolution in the past decade, and there is no doubt that social media tops the list of technologies that have tremendously transformed the world. Social media is no longer negligible (Gaál et al., 2015; Khama li et al., 2018). It is one of the technologies that has received notable embrace by people of all walks of life. By June 2022, over 4.59 billion people were using social media worldwide, and this figure is projected to rise to almost six billion social media users in 2027 (Statista, 2022). Of these global statistics, there are 857.2 thousand social media users in Namibia as of January 2022, which translates to approximately 32.8 per cent of the total Namibia population (Kemp, 2022).

As social media usage grows, so does its influence on how people interact with one another on a global scale. This interaction ranges from socialising, marketing, communication, business, and more. Social media has been predominantly used to connect people of mutual interest, such as entrepreneurs and learning platforms. Panahi et al. (2016) note that social media platforms bring about great opportunities for rapid knowledge flow among people working across different geographical areas, as they allow information to circulate virally among much larger communities worldwide. Thus, using social media as a tool for knowledge sharing among people with similar interests or passions has not been farfetched.

Rai and Yadav (2019) note that social media is one of the most fascinating trends in entrepreneurship in the current world. This implies that social media has great potential for entrepreneurs because it can be used, among other things, to share knowledge that would improve business acumen.

Despite the importance and rapid growth of research focusing on the influence of social media on various aspects, few attempts have been made to investigate its influence on management in business enterprises, especially those operating in Namibia. Furthermore, a systematic literature review on the use of social media for knowledge sharing conducted by Ahmed et al. (2019) revealed that research in this area has received limited attention and requires further investigation. Therefore, this study sought to address this gap in the literature by examining the influence of social media on knowledge-sharing practices among women entrepreneurs (womenpreneurs) in Windhoek Namibia. This study made a significant contribution to the discussion by shifting from the general use of social

media to connect the application of social media to knowledge management and entrepreneurship, specialising in women entrepreneurship in Africa.

2 Literature review

Knowledge is regarded as one of the key ingredients in gaining long-term competitive advantage (Obermayer, 2020). Some researchers, such as Zaim et al. (2019) and Li et al. (2020), argue that failure to embrace knowledge management practices is detrimental and may lead to poor business performance because knowledge is the best driving force for entrepreneurial performance and success. Other scholars agree that the value of knowledge increases when shared; hence, companies that are capable of boosting knowledge sharing either within or those that can absorb valuable knowledge from external environments are most successful (Kim et al., 2013; Berraies, 2019)

The primary processes involved in knowledge management include knowledge capture, creation, codification, sharing, accessing, using, and reusing knowledge (Dalkir, 2013). While each of these processes is important, Nazim and Mukherjee (2016) argue that knowledge sharing is one of the most essential factors recognised for the success of knowledge management. Sharing knowledge is, therefore, fundamental for generating new ideas and developing new business opportunities (Lin, 2007).

The literature provides numerous definitions of knowledge sharing. Woo et al. (2009) defined knowledge sharing as the voluntary process of transferring or disseminating knowledge from one person to another person or group in an organisation, while Nazim and Mukherjee (2016) defined knowledge sharing as the exchange of knowledge, skills, and experiences. Other researchers, such as Ganguly et al. (2019), term knowledge sharing as a formal or informal exchange or dissemination of knowledge among individuals or groups. According to Collis and Moonen (2009), knowledge sharing is the intentional sharing of awareness and experience among peers. Al-Husseini and Elbeltagi (2018) defined knowledge sharing as collecting and donating explicit and tacit knowledge. According to Semertzaki (2011), knowledge sharing is knowledge management's core and distinguishing feature, which is also the primary condition for innovation activities. This fosters collaboration and promotes the creation of new ideas. This finding implies that entrepreneurs lacking knowledge-sharing capacities perform poorly in competitive markets.

To enable the learning process between individuals such as entrepreneurs, the flow of knowledge in terms of sharing what one knows with others in a community of practice is

essential as it results in improved performance. Otherwise, the mere fact that an individual or organisation possesses knowledge is insufficient (Yuan et al., 2013; Gonzalez & Martins, 2017).

3 Social media

Appel et al. (2019) defined social media as a collection of software-based digital technologies that provide users with digital environments to send and receive digital content or information over an online social network. These technologies are typically presented as apps and websites. A similar definition was provided by Kaplan and Haenle (2010, p. 61), who defined social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content, which can then be readily made available to others (Sloep, 2011). The social media platforms include WhatsApp, Telegram, Facebook, Instagram, WeChat, Twitter, Skype, TikTok, YouTube, and LinkedIn.

4.62 billion people worldwide use social media. This translates to approximately 58.4% of the world's population as of January 2022. These figures account for the various social media platforms. However, Facebook is the world's most 'active' social media platform, with 2.934 billion monthly active users and 1.968 billion daily active users as of July 2022 (Kepios, 2022), while WhatsApp is rated as the most popular global mobile messenger app worldwide with approximately two billion monthly active users as of April 2022 (Ceci, 2022).

According to a report by Galal (2022), as of February 2022, countries in Southern Africa had the second-largest share of social media users. The report indicated that 45% of the population used social media, while at the top of the list of social media users were countries in Northern Africa, whose figures stood at 56% of the population. The lowest rate across Africa and regional share worldwide was in Central Africa, where only 8% of its population used social media. Localising these statistics to Namibia, an analysis from Kepios (2022) indicates that, as of January 2022, there were 857.2 thousand social media users in Namibia. According to these figures, social media has a massive potential to influence knowledge sharing if well exploited.

The findings of a study by Glover et al. (2022) revealed that through social media, an individual can connect, share, access, and receive information across borders; those in

business can participate in all the business processes; and organisations are provided for a virtual marketplace for campaigns, promotions, advertisements, and relating to clients.

People use social media for several reasons. A report on the global overview by Kepios (2022) listed the main reasons Internet users (worldwide) aged 16–64 years use social media platforms. Among other reasons, 24.5% indicated that their reason for using social media was to share and discuss opinions with others, 26.6% to find products to purchase, and 22.1% indicated that they used social media to find like-minded communities and interest groups. Although the majority (47.6%) in this report indicated that they used social media to keep in touch with friends and family, it is evident that social media can advance knowledge sharing among entrepreneurs. This report also indicates that more females (51%) than males (49%) use social media in Southern African countries.

Concerning ranking the world's most used social platforms by active users, Facebook topped the list, followed by YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, WeChat, TikTok, and Telegram. Social platforms with fewer active users (less than half a million) included Pinterest and Twitter. WhatsApp topped the list of 'favourite' social media platforms, followed by Instagram and Facebook respectively (Kepios, 2022).

4 Social media and knowledge sharing

Nowadays, social media applications have moved beyond personal use as they have become valuable platforms for facilitating knowledge sharing (KS) and communication (Ahmeda et al., 2019). According to Obermayer (2020), social media tools like Facebook have become mainstream, modified personal relationships, and generated new opportunities to facilitate collaboration. Within the business sector, social media tools are used to generate and share knowledge and seek information about customers, suppliers, and stakeholders (Ahmed et al., 2019; Busalim & Hussin, 2016). Other sectors, such as disaster management, farming, higher education, and many others, have increasingly used social media for knowledge sharing, among other uses (Yates & Paquette, 2011; Balakrishnan & Gan, 2016).

Social media is regarded as a fertile environment for knowledge sharing (Mladenović & Krajina, 2020) because of its versatility and ease of use. Others have recognised it as an essential tool because of its ability to bring together large sets of users for free. These sets of users create spaces to easily exchange knowledge and express thoughts, experiences, and perceptions (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Cevik et al. (2016) argue that social media

has a strong potential for sharing explicit and tacit knowledge because of its affordability and reliability.

Social media technologies such as blogs, YouTube, SlideShare, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Skype foster a more socially connected platform that allows sharing, storage, and synthesis of knowledge from different sources to create new knowledge. Social media users can collaboratively generate new knowledge by sharing experiences and deliberating issues through communities of practice (Anderson, 2007; Sigala & Chalkiti, 2015).

Those in the business sector recognise the importance of using social media, as reported by Kiron et al. (2012). This study reported that 86% of managers valued social media as a knowledge-sharing method for their businesses. It noted that social media increased business value, especially in managing customer relationships and innovating for competitive advantage.

5 Challenges faced when using social media for knowledge sharing

Although social media offers unprecedented opportunities for sharing knowledge (Ford & Mason, 2013), it has also been linked with potential challenges that prevent companies from utilising it. Some of these challenges, as noted by Barzilai-Nahon and Mason (2010), are that the ease and speed with which information and knowledge can be circulated on social media threatens organisational control of information and knowledge and increases the risk of the loss or leakage of intellectual property and proprietary knowledge. In addition, their study also noted the lack of separation of work from personal life and limitations of company technology as other barriers. For instance, the company studied restricted instant messaging and blogs citing technology provided to employees to perform business functions for business solutions. Hence, external sharing was prohibited. Due to these restrictions, employees felt limited about what they could share online.

Another study with similar findings is that of Vayrynen et al. (2013, p. 45), "Knowledge protection challenges of social media encountered by companies." This study noted that some managers perceive knowledge sharing on social media as threatening the company's security. This perception is driven by the notion that the organisation owns knowledge. However, if the organisation views knowledge as housed within people, they see no threat in sharing it on social media. Others, such as Aula (2010), see social media as a potential reputation risk when using it for corporate communication, citing that it is difficult to control and manage what is communicated through social media as it would

be on other traditional ways of corporate communication, such as TV and newspapers. To avert fears of the risk of the loss or leakage of intellectual property and proprietary knowledge, SMEs need to learn about intellectual property rights protection (Retnaningdiah et al., 2020).

Razmerita et al. (2016) studied factors that influence knowledge sharing in organisations, focusing on the social dilemma perspective of social media communication. The findings of this study revealed that 47.4% of respondents lack time, 6% do not share knowledge because they feel sharing is not part of their job, 6% lack trust in colleagues, and fear knowledge will be misused if they share it, 17.2% do not share because they lack training for using social media platforms, 16.4% feel social media is too complicated to use, and 19.8% do not share because they lack understanding of knowledge sharing through social media and its benefits. The study also noted that changing behaviour from hoarding to sharing was challenging for some individuals.

Kazaure et al. (2016) identified several barriers to knowledge sharing, which included age, ethnicity, lack of time, low awareness and realisation of the value and benefit of possessing knowledge with others, fear that sharing what one knows may jeopardise one's job security, lack of social networking sites available to share knowledge, lack of trust, internal and external competitiveness within business units, layout of work areas restricting effective sharing practices, existing corporate culture that does not provide sufficient support for knowledge sharing practices, and shortage of formal and informal spaces to share, reflect, and generate new knowledge among others.

6 Research questions

The literature review in the above sections reflects an interest in social media and entrepreneurship research. However, most studies have focused on the awareness, utilisation, and use of social media as a platform for marketing and advertising. There is a gap in the literature on social media's influence on knowledge management and its implications on entrepreneurship, especially in Africa that needs to be addressed to inform the operations and management of knowledge in small and medium entrepreneurship (Ali et al., 2023). Furthermore, more knowledge is being created and shared online for easy and seamless access, and knowledge is used for effective and optimal business performance. Furthermore, a systematic review revealed that most studies focused on social collaboration (61%).

In comparison, 54% focused on the use of social media for marketing and advertising of business enterprises (Ali et al., 2023). These studies mainly focused on countries such as the United Kingdom, United States, Australia, Brazil, France and Denmark. They reflected gaps in studies from countries in the global south, like Namibia. Ali et al. (2023) further emphasise the need for studies investigating the adoption of social media for knowledge management in entrepreneurship to determine its effectiveness and contribution to business performance.

In Addition, woman entrepreneurs operating in countries like Namibia, where over 53.2% of the population use the internet and social media to create and share information, collaborate and communicate (Keopios, 2023), it is essential that business enterprises adopt social media in their process to improve their business performance and engage with their customers. This study is grounded in the following research questions: How do women entrepreneurs share knowledge? How does social media influence the knowledge-sharing practices of women entrepreneurs? What have been their experiences in using social media for knowledge sharing? How does the use of social media impact their business enterprises?

7 Methodology

The qualitative approach, a case study design, was used to respond to inquiries regarding experience, meaning, and perspective on the utilisation of social media for knowledge sharing from the women entrepreneurs' perspective (Hammarberg et al., 2016). Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were used to collect rich and reliable data from women entrepreneurs and to allow comparisons between subjects while opening doors to flexibility (Steward & Cash, 2006). In-depth interviews help to understand a condition, experience, or event related to the integration of social media for knowledge sharing from the woman entrepreneur's perspective, through which the researchers gather participants' opinions on background information and perspectives and analyse the texts to discover themes and sub-themes from the data that address the research questions of the study (Hammarberg et al., 2016). This study conducted interviews to gather information about people's subjective perceptions of social media use concerning knowledge sharing in small and medium-sized businesses run by female business owners, as opposed to facts or behaviours.

This study adopted a small sample size of 20 women entrepreneurs, sufficient to obtain rich, in-depth data that describe and explain individual women's experiences, viewpoints,

and practices of knowledge sharing, as well as the influence of social networks on knowledge sharing and business processes (Davies & Fisher, 2018). The small sample size was adopted because, unlike quantitative research, which generalises the findings to the entire population, the purpose of this qualitative study is not to generalise the findings to the entire population (Merriams, 2009). However, the findings can be transferable to similar sceneries to a certain degree. Non-probability sampling was applied using snowball sampling techniques to sample female entrepreneurs in small and medium enterprises with formal business enterprises. This sample strategy can be employed extensively when performing qualitative research with a difficult-to-find population. Snowball sampling is predominantly used in qualitative research when the population is challenging to locate. The researchers started collecting data from two female entrepreneurs who were personally known to them, and each interviewee made referrals to female entrepreneurs known to them until the target sample size was reached. Data were analysed using content analysis.

8 Results

This section presents the study results by reporting the themes relevant to the research questions. This study aimed to investigate the use of social media for knowledge sharing among female entrepreneurs in Namibia. Twenty female entrepreneurs were interviewed between August and October 2022. The table below provides information on the types of business activities that women entrepreneurs in Namibia engage in.

Table 1: Business types

Business Type	No of Business
Food Industry	4
Arts and Crafts Industry	4
Poultry Farming	5
Printing Industry	1
Milling Industry	2
Crop Farming	3
Networking Business Industry	2
Fragrance & Perfume Industry	1

8.1 Type of business managed by women entrepreneurs

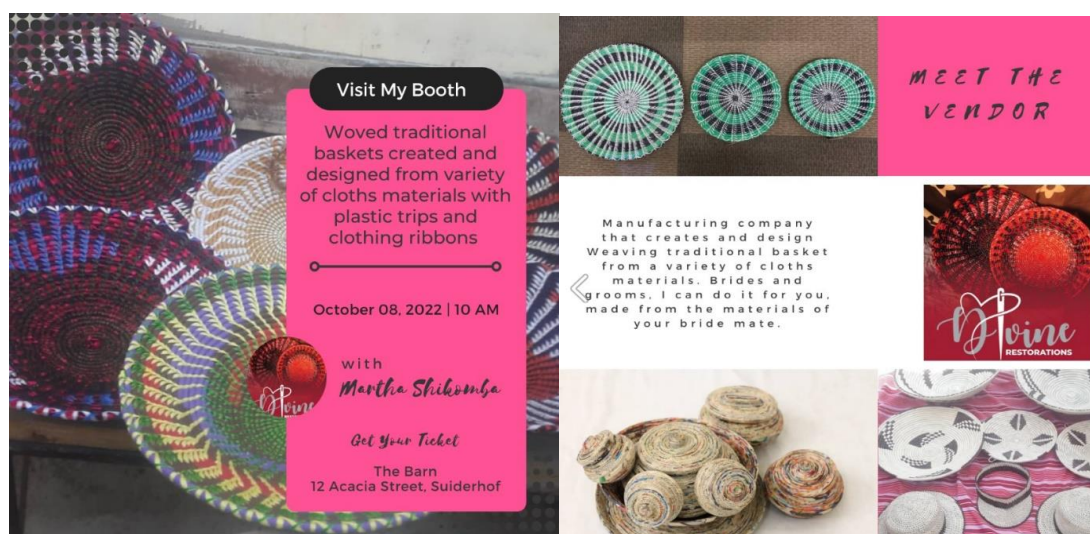


Figure 1: Devine Restoration Arts and Craft¹



Figure 2: Dnak Eembe Jam²



Figure 3: NAKA Namibia³

Women entrepreneurs are engaging and managing different business industries. The study findings show that women entrepreneurs manage the food industry (4), Arts and Crafts, Poultry farming, Crop farming, and milling industry.

The findings revealed that women entrepreneurs share knowledge within their enterprises through meetings, in-person training, and developing manuals/guidelines.

¹ These baskets are woven with recycled materials like paper, plastics and fabrics.

² Eembe jam is made from eembe known as “bird plum” an indigenous wild fruit from the Northern regions of Namibia. See Dnak website: <https://www.dn-nak.com/product/eembe-jam/>

³ These NAKA-scented candles were designed specially to support and advocate for cancer awareness in Namibia in 2021. Meanwhile, NAKA, cancer awareness and advocacy, the design and production of candles and specific themes in collaboration with the Namibia Cancer Association. For details, see the NAKA website: <https://naka.com.na/>

8.2 Use of social media to share knowledge

The study findings revealed that women entrepreneurs shared tacit and explicit knowledge using different platforms, such as social media (YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook, Mass Media (Radio or TV), and in-house training.

Some business enterprises use social media for communication purposes within the enterprises:

“We use the WhatsApp group for communication purposes to check up on each other but not necessary to share the know-how and best practices” P.6

However, women entrepreneurs create, seek, and share knowledge beyond their enterprises through social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube.

Most participants, 15, mainly use WhatsApp to share knowledge on business-related issues. They have different WhatsApp groups targeting different industries such as Chicken Namibia, National Innovation group, Namibia Entrepreneurs, Horticulture marketing, Livestock and Poultry.

“There is a WhatsApp group for poultry farmers, where we discuss issues of managing chickens, diseases and how to treat them” P. 14

“I am leading a business networking WhatsApp and Instagram group where we discuss pricing, marketing and how to get your products in the market”. P2.

"I am a member of several WhatsApp groups such as National Innovation group, Namibian Entrepreneurs, Business link where we share knowledge amongst each other" P3.

Some participants used YouTube (five), while four used live Facebook streams (four) to share knowledge with people interested in the same industry.

“I usually make YouTube videos on how to bake cakes and biscuits”. P5.

"At times, we conduct live Facebook streaming training on how to make baskets from reusable materials like plastics and newspapers." P10.

In addition to social media, women entrepreneurs share their knowledge using different approaches and platforms such as seminars, workshops, and mass media such as Radio and TV programs to share skills and expertise with general communities. One participant indicated that they shared their expertise with university students.

“I was invited by NBC Oshiwambo radio to discuss poultry farming and how to treat different poultry diseases” P.12.

"Our business sometimes got funding to train youth through face-to-face workshops and seminars on how to make different products from plastics and other recyclable materials", Participant 18

"At times, High education Institutions refer students to my business to do their internship and research at my poultry farm, and I share my expertise with them", Participant 15

In addition to knowledge sharing, all participants indicated that they used social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Telegrams, and Tick-tock regularly to advertise and create brand awareness of their products and business.

8.3 Benefits of sharing information and knowledge on social media

In addition, women entrepreneurs acknowledge the benefits of social media platforms to create brand awareness of their company and advertise their products.

“Social media is a good advertising platform as you can reach a wider audience” Participant.8.

“When using Facebook for training, it raises more awareness of the company’s products and services, which may lead to great reputation” Participant.19.

"Social media allows you to get customer feedback, and in the end develop customer loyalty", Participant 20.

8.4 Challenges of sharing information and knowledge on social media

While using social media to provide insightful articles, case studies, and industry trends, women entrepreneurs may demonstrate their knowledge and thought leadership in their domains and establish themselves as authoritative figures. In addition to improving their brands, this encourages knowledge sharing among network members. However, they encounter numerous obstacles that prevent them from fully utilising social networking in their businesses. The main difficulties experienced by female entrepreneurs are illustrated in the mind map below:



Figure 4: Challenges faced by women entrepreneurs

As Depicted in the mind map above, the study revealed that a female entrepreneur's main obstacle is the lack of knowledge to optimally use, manage, and share information effectively using different social media platforms.

"Sometimes Lack of technical knowledge to use social media." P9.

In addition, some participants mentioned that internet connections and the high cost of internet data limit them from entirely using social media to share knowledge and their business expertise with others.

"My challenge in using social media is a higher cost for internet data." P15.

Furthermore, about five participants mentioned the fear of copyright and IP theft and infringements as a significant challenge, especially for those who only have registered the company but did not register their patent with the BIPA, to protect their recipe, business/product processor business ideas against patents not.

"Fear of copyright theft, I once become a victim of that, presented my idea in a public meeting and my ideation was stolen" P13.

8.5 Management of information/knowledge shared on social media

When asked how female entrepreneurs manage the information shared on social media that is relevant to their business or on best practices of managing and marketing business, the participants mentioned different strategies to manage information for future reference. Women entrepreneurs use several approaches, such as sharing videos on a Facebook page or saving on a Google Drive or a computer drive.

The majority (12, 12) of participants (use their cellphones to temporarily store video and audio files through their phone galleries but lose essential information when their device space is filled up. This is because mobile devices have limited storage capacity and cannot be used for knowledge, information management, and preservation.

I keep my essential videos and audio (WhatsApp voice message) on my phone gallery, but sometimes the phone gets full, and you need to delete some essential files to free up space." P11.

"If I have to refer back to such information, I usually return to the group where it was shared." P6.

About five participants indicated sharing and posting videos and audio clips on their social media pages to preserve such knowledge for future reference. This also applies when they discover essential information about different groups important to their business.

"I share videos shared through social media on my Facebook page" P4.

"If I find a video or essential information on social media, I repost it under my account to have access to it forever." P17.

Only two participants indicated using a hard drive to save essential knowledge shared through social media platforms. One said they print it out and file the information shared on social media, which is more important for the business because it is easier to manage, read, and retrieve information on print papers than audio and other online information.

"If the document that benefits my business is shared, I save it to my Google Drive." P10.

"I prefer to print out important information so that I can easily keep it and share it with my employees." P3.

Women entrepreneurs use temporary measures to preserve the knowledge shared through social media for future access, such as reposting a video and posting it to their social media page or downloading and saving it on a hard drive or Google Drive.

9 Discussion

The findings of this study shed light on how women entrepreneurs in Windhoek, Namibia, are utilising social media technologies for knowledge sharing, the challenges they face, and the benefits they derive from these practices. The findings of this study

demonstrate that social media is not only used as an advertising and marketing platform but also as a platform for women to create and share knowledge and engage with their consumers in the business process that can result in product co-creation. The study adds new insights into business enterprises' use of information and communication technology by providing new perspectives on how women use these new technologies to improve their business and create and share knowledge. The findings of this study not only contribute to the body of knowledge by linking social media to knowledge management and entrepreneurship. Furthermore, the results presented have implications for women's entrepreneurship in an online environment.

The findings of this study suggest that social media is a critical tool for knowledge sharing among women entrepreneurs in Windhoek, Namibia. Social media can enhance entrepreneurial innovation, improve decision-making, and provide a competitive advantage. However, women entrepreneurs face challenges in using social media for knowledge sharing, such as lack of access to reliable internet connectivity, limited digital literacy, and language barriers.

The study found that women entrepreneurs in Windhoek, Namibia, use formal and informal platforms to share and create knowledge. These platforms include WhatsApp groups for communication and checking up on each other, as well as broader social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. WhatsApp groups are a popular choice for knowledge sharing on business-related issues, with participants engaging in discussions and information exchange related to specific industries (e.g., Chicken Namibia, National Innovation group, Horticulture marketing). The findings suggest that women entrepreneurs use social media tools for collaborative learning and sharing best practices within their respective industries. These findings were in line with what was reported by Keppio (2022).

The study also highlights that using social media technologies has elevated information and knowledge sharing, interaction, and advertising to a higher level. Women entrepreneurs have reported benefits for their organisations and customers from their engagement with social media. By sharing essential videos and content, these entrepreneurs increase their reach to a broad audience and effectively market their businesses. Moreover, social media platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp are avenues for raising awareness about products and services, potentially leading to a positive

reputation. Similar findings were reported by Cevik et al. (2016) and Mladenović and Krajina (2020).

The researchers identified several challenges women entrepreneurs encounter while using social media for knowledge sharing. These challenges include a lack of affordable data reported as expensive or unavailable for some women, limiting their ability to share and create knowledge online. On the other hand, some entrepreneurs lack the technical skills or knowledge required to record and share videos, which could hinder their efforts to showcase their work and expertise. These findings agree with those of Razmerita et al. (2016). Governments must address the issue of expensive data, as this could enable more women entrepreneurs to participate actively in online knowledge-sharing activities.

Storing videos and audio messages on phone galleries was also a challenge. It led to storage constraints, forcing entrepreneurs to delete important files and potentially lose valuable information gathered from other entrepreneurs. On the other hand, copyright concerns were highlighted as a hindrance to knowledge sharing through social media. Some women expressed fear of intellectual property theft, with some entrepreneurs expressing concerns about sharing their ideas in public spaces due to the risk of ideation theft. Strategies to protect intellectual property, such as copyright awareness and legal support, could help alleviate concerns about idea theft. There is a need, therefore, to educate entrepreneurs on how to protect their intellectual property rights, as alluded to by Retnaningdiah et al. (2020). In addition, providing training and resources to enhance technical skills for content creation and sharing could empower entrepreneurs to utilise social media more effectively. Educating entrepreneurs about efficient storage solutions and data management could help them retain important information without compromising storage space.

Apart from social media, the study indicates that women entrepreneurs in Windhoek use diverse approaches and platforms for knowledge sharing. These include seminars, workshops, and mass media like radio and TV programs. While social media plays a significant role, entrepreneurs adopt multiple strategies to reach a wider audience and disseminate their expertise within the community.

10 Conclusion

This research sought to examine women entrepreneurs' use of social media technologies to share knowledge, identify tools used, how such knowledge is managed, and the challenges women entrepreneurs encounter. The study demonstrates positive and

significant evidence that women entrepreneurs use social media to create and share knowledge with fellow business owners and the public at large. Social media is a place for women entrepreneurs to engage with people wherever they are because it provides unique opportunities to establish trust, as it can be a place where businesses encourage people to talk about them. These technologies take information and knowledge sharing, interaction beyond business building, and advertising to a higher level, where a wider audience can be reached in a second. The study concludes that social media is significant for knowledge creation, sharing, and product co-creation among women entrepreneurs in Namibia. Women entrepreneurs in Namibia use social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube to share expertise and educate and advertise their products. The study also observes that women entrepreneurs adopt temporary measures to preserve knowledge and information shared on social networks for future reference.

Furthermore, women entrepreneurs experience several challenges and bottlenecks that hinder the equitable optimisation of social networks. These include copyright and intellectual property theft, lack of knowledge, high cost of internet data, misinformation, and information overload. It is evident that social media technologies elevate the exchange of information and expertise, enhance customer engagement, and boost advertising, which can benefit women entrepreneurs, business enterprises, and customers. However, capacity building on effective, efficient, and safe use of social media, IP, and evaluation of information is desired to allow women entrepreneurs to address the challenges of online scams, misinformation, and information overload.

11 Implications of the study findings

The study findings have practical implications for supporting organisations like Telecom Namibia, Mobile Telecommunication Centre and BIPA, and community libraries. From the practice perspective, our findings provide significant cases and instances of how women entrepreneurs use social media for business activities and processes as a platform to manage knowledge, which can help improve the understanding of entrepreneurs and policymakers on the role social media can play in augmenting business performance and effectiveness because of its potential for different types of knowledge creation and sharing in business enterprises. Effective use of social media platforms as a means of knowledge management for small and medium business enterprises would, in turn, transform the traditional modes of business into more innovative and creative businesses through knowledge sharing and customer engagement. However, such transformation

cannot happen if entrepreneurs are not well informed of the benefits social media can bring to their business and do not have the skill set and competencies to use social media and to handle the challenges associated with operating a business online and specifically through social media such as misinformation, information overload, IP and copyright issues in an online environment. Hence, there is a need for a collective proactive approach and framework for knowledge management for socially networked businesses.

Furthermore, in Namibia, where over 54% of the population uses social media, entrepreneurs need to acquaint themselves with and improve the skills required to be competitive in an online business environment. The effective use of social media to create and share the acquired knowledge that may be relevant to their business processes, engage customers, and market and advertise their products is specifically significant for women entrepreneurs. However, limited skills to optimally use social media by women entrepreneurs hinder their businesses from benefiting from the advantages brought by social media. Therefore, there is a need for public and private institutions and the state to engage with entrepreneurs and develop programs that can equip entrepreneurs with the skill set required not only on how to use social media to create, share and manage knowledge but also with skills about handling information overload and understanding of intellectual property and copyright related skills for small and medium enterprises operating in an online environment. Collaboration between the Ministry of Trade and Industry, BIPA, and high-education institutions like the University of Namibia and NUST is needed to develop tailored short courses for entrepreneurs.

Additionally, the high cost of the internet is accentuated in this study as a hindrance for women entrepreneurs to use social media in their business effectively. The researchers, therefore, recommend that telecommunication companies such as MTC and Telecom provide affordable packages for small and medium business companies to augment their business operations and online presence, which in turn can improve their business performance. The study also recognised Namibia's lack of a national knowledge management policy and system. Hence, there is a need for such a policy to aid knowledge-sharing practices in Namibia.

12 Limitations of the study findings

This study adopted a qualitative approach using interviews to establish and understand the use of social media platforms for knowledge sharing by female entrepreneurs, which had a limited sample size, making it difficult to generalise the findings. Future studies can

explore the influence of social media on knowledge sharing among women entrepreneurs in other African countries. Furthermore, future studies should examine the management and preservation of tacit knowledge shared in public domains such as social networks. The researchers also suggest that future research is needed to explore factors such as age, gender, and level of education as mediating factors to test their overall influence on the use of social media as a means for knowledge management in different business processes and their impact on business effectiveness. Furthermore, there is a need to investigate the impact of knowledge sharing and consumer engagement through social media on the co-creation of products and services for women-owned businesses.

Declaration of Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no potential conflict of interest concerning the paper's research, authorship, and/or publication.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for this research, authorship, and /or publication of this article.

References

- Ahmed, Y. A., Ahmad, M. N., Ahmad, N., & Zakaria, N. H. (2019). Social media for knowledge-sharing: A systematic literature review. *Telematics and informatics*, 37, 72-112. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2018.01.015>
- Al-Husseini, S., & Elbeltagi, I. (2018). The role of knowledge sharing in enhancing innovation: a comparative study of public and private higher education institutions in Iraq. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 55(1), 23-33. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2015.1122544>
- Ali, I., Balta, M., & Papadopoulos, T. (2023). Social media platforms and social enterprise: Bibliometric analysis and systematic review. *International Journal of Information Management*, 69, 102510.
- Anderson, P. (2007). What is Web 2.0?: ideas, technologies and implications for education. *Bristol JISC*, 1(1), 1–64.
- Appel, G., Grewal, L., Hadi, R. & Stephen, A. T. (2019). The future of social media in marketing. *J. of the Acad. Mark. Sci.* 48, 79–95 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-019-00695-1>
- Aula, P. (2010). Social media, reputation risk and ambient publicity management. *Strategy & leadership*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/10878571011088069>
- Balakrishnan, V., & Gan, C. L. (2016). Students' learning styles and their effects on using social media technology for learning. *Telematics and Informatics*, 33(3), 808-821. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2015.12.004>
- Barzilai-Nahon, K., & Mason, R. M. (2010). How executives perceive the net generation. *Information, Communication & Society*, 13(3), 396-418. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691180903490578>
- Berraies, S. (2019). Effect of middle managers' cultural intelligence on firms' innovation performance: knowledge sharing as mediator and collaborative climate as moderator. *Personnel Review*, 49(4), 1015–1038. <https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-10-2018-0426>
- Busalim, A. H., & Hussin, A. R. C. (2016). Understanding social commerce: A systematic literature review and directions for further research. *International Journal of Information Management*, 36(6), 1075-1088. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2016.06.005>
- Ceci, L. (2022). WhatsApp Statistics & Facts. <https://www.statista.com/topics/2018/whatsapp/>

- Cevik, A. A., Aksel, G., Akoglu, H., Eroglu, S. E., Dogan, N. O., & Altunci, Y. A. (2016). Social media, FOAMed in medical education and knowledge sharing: Local experiences with an international perspective. *Turkish Journal of Emergency Medicine*, 16(3), 112-117. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tjem.2016.07.001>
- Collis, B., & Moonen, J. (2009). Contribution-Oriented Pedagogy. In P. Rogers, G. Berg, J. Boettcher, C. Howard, L. Justice, & K. Schenk (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Distance Learning, Second Edition* (pp. 439–446). IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-60566-198-8.ch066>
- Dalkir, K. (2013). *Knowledge management in theory and practice*. Routledge.
- Davis, C. & Fisher, M. (2018). Understanding research paradigms. *JARNA*, 21(3), 21–25.
- Dixon, S. (2022). Number of global social network users 2018-2027. *Statista*. <https://www.statista.com/>
- Facebook (2022). *Essential Facebook statistics and trends for 2022*. <https://datareportal.com/essential-facebook-stats>
- Ford, D. P., & Mason, R. M. (2013). Knowledge management and social media: The challenges and benefits. *Journal of Organizational Computing and Electronic Commerce*, 23(1-2), pp. 1–6. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10919392.2013.748603>
- Gaál, Z., Szabó, L., Obermayer-Kovács, N., & Csepregi, A. (2015). Exploring the role of social media in knowledge sharing. *Electronic Journal of Knowledge Management*, 13(3), pp185-197. <https://academic-publishing.org/index.php/ejkm/article/view/1055>
- Galal, S. (2022). Social media penetration in Africa 2022, by region. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1190628/social-media-penetration-in-africa-by-region/>
- Ganguly, A., Chatterjee, D., & Talukdar, A. (2019). Knowledge Sharing Barriers Affecting Pharmaceutical Supply Chain Performance. In H. Nozari, & A. Szmelter (Ed.), *Global Supply Chains in the Pharmaceutical Industry* (pp. 269-291). IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-5921-4.ch012>
- Gonzalez, R. V. D., & Martins, M. F. (2017). Knowledge Management Process: a theoretical-conceptual research. *Gestão & Produção*, 24, 248-265. <https://doi.org/10.1590/0104-530X0893-15>
- Grover, P., Kar, A. K., & Dwivedi, Y. (2022). The evolution of social media influence: A literature review and research agenda. *International Journal of Information Management Data Insights*, 2(2), 100116. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijime.2022.100116>
- Hammarberg, K., Kirkman, M., & de Lacey, S. (2016). Qualitative research methods: when to use them and how to judge them. *Human reproduction*, 31(3), 498–501.
- Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizons*, 53(1), 59-68. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003>
- Kemp, S. (2022). Digital 2022: Namibia. <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2022-namibia>
- Kepios (2022). "Global digital reports". <https://kepios.com/reports>
- Kim, T. T., Lee, G., Paek, S., & Lee, S. (2013). Social capital, knowledge sharing and organisational performance: what structural relationship do they have in hotels?. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 25(5), 683-704. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-Jan-2012-0010>
- Kiron, D., Palmer, D., Phillips, A. N., & Kruschwitz, N. (2012). What managers think about social business. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 53(4), 51.
- Knowledge Management Tools (2018). Knowledge management from A to Z. <https://www.knowledge-management-tools.net/knowledge-sharing.php>
- Li, C., Ashraf, S. F., Shahzad, F., Bashir, I., Murad, M., Syed, N., & Riaz, M. (2020). Influence of knowledge management practices on entrepreneurial and organisational performance: A mediated-moderation model. *Frontiers in Psychology*, p. 11, 577106. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.577106>
- Merriam, S.B. (2009). *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* 2nd edition San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons.
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley.
- Mladenović, D., & Krajina, A. (2020). Knowledge sharing on social media: state of the art in 2018. *Journal of Business Economics and Management*, 21(1), 44-63. <https://doi.org/10.3846/jbem.2019.11407>
- Nazim, M., & Mukherjee, B. (2016). Factors critical to the success of knowledge management. *Knowledge management in libraries concepts, tools and approaches*, pp. 263–286.

- Obermayer, N., Gaál, Z., Szabó, L., & Csepregi, A. (2020). Leveraging knowledge sharing over social media tools. In *Information Diffusion Management and Knowledge Sharing: Breakthroughs in Research and Practice* (pp. 761-784). IGI Global. <https://www.igi-global.com/chapter/leveraging-knowledge-sharing-over-social-media-tools/242163>
- Obermayer, N., Kóvári, E., Leinonen, J., Bak, G., & Valeri, M. (2022). How social media practices shape family business performance: the wine industry case study. *European Management Journal*, 40(3), 360-371.
- Olanrewaju, A. S. T., Hossain, M. A., Whiteside, N., & Mercieca, P. (2020). Social media and entrepreneurship research: A literature review. *International Journal of Information Management*, pp. 50, 90–110.
- Panahi, S., Watson, J., & Partridge, H. (2016). Information encountering on social media and tacit knowledge sharing. *Journal of Information Science*, 42(4), 539–550. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0165551515598883>
- Pérez-González, D., Trigueros-Preciado, S., & Popa, S. (2017). Social media technologies' use for competitive information and knowledge sharing and its effects on industrial SMEs' innovation. *Information Systems Management*, 34(3), 291-301.
- Razmerita, L., Kirchner, K., & Nielsen, P. (2016). What factors influence knowledge sharing in organisations? A social dilemma perspective of social media communication. *Journal of Knowledge Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JKM-03-2016-0112>
- Retnaningdiah, D., Resmi, S., Kurniawati, I., & Winarso, B. S. (2020). Incorporating intellectual property rights and E-commerce: supply chain strategy to strengthen the competitiveness of SMEs. *International Journal Of Supply Chain Management*, 9(1), 649-55.
- Semertzaki, E. (2011). Knowledge Management. In *Special libraries as knowledge management centres* (pp.57-119). Elsevier. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-1-84334-613-5.50002-9>
- Sigala, M., & Chalkiti, K. (2014). "Investigating the exploitation of web 2.0 for knowledge management in the Greek tourism industry: An utilisation– importance analysis". *Computers in Human Behavior*, 30(1), 800-812
- Sigala, M., & Chalkiti, K. (2015). "Knowledge management, social media and employee creativity". *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 45, 44-58. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2014.11.003>
- Sloep, P.B. (2009). "Fostering sociability in learning networks through ad-hoc transient communities". *Computer-mediated social networking lectures note in computer science*, pp. 5322, 62-75
- Soto-Acosta, P., & Cegarra-Navarro, J-G. (2016). "New ICTs for knowledge management in organisations". *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 20(3), 417- 422
- Steward, C. J., & Cash, WB (2006) "Interviewing: Principles and Practices". 11th edition New York: McGraw-Hill International Edition.
- Steward, C.J. & Cash, W. (2006). "Interviewing: Principles and Practices". 11th edition New York: McGraw-Hill International Edition.
- Tajpour, M., & Hosseini, E. (2021). "Entrepreneurial intention and the performance of digital startups: The mediating role of social media". *Journal of Content, Community & Communication*, 13(1), 2-15.
- Väyrynen, K., Hekkala, R., & Liias, T. (2013). "Knowledge protection challenges of social media encountered by organisations". *Journal of Organizational Computing and Electronic Commerce*, 23(1-2), 34-55. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10919392.2013.748607>
- Woo Bock, G., Way Siew, C., & Jung Kang, Y. (2009). "Effects of Extrinsic Rewards on Knowledge Sharing Initiatives". In M. Khosrow-Pour, DBA (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Information Science and Technology, Second Edition* (pp. 1287–1293). IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-60566-026-4.ch204>
- Yates, D., & Paquette, S. (2011). "Emergency knowledge management and social media technologies: A case study of the 2010 Haitian earthquake". *International journal of information management*, 31(1), 6–13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2010.10.001>
- Yuan, Y. C., Zhao, X., Liao, Q., & Chi, C. (2013). "The use of different information and communication technologies to support knowledge sharing in organisations: From e-mail to micro-blogging". *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 64(8), 1659–1670.
- Zaim, H., Muhammed, S., & Tarim, M. (2019). "Relationship between knowledge management processes and performance: critical role of knowledge utilisation in organisations". *Knowledge Management Research & Practice*, 17(1), 24-38. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14778238.2018.1538669>