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"WHAT'S YOUR NAME ON FACEBOOK?"

A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF SOCIAL NETWORKING TECHNOLOGIES IN ZIMBABWE

Author: Edward Lindquist
Supervisor: Lisa Eklund

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This process has been a difficult one. Having never written an academic paper of this size before, I did not quite know what I was getting myself into before I started. That being said, I am extremely grateful for the opportunity, and thankful for all those who supported me throughout this incredible and exciting journey.

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TATENDA!

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I have attempted to understand how young people are using social media tools to increase capabilities. The primary fieldwork was carried out in Harare, Zimbabwe. A qualitative study was completed, employing Sen's (1999) Capability Approach, adapted by various authors to account for the role of information and communication technologies. After presenting empirical analysis, the thesis concludes that the unique characteristics of social media as an ICT tool have helped increase capabilities for young people primarily through increased availability of information that is useful and relevant to the lives of young people, thus increasing the opportunity for people to make informed choices in critical lifestyle areas. Finally, the thesis concludes by offering suggestions for further research and programmatic implications for this new and growing sector.

Keywords: social networking; social media; capability approach; Zimbabwe

Word Count: 14,915

ABBREVIATIONS

CA	Capability Approach
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
LIC	Low-income country
MIC	Middle-income country
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SAfAIDS	Southern Africa HIV and AIDS Information Dissemination Service
SNT	Social networking technology
SRH	Sexual and reproductive health
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
Y4R	Young 4 Real
YPN	Zimbabwe Young People's Network on SRH, HIV, and AIDS
ZDHS	Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Survey
ZIMSTAT	Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency

1. INTRODUCTION

It was my first full weekend in Zimbabwe. Before starting my internship at the UNAIDS country office in Harare, my future colleagues and I (all Masters students from Sweden) decided to go for drinks at one of the local bars. After a brief time conversing amongst ourselves, we were approached by a young Zimbabwean woman who asked to join us. Introductions were made, stories shared, and a few laughs had. After about a half-hour, she quickly interrupted. "Are you guys on Facebook? What are your names? We should hang out some more." I was struck by a realization: her primary and preferred mode of communication was the same site I used day in and day out back home. After all of the press that social media has received in the United States and Europe, these technologies are now growing quickly in other parts of the world. Social media has truly become a global phenomenon.

As with many new technologies, social media's arrival is seen by many developing countries as symbolic of modernization; Zheng (2009:67) argues that this is often done without much consideration of their compatibility within local contexts. Questions have been raised as to social media's appropriateness and sustainability in local cultures. Across the world, social media is changing many aspects of life for its users, especially young people interested in staying connected. Issues such as friendship, emotional expression, language, community, sense of identity, and sense of self are being redefined in these virtual worlds. However, as detailed in section 2, the majority of academic research focuses on the role of social media in the lives of HIC users.

But what about this new set of users in LIC? The high-growth and novelty of the social networking technology (SNT) sector (commonly known simply as social media), and the resulting lack of substantive research on social media in LIC, demands more knowledge in order to determine how these technologies are being applied by young people in these new environments. It is possible that social media opens a variety of new opportunities for young people, expanding choices available to them. Additionally, as these technologies continue to expand globally, the ways in which they can be harnessed by the development community should be explored in further research, as these tools

could provide new prospects for information dissemination and linking of individuals and communities.

1.1 Purpose and Research Questions

This research will focus on the increasing use of SNT by youth in Zimbabwe. The purpose of this study is to understand and describe SNT usage for young people in urban Zimbabwe, namely the capital city of Harare. More specifically it aims to understand how young people can use SNT to increase their own choices and capabilities, in line with Sen's Capability Approach. At this stage, SNT will be explored through the two main platforms currently being used, Facebook[1] and Whatsapp[2]. Since these technologies are largely used by urban youth, research will focus on youth in Zimbabwe's capital city of Harare. Additionally research will mostly be restricted to the intersection of social media and mobile technology, as this remains one of the primary access points in Zimbabwe.

The ways in which SNT are used may vary widely from person to person; it is exactly for this reason that this study is being undertaken. As such, the following main research question was formulated with inspiration from previous research on the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) and the Capability Approach:

How are young people in urban Zimbabwe using social networking technologies (SNT) to increase choices and capabilities?

The following sub-questions were also developed with this same inspiration:

What are young people in urban Zimbabwe using SNT for?

What attributes make SNT appealing tools for young people in Zimbabwe?

These questions will be answered by undertaking a qualitative study, looking primarily at Facebook and Whatsapp (as the two primary technologies currently utilized by young Zimbabweans) usage by young people active in online SRH communities. The strong and active social media presence by Harare's youth-serving SRH organizations

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[1] Facebook is an online social networking site, launched in 2004, with over 1 billion users globally. The homepage can be found at <www.facebook.com>.

[2] Whatsapp is a cross-platform instant messaging application available for smartphones. Users are able to send text messages, photos, videos, and audio messages, in addition to creating group chats. The homepage can be found at <www.whatsapp.com>.

makes these groups a perfect subset through which to study SNT. For this reason, many of the examples and quotes given tend to have a health focus, but the insights drawn can be applied more broadly (to areas such as economics, education, or politics).

This study hopes to contribute to the academic debate by adding to the very limited research available on SNT and the ways in which these tools are used by citizens of LIC; additionally, the application of these tools to development initiatives will be an important discussion in years to come, and this research hopes to contribute productively to that discussion by illuminating the ways in which these tools can add to the capabilities of citizens in LIC.

1.2 Outline of the Thesis

Following this introductory chapter, the second section provides an overview of the originality of this study, including a limited literature review. Section three provides a brief background of Zimbabwe, before presenting the study's methodological design in section four. The analytical framework and description of the theoretical concepts used is presented in section five, followed by an empirical analysis using this framework in section six. Finally, concluding remarks are given in section seven.

2. ORIGINALITY AND RELEVANCE

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have now penetrated some of the poorest developing countries, due in large part to the exponential increase of mobile phones and the advent of Internet and social networking sites (Mogotlhwane et al 2011:642). Globally, social media usage has been growing as mobile broadband access spreads to previously unreachable areas. However, the novelty of social media's usage by young users necessitates a deeper understanding than is currently available.

SNT are now attracting the attention of academic researchers interested in the affordances and digital reach of these tools (Boyd and Ellison 2007:210). However, while academic research has previously been carried out on social media and its impact on young people, virtually no formative studies exist examining social media in low-income settings, particularly in Zimbabwe (Zanamwe et al 2013). The few studies that do exist have focused primarily on the impact of ICTs on economic processes (using quantitative

methodology), often failing to capture the wider human development impact that these technologies might have. There is very limited ICT research that focuses on the poor and the role of ICT in reducing poverty and promoting development in LIC (Mogotlhwane et al 2011:642-644), and the ways which these technologies can increase capabilities and choices.

Additionally, the research community knows very little about the community of users that access the Internet exclusively via mobile devices (Donner and Gitau 2009). Research among resource-constrained communities surrounding social media and mobile Internet remains understandably rare since spread of these technologies has only occurred within the past few years. Thus, little academic research exists on the Internet's impact on well-being or social inclusion in LIC (Donner and Gitau 2009).

According to Heeks (2002:9), most ICT systems are designed in the North before being implemented in the South; typically this brings a large design reality gap that helps explain the significant failure rates of ICT programs. Concern is often also expressed about the influence that increased exposure to these Northern technologies is having on young users in LIC. As Boyd and Ellison (2007:211) highlight, there is a need to understand the "practices, implications, culture, and meaning of the sites as well as users' engagement with them." Thus, a more nuanced and contextual understanding of ICT and social media usage is necessary in order to address the many evolving issues as this sector grows.

As such, the framework for this thesis was developed with inspiration from other ITC analyses that have adapted human development theories, specifically Sen's Capability Approach (CA). The idea of studying social media in relation to the CA is a new twist to the continually evolving research agenda of the ICT4D (ICT for development) field. The thesis now leads to an introduction of the Zimbabwean context, before proceeding to a methodological discussion and introduction of the conceptual framework used in analyzing primary data that was gathered.

3. BACKGROUND

Zimbabwe is a land-locked country found in the eastern region of Sub-Saharan Africa. The capital city of Harare forms the main metropolitan area, with a population of 1.6 million as of 2009. The total population of Zimbabwe stands just over 13 million as of 2013, with 98% of these people belonging to various African ethnic groups (primarily Shona and Ndebele). As such, Zimbabwe has three main languages: English as the official working language; Shona; and Ndebele (CIA 2013). While the majority of Zimbabweans speak either Shone or Ndebele as a first language, knowledge of English is widespread, especially in urban areas. Christianity comprises the main religion in Zimbabwe, with a mixture of indigenous and tribal beliefs also practiced.

Following a decade of contraction culminating in financial crisis and failure of the Zimbabwean dollar in early 2009, Zimbabwe's economy has begun to recover. The economy is diversified, but biased towards mining and agriculture (ZIMSTAT 2012:1). Classified as a low-income country (LIC), the average Zimbabwean earns approximately 570 USD per year. The country has a stark urban-rural divide, with 38% of the population living in urban areas as of 2011 (UNDATA 2013).

3.1 Youth in Zimbabwe

The United Nations defines a "youth" or "young person" as persons between the ages of 15 and 24; the recently released Zimbabwe Draft Constitution (from 1 February 2013) expands on this definition, including ages 15 to 35. This study uses the same definition as the draft constitution in order to take into account local perceptions of "youth".

Median age in Zimbabwe is currently 18.9 years old and life expectancy 51.82 years (CIA 2013). Zimbabwe has a young age structure, with 76.5% of the country's citizens less than 34 years of age and 35% of the population falling between ages 15-34 (ZIMSTAT 2013:5). The young age structure and low life expectancy are likely due to the high prevalence of HIV and the impact of the economic recession (ZIMSTAT 2012:14). Despite a major decline since 1998, when HIV prevalence was 27.8%, the prevalence rate still hovers around 15% as of 2011 (UNAIDS 2012). The HIV epidemic has also resulted in Zimbabwe's high rate of orphaning, which is one of the highest in the world at 25% (UNICEF 2011).

The majority of Zimbabweans have attained some education, and there is very little difference in educational attainment based on gender (ZIMSTAT 2012:22). This is reflected in Zimbabwe's literacy rate, rare amongst its counterparts in Sub-Saharan Africa. The country is recognized for unusually high literacy rates, with over 94% of females and 96% of males literate (ZIMSTAT 2012:31), with over 95% literacy for ages 15-24 (ZIMSTAT 2013). Adoption of SNT and ICT is often facilitated by high literacy rates. This high level of general literacy indicates that the capacity to use social media and other ICTs already exists in Zimbabwe, making the country an interesting case within Sub-Saharan Africa to explore social media usage. However, UNICEF (2011:2) reports that more than 1 million children and young people in Zimbabwe are out of school, with very limited educational or employment opportunities.

Unemployment in Zimbabwe is an issue for all age cohorts. Women and men aged 15-19 are less likely to be employed than older counterparts; however this is likely due to the fact that many are currently still students. Unemployment for older age groups is still quite high, ranging from 46-59% for women and 16-29% for men aged 20-34 (ZIMSTAT 2012:37). Unsurprisingly, women and men with more than a secondary education were most likely to be currently employed.

3.2 Internet in Zimbabwe

To understand the growth of alternative media, specifically that of Internet and social media, one must first understand the environment in which media operates within Zimbabwe. Mass media generally refers to print media and traditional electronic media, but has recently broadened to include the Internet and its various diverse forms. Since the 1990s, Zimbabwe has witnessed the emergence and expansion of the independent press (Thondhlana 2011:229). However, in the early 2000s the government passed a number of laws aimed at restricting the media. The Post and Telecommunications Act of 2000 allowed the President to give a directive that "any class of communications transmitted by means of a cellular telecommunication or telecommunications service (including e-mail) may be intercepted or monitored in a manner specified in the directive"; the Public Order and Security Act of 2002 makes it a criminal offense to publish anything likely to cause alarm (Thondhlana 2011:230-231; Moyo 2007). While the extent to which these

laws are used is unknown, their passage has led to the arrest and detention of a number of journalists (Thondhlana 2011:231).

According to Borowa et al (2010), Zimbabwe is still on the verge of being a fully technologically capable nation due to lack of financial capabilities. The main obstacle to Internet usage in Zimbabwe is cost. With a home Internet package costing approximately $50 per month, subscriptions are still limited mainly to affluent Zimbabweans (Freedom House 2012:3). Many Zimbabweans still lack access to telephone services, computers and the Internet. A vast divide also exists between urban and rural penetration, as most rural communities are geographically isolated and economically disadvantaged. Additionally, limited infrastructure and rationing of electricity make Internet penetration uneven or even unattainable for a large portion of the country, even in urban areas (Freedom House 2012).

Despite the restrictive environment generally associated with Zimbabwe's traditional media, Internet and mobile phone usage has generally remained free from government interference. Despite poor infrastructure and high cost, both Internet and mobile phone subscriptions have seen steady growth in recent years (Freedom House 2012), and Internet services are beginning to play important roles in Zimbabwean society. As of 2011, Zimbabwe ranks 115 (out of 155) in the ICT Development Index (IDI), up from 118 in 2010 (ITU 2012:7).

Internet access grew rapidly in Zimbabwe, from a penetration of 0.3% in 2000 to approximately 15.7% as of 2011 (Freedom House 2012:2). A large diaspora in overseas commonwealth countries, estimated at one-third of the Zimbabwean population (Thondhlana 2011:233), has created a favorable environment for increased Internet usage; the Internet represents a faster, cheaper and overall easier alternative for local Zimbabweans wanting to communicate with friends and family abroad. Additionally, the Internet has become a popular source for seeking information alternatives to the largely state-run traditional media. According to the 2011 Zimbabwe All Media Products and Services Survey (ZAMPS), 24% of adults living in urban centers are accessing Internet services. The survey also found that Facebook is the most popular website among Internet users in Zimbabwe (Freedom House 2012:3).

Cellular devices continue to play a major role in Internet access in Zimbabwe, and are still one of the main channels for Zimbabweans wishing to get online. Mobile phone penetration has continued to expand, growing from 6.8% in 2006 to 72.1% in 2011 (Freedom House 2012:4). Like many African countries, Zimbabwe has seen a surge in internet-enabled low-cost imitation mobile devices imported from Asia. However, mobile internet service is quite slow and tariffs for EDGE and 3G service still remain expensive for the average user; Telecel, Econet, and NetOne (Zimbabwe's three primary mobile operators) charge 0.11, 0.15, and 0.10 USD per megabyte respectively. Nonetheless, Internet access has certainly increased as more people connect through mobile devices (Freedom House 2012).

SNT, commonly known as social media, are a collection of Internet-based applications that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Dubose 2011:112). In Zimbabwe, sites like Facebook are used for chatting and keeping connected with friends, as well as staying abreast of global news; unfortunately low penetration, the lack of anonymity, and the fear of repercussions from the Government limit social media's use as a mass mobilization tool in Zimbabwe (Freedom House 2012:8). Additionally, as stated in section 2, very little formative academic research exists on social network sites and their use in Zimbabwe.

4. METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

This study was founded in the principles of interpretivism, namely that one must aim to understand the social world by examining the interpretation of that world by its participants (Bryman 2008; Creswell 2009:37). However, much of the activity of social life is routine, and it is only once enquiries are made about a person's social life that they begin to construct meanings and interpretations (Ong 2012:424-425). As suggested by Bryman (2008:16), social reality has an inherent meaning for people, who in turn act on the basis of these meanings. The social world has already been defined and interpreted before the researcher enters into a person's social life; thus, the aim is not to impose an outsider view but rather to discover the insider view (Ong 2012:423), which can be linked with abduction. The process of abduction refers to generating scientific accounts

from social actors' own accounts and interpretations of their social life grounded in everyday activities (Ong 2012:422).

This combination of ontological and epistemological worldviews is appropriate for a qualitative research design. Qualitative research is an approach that attempts to gain a complex and contextual understanding of a specific social phenomenon in its natural setting (Golafshani 2003:600; Creswell 2009:40), often emphasizing words rather than quantification in the gathering and analysis of data (Bryman 2008:22; Scheyvens 2003:59). By focusing on the words of participants, responses become culturally salient and explanatory in nature (Mack 2005:2-4; Scheyvens 2003:57). In a qualitative study, theory often becomes an outcome of investigation rather than something that precedes and guides the study (Bryman 2008:369). This process is often iterative in nature, and indeed the process for this study was by no means linear; constant revision and rethinking was necessary throughout.

To complete the proposed research, a qualitative study was undertaken investigating Facebook and Whatsapp usage by young people in online SRH communities. I was initially introduced to these groups through my UNAIDS internship; additionally, it was through the internship that I learned that these SRH organizations and their members were active users of SNT. This helped guide my choice of using these networks as a departure point for study and sampling. For this study, tools chosen included online observation, interviews and focus groups. A semi-structured approach with a predetermined list of topics, but still allowing a range of flexibility, was chosen to appropriately capture the views of young people. In qualitative research, questions are broad and general so that participants themselves can construct the meaning of a situation, a meaning typically forged in discussions or interactions with other people (Creswell 2009:21).

4.1 Sources of Data

4.1.1 Study Sample

Sample size was determined once the study had already begun and guided by theoretical saturation of the specific topics of interest; the researcher can stop once the major analytical categories have been saturated (Bryman 2008). Sample size can also be

influenced by the time and resources available to the study (Mack 2005:5). In this case, limited time and resources for travel restricted sampling to one urban metropolis in Zimbabwe. Individual interviews combined with focus groups helped to connect with a wide group of young social media users in Harare. In the end, the appropriate sample size was one that adequately answers the research question, as suggested by Marshall (1996:523), which often becomes obvious only as the study progresses.

The qualitative researcher recognizes that certain informants may provide richer answers than others, and are thus likely to provide more useful insight and understanding for the researcher (Marshall 1996:523). For this study, a combination of convenience and purposeful sampling was used to recruit participants for both individual interviews and focus groups. Convenience sampling entails selecting the most accessible subjects, and is the least costly for the researcher in terms of time, effort, and money (Marshall 1996:523). In purposive sampling, participants are actively selected with direct reference to the study's research question, in order to provide the most productive sample to answer the research question (Bryman 2008:375; Mack 2005:4; Marshall 1996:523).

Key sampling groups were initially identified through work done as part of the UNAIDS Youth Team, in collaboration with the main youth SRH organizations serving young people in Zimbabwe, primarily the National Aids Council (NAC), the Zimbabwe Young People's Network on SRH, HIV, and AIDS (YPN), and the Southern Africa HIV and AIDS Information Dissemination Service (SAfAIDS). These organizations were also known to employ SNT heavily in their own work, and thus served as good networks from which to recruit individuals for participation in the study. All young people interviewed resided in or around Harare due to the difficulty of recruiting individuals from rural areas.

The ongoing process of including and interviewing youth in my own work also helped to develop interview questions and interview guides. By allowing the subjects of the study to provide input into the study itself, the thesis and any resulting conclusions could be used more effectively by the community in question. The study integrated urban youth into the research design and allowed youth to influence and highlight important discourses by actively including them in project design, data collection, and review of the final research conclusions. This participatory approach allowed not only for a more

complete understanding, but also allowed the community itself to determine the most appropriate direction of study.

4.1.2 Gatekeepers

Typically gatekeepers help a researcher develop a plan to identify and recruit potential participants for a study (Mack 2005:6). For this study, three separate gatekeepers helped recruit participants for individual interviews and focus group discussions; one was a member of the YPN and two were involved with SAfAIDS programs. These gatekeepers were the primary points of contact for organizing focus groups, and were able to put me in touch with members from their respective organizations that were interested in participating in the research. Urban youth engaged in social networking already were targeted (though there were some youth that participated in focus groups who were not active social media users).

4.2 Gathering of Data

4.2.1 Literature Review and Online Observation

A literature review was conducted to identify previous research. However, as detailed in section 2, very little academic research on SNT in LIC currently exists, especially concerning the use of these technologies in Zimbabwe. Even usage statistics, which detail the demographics of a country's population using Facebook, are unavailable for Zimbabwe. This lack of research is likely due to the extremely novel nature of the social networking sector.

Direct observation of individual social media usage was not possible, justifying the choice of individual interviews and focus groups as a tool to explore informants' own views on the phenomenon of social media usage in Zimbabwe. However, observation of activity and discussions occurring in various Facebook groups to which gatekeepers directed me was possible. Observation of the activity within these groups added productively to insights gained from interviews and focus groups.

4.2.2 Interviews and Focus Groups

As participants could not be directly observed in social networking usage, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with purposefully identified individuals so that direction and topic of questioning could be controlled. Interviews are a useful tool

when participants cannot be directly observed in the area of research (Creswell 2009:179). In qualitative interviewing, greater emphasis and interest is placed on the viewpoint of the interviewee and the rich answers gained, and departure from any standardized process occurs frequently and is actually often encouraged (Bryman 2008:437; Mack 2005:29). While a predetermined list of topics and questions, in the form of an interview guide, helped direct each interview and systematize the data collection process, flexibility in questioning was still ensured. Indeed, the flexible nature of the interview guide and the semi-structured interview allowed for new questions to be posed and topics to be introduced when appropriate.

In-depth semi-structured interviews were carried out with members of various SRH youth advocacy groups, primarily the YPN and SAfAIDS' Young 4 Real (Y4R). A total of six interviews were conducted; in addition, two key informant interviews were conducted with communications experts at local NGOs. Key informant interviews helped to obtain special knowledge on the given topic in question (Mikkelsen 2005:172), while also corroborating findings from previous interviews.

A focus group discussion is an interview technique that involves several interviewees; it is an effective tool in helping researchers learn social norms of a community or subgroup, including the range of perspectives that might exist within that community groups (Bryman 2008:473; Mack 2005:51; Mikkelsen 2005:173). The principal advantage of focus groups is that they yield a large amount of information in a short period of time (Mack 2005:51), ideal for a study such as this in which time was one of the limiting factors. Focus groups can be especially enlightening in a new and previously unresearched domain (such as social media) since group interaction can bring about more spontaneous and expressive views on the topic than one would find in an individual interview (Bryman 2008:475). Focus groups served as a starting point to learn the general attitudes and behaviors of the community of interest at large, in this case urban youth using SNT. Focus group discussions were carried out with members of SRH advocacy groups, primarily the YPN and SAfAIDS' Y4R. Participants were arranged through two of the previously mentioned gatekeepers, one a member of the YPN and one a member of Y4R.

A total of five focus groups were arranged, with six to eight young people participating in each, to facilitate discussion in which each group member could actively participate. All discussions were conducted with mixed gender, as gender was not initially determined to be an important factor in this study. Participants were contacted through one of the gatekeepers, who also arranged the time and location where I met the group. Questioning was structured around the interview guide; however, as recommended by Bryman (2008:480) a smaller number of general questions were used to allow more latitude for the group to discuss.

All interviews and focus group discussions were conducted at UNAIDS offices, NAC offices, and at cafes in suburban Harare. All discussions were held in English, Zimbabwe's working language, without any communication difficulties. Oftentimes, interviewees requested these sites in advance because of the offices' central location and the resulting easy accessibility through public transport networks. While it was certainly a concern, no negative consequences were observed due to location during the interview process. For focus group discussion, refreshments were provided during discussions and transport reimbursement was provided for participants after completion.

4.2.3 Transcription and Analysis

As suggested by Bryman (2008:443) and Creswell (2007:133), good recording equipment was used to record all discussions to ensure that interviewees' viewpoints were captured accurately in their own terms. These recordings were then transcribed for analysis. Transcription of individual interviews was completed in their entirety, as important insights might not emerge until later in the process; however, this proved a more difficult process for focus groups. As Bryman (2008:476) points out, while transcription of focus groups is important, these transcripts tend to have more missing pieces due to the lack of audibility when compared to conventional interviews.

Typed transcripts can be coded according to participant responses, and the themes that emerge across the set of all interviews can be then be analyzed (Mack 2005:30,52). According to Mikkelsen (2005:181), there is no point at which data collection ends and analysis begins; rather ideas about analysis emerge continuously throughout the data collection process. Additionally, no strict scientific or mechanistic formulas exist for

analyzing qualitative data. However, analysis was structured around Mikkelsen's (2005) method of coding, in which the researcher organizes data into conceptual categories in order to create themes that can be used in the analysis. Broad themes, based on experiences gained in initial research and work with young people, were more or less determined before preparation of the interview guide; however, new themes and methods for structure and categorizing data emerged as research proceeded. Coding categories were further developed with inspiration from the 8 C's framework introduced in section 5.4; however, flexibility in coding categories for analysis remained a consideration so as not to restrict analysis in any way.

Categorical coding helped to facilitate further analysis of the data. Data was then presented as summarized accounts of all informants' viewpoints, along with selected representative quotes. At this stage, it is up to the researcher to infer and interpret the statements provided, and as Bryman (2008:554) mentions this entails the risk of misinterpretation or misuse of data. However, this is a necessary step in order to provide significance to the findings, and the utmost care was taken not to misinterpret responses provided by informants.

4.3 Assessment Criteria

Current literature debates heavily on the best way to evaluate qualitative research, and while little consensus has been reached, scholars often speak of the two main criteria of reliability and validity (Bryman 2008:31-32). Reliability is concerned with whether the results of a study can be repeated and replicated upon further study by other researchers, while validity is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from the research. As suggested by both Mikkelsen (2005:197) and Creswell (2009:191), by providing a clear description of the study context, and of my own personal background, a reader can form his or her own opinions of the validity of the research in question. The more clearly a study has been described, the easier it is to scrutinize the reliability and to potentially replicate the study in further research (Bryman 2008:32). I have explicitly detailed my own research experience clearly to facilitate this process.

However, because qualitative research is more interested in generating a rich and detailed analysis, issues of representativeness are often less important in a qualitative

approach (Bryman 2008:458). The importance of these parameters is often left up to the researcher himself, and other parameters can be proposed that may be deemed more appropriate. Golafshani (2003:604) suggests that reliability and validity are instead conceptualized as trustworthiness, rigor and quality.

Data triangulation and engaging multiple tools of study in the research design will help to achieve a more valid, reliable and diverse analysis (Golafshani 2003:604). Initially, integration into the SRH environment and engagement with young people involved in these networks (through work at UNAIDS) helped me develop a basic understanding of the contextual factors at play. Individual interviews, focus group discussions and reviews of online social networking forums were then combined in the research design to ensure validation of data. Recording and transcribing of all interviews and focus groups, along with careful note taking throughout the research process, further facilitated this process. Additionally, key informants helped to further validate the emergence of initial analytical findings.

4.4 Ethical Considerations

My primary aim in conducting my research was for the results to be relevant and necessary, used in a valuable capacity by the youth organizations that I worked with in Zimbabwe. While this aim of good is important, I firmly believe that it is equally important to do no harm; thus, I tried to avoid any sensitive topics that may have emerged due to the semi-structured nature of the discussions, as was also suggested by my UNAIDS supervisor.

Whenever conducting research on people, the well-being of the research participants must be taken as the top priority (Mack 2005:8). This entails usage of two key ethical considerations for qualitative research: informed consent and confidentiality. Participation in any qualitative research should be based on the freely given informed consent of those participants being studied. This implies a responsibility on the researcher to explain as fully as possible, and in terms meaningful and understandable to the participants, what the research is about, who is undertaking it, and why it is being undertaken (Bryman 2008:121; Mack 2005:9; Scheyvens 2003:142). However, as detailed by Bryman (2008:121), it is difficult to present all of the information that might

be required for an informed decision, especially since the researcher does not want to bias participants' responses. Participants should also be informed of the anonymity and confidentiality of their answers (Scheyvens 2003:146; Mikkelsen 2005:342).

Participants were informed of the purpose of the research, to study social media usage in Zimbabwe as part of a University Masters thesis, and that participation was not required and participants could withdraw whenever they wished. The discussions taking place would be recorded and transcribed; however these recordings were for my personal academic use only and would not be shared with anyone. Although focus group participants were asked to provide demographic information on a sign-in sheet, they were informed that these answers were solely for recordkeeping and would be kept confidential. To ensure maintenance of privacy, all names in this thesis were changed, any potentially identifying details were removed, and participants were not personally identified in any outputs produced. However, because other participants might be less ethical in guaranteeing confidentiality, a request for privacy was emphasized before starting the discussions. Informed consent was also secured verbally from each participant before discussions began. As suggested by (Scheyvens 2003:142-144), participants were not required to sign a consent form but rather asked to give consent orally and in an informal manner, which was deemed appropriate in this circumstance.

Use of electronic communications in qualitative research has been a touchy issue. Bryman (2008:130) suggests that these communications can be used if the information is publicly archived; if no password is required to access the information; if material is not sensitive in nature; and if no stated site policy prohibits use of the material. In this case, online communications were found in Facebook groups focusing on SRH issues; gatekeepers and informants initially directed me to these groups. While a Facebook membership is required to access these groups, membership is free and access to all groups that were analyzed is open and available for any Facebook member.

4.5 Limitations

As a university researcher with an American and Swedish background, it is critical for me to reflect on the inherent values that I carry into my research. As Bryman (2008:25) suggests, it is important to recognize that research can never be value free, and recognize

the role that these values play in influencing the research process. Having worked with social media for many years, it is an area that I am passionate about; it is possible that this passion shone through in my research process.

Additionally, the researcher's own position within the group may keep him from acknowledging all dimensions of the research experience (Creswell 2009:139). Informants were often aware of my position as a Swedish intern at UNAIDS. While the combination of these factors could have influenced informants' responses, making them more enthusiastic because that is what they thought I wanted to hear, I believe that informants' answers were truthful and honest. The vast majority of informants were familiar in one way or another with the process of independent, academic research, a factor that definitely aided in data collection. Nonetheless, it is important to reflect on how informants stated attitudes, beliefs and perceptions match the reality of the situation.

Additionally, it might be seen as a limitation that youth already engaged in social media usage were targeted. One might assume that these youth tended to be more affluent than their non-using peers, and that the socioeconomic and development characteristics of these two groups differed drastically. However, convenience sampling of youth familiar with social media was necessary in order to gain any sort of valuable insights. The difference in attitudes may also not be as drastic as initially assumed due to the high mobile penetration found in Zimbabwe's urban areas. Additionally, as these technologies are spreading quickly throughout Zimbabwe (especially as prices of smartphones continue to drop), I believe it is likely that the views expressed in interviews are likely to spread as well. Nonetheless, this was a limitation that must be kept in mind.

5. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Before discussing empirical data gathered during my time in Zimbabwe, it is necessary to outline the theoretical framework that will guide analysis of information provided by informants. This framework draws on prior research on ICTs in LIC. Specifically, the framework applies Sen's (1999) Capability Approach, adapted by a number of authors to incorporate the role of ICTs in expanding capabilities and freedoms. Analysis is grouped based on the parameters of the digital economy as proposed by Rao (2005).

5.1 Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)

Since the introduction of the information society concept in the 1970s, the link between access to information and poverty has been widely recognized. As the global economy now enters the information age, knowledge has become a critical resource and information a primary commodity, a vital aspect to technology, economy, work and culture (Flor 2001:1-3; Alampay 2006:4). Information and communication technology (ICT) is the collective term given to the new generation of technologies that evolved from the merger of computers and telecommunications, used to capture, transmit and display information digitally (Flor 2001; Kelles-Viitanen 2003; Heeks 2002); naturally, this classification also includes the Internet and more recently developed social network technologies (SNT), commonly known as social media.

Today ICTs play a major role in many aspects of modern life: politics, economics, and social and cultural development; these technologies have transformed the way we access information and services, communicate with each other, and entertain ourselves (Kelles-Viitanen 2003:82). Further, as the 21st century progresses, economic, social and political lifestyles have become increasingly digital, and those without access to ICT risk being excluded (Heeks 2008:26). However, as influential as these technologies have been, scholars often struggle to prove specific impacts for disadvantaged populations (Kleine 2008:108).

Scholars have differing views on the significance of the Digital Divide in the development discussion (Ali 2011:190). Some contend that no special attention is deserved, as the Digital Divide is merely a symptom of broader economic disparities in LIC. However, the necessity of basic ICT services was highlighted by Kofi Annan:

> *'People lack many things: jobs, shelter, food, health care and drinkable water. Today, being cut off from basic telecommunications services is a hardship almost as acute as these other deprivations, and may indeed reduce the chances of finding remedies to them.'* (Ali 2011:191)

It is important to remember that ICT offers cheap and efficient tools and applications for citizens of LIC. By providing tools for exchange of information, ideas, and knowledge, ICT can become an enabling tool (Kelles-Viitanen 2003). But information is still by no means a magic cure; new technologies will not inherently address the divides

that exist within societies for many of these citizens, such as varying levels of access between: men and women; rich and poor; urban and rural; young and old; and people with different levels of education (Alampay 2006:6; Kelles-Viitanen 2003:84). This is a reminder that the disadvantaged often remain so because of inequalities in a broad range of resource endowments, such as knowledge, skills, money, or power (Heeks 2002:7). However, as Gasco-Hernandez et al (2006:xv) write:

> *'We do not eat information, but we can use information to grow more food and learn better nutrition habits. And in some circumstances, like natural disasters, the AIDS epidemic, or simply being in the face of rough seas (for fishermen), information simply saves lives.'*

As stated above, the right information provided in the right way at the right time can certainly help underserved populations in increasing opportunities and choices, and thus expanding capabilities.

5.2 The Internet & Social Networking Technologies (SNT)

By definition the Internet refers to the electronic networks that link people and information, through computers and other digital devices, allowing communication and information retrieval (DiMaggio et al 2001:307). Combining innovative features of its ICT predecessors, such as bridging great distances and reaching mass audiences, with new novel features unique to Internet applications, such as users' relative anonymity and creation of group venues in which to meet other users with similar interests and values (Bargh et al 2004:573), the Internet has the potential to wildly alter the communications industry. It is a medium unique in its integration of modes of communication and forms of content (DiMaggio et al 2001:307).

While disagreements still exist among scholars as to how crucial Internet is for development, technology enthusiasts posit that unequal access to ICT and the Internet can limit people's opportunities to find and compete for jobs, obtain varying levels of education, access relevant political and healthcare information, participate in political dialogue, and build extensive networks of social support (DiMaggio et al 2001:310). The Internet helps to lower inequalities primarily by lowering the cost of information, addressing the Digital Divide or the unequal distribution of ICT access and services, seen across and within countries (Ali 2011:188).

As Internet use and competence has spread, recent surveys have revealed that Internet users tend to have higher levels of generalized trust and larger social networks as compared to nonusers. In addition, increased Internet use was associated with increased family member interaction, closeness to friends, and involvement in community, especially for users who had strong social support networks before Internet use began. (DiMaggio et al 2001:316-317; Bargh et al 2004:580). Rather than being the socially isolating technology that some early scholars thought it to be, communicating with family and friends over the Internet has instead helped to maintain close ties (especially over long distances) and can even help facilitate formation of new relationships based on shared interests and values (Bargh et al 2004:582).

SNT, more commonly known as social network sites or social media, refer to the platforms on which people create, share, and exchange ideas and information through interaction in virtual communities and networks. In general, social media refers to a subset of Internet-based tools that use scalable and simple content publishing techniques, and are often readily accessible through mobile devices (Ali 2011; Dubose 2011).

Social media empowers individuals to create their own content; if necessary, users can express themselves in ways other than textual characters, such as posting videos, pictures, or photos (Ali 2011:214). Transcending socioeconomic and geographic barriers, social media is radically transforming the way that people communicate by allowing rapid exchange of information. Because little formal ICT training is needed to publish content, barriers are reduced through the use of social media (Ali 2011:213-214), and it is now possible for anyone to become a content creator and publisher. Thus, content is inherently relevant to the local interests of users. Additionally, the sense of general empowerment that comes from this inclusion and content creation is invaluable (Heeks 2008:29). Social media has transformed Internet users from passive listeners and readers into active participants (Ali 2011:215). As ICT has evolved, conversations have moved from a monologue to a dialogue, from "1-to-1" to "1-to-many" or "many-to-many" (McNab 2009; Dubose 2011:113), as can now be seen in many SNT platforms.

Optimistic accounts of social media stress new opportunities for self-expression, sociability, community engagement, and creativity (Livingstone 2008:394). Due to its

ability to attract a wide audience, foster ICT adoption through locally relevant and understandable content creation, and promote basic ICT skills, social media can support the more traditional end goals of general ICT adoption: quick access to vital economic, educational, and healthcare information for citizens of LIC (McNab 2009; Ali 2011:218). Citizens of LIC can now easily connect to the outside world, while also helping to shape the Internet in ways relevant to their own lives (Ali 2011:219).

5.3 ICT & the Capability Approach

According to Zheng (2009:75), it is not uncommon that ICT is often evaluated from a technological perspective rather than a human centered-one; most mainstream discourse on ICT and development focuses on development as economic growth or modernization (Zheng 2009:68), which Kleine (2008:108) argues are too narrow to capture impacts of ICT. Sen's CA thus offers a different space to assess e-development and issues surrounding ICT, situating technological adoption within the wider development context. The CA is deliberately vague, allowing it to be applied to a range of human development issues, including ICTs.

In this light, Sen's (1999) CA provides a useful mode of thinking. In his seminal work, Sen (1999:36) argues that development can be seen as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy, and must be more concerned with enhancing the lives people lead and their freedom of choice. Freedom thus involves both the processes that grant people freedom of action and decisions, and the actual opportunities that people have, given their personal and social circumstances (Sen 1999:17). The primary development outcome then becomes choice itself (Kleine 2008:110), which may include easier communication, increased knowledge, or time saved.

The CA thus views development as a multidimensional process of enlarging people's choices and freedoms, a process that is both participative and empowering (Hamel 2010:1-4). Promoting choices in peoples' lives means increasing access to information that leads to knowledge (Hamel 2010:6). Thus, the CA strives to use ICTs to increase access to information for marginalized groups within society. ICT tools can have positive impacts by being capability enhancers, allowing people to make better judgments by having access to knowledge that was once not available to them (Hamel 2010:1-3). By

allowing people to do more with their lives, or at the very least do different things, ICTs increase capabilities and become an intricate part of the human development process (Hamel 2010:6-7; Zheng 2009:79).

Technology has become the driving force in most notions of economic development, providing the world with new opportunities and potentials (Heeks 2002:5). Research shows that these tools can have positive impacts on increasing the stakeholders' participation in debates about poverty and development; in this way, development becomes more relevant to the lives of the user (Hamel 2010:51). The real benefits of ICT, specifically in Zimbabwe, are related to its ability to make critical information easily available and break down barriers to participation, as argued by Borowa et al (2010). Similarly, Thondhlana (2011:249) argues that given the right environment in Zimbabwe in terms of freedoms, capacities, and checks and balances, media can help to support development by facilitating the transmission of ideas and innovation across boundaries.

However, Zheng (2009:77) argues that a simplistic correlation is often made between ICT acquisition and the improvement of people's well-being. The CA is concerned with the range of options available for people to access and use ICTs to both improve their own quality of life and to accomplish their goals (Zheng 2009:77). The evaluative focus of the CA can thus fall under 2 areas: realized functionings (what a person is able to do) or the capability set of alternatives that he/she has (the real opportunities available). From this perspective, ICTs are meaningful in their contribution to the users' capability set. By using the CA, one can focus on the effective opportunities that people have to achieve what they consider to be valuable in life (Zheng 2009:68), and the role that ICTs have in facilitating this process. The characteristics of ICT (such as the functions of information collection, storage, processing, and dissemination; the ability for instant communication; and the potential for knowledge creation and dispersion) can be converted into the capability set of the user (Zheng 2009:76). What ultimately makes a difference in the lives of the users is the specific use of technology and the extent to which these technologies help communities and individuals reach their development objectives (Hamel 2010:7).

Within academic circles, a distinction is now made between formal, physical access and effective use of ICT. Zheng (2009:79) argues that ICT should account for the free flow of valuable information to enhance both well-being and the agency freedom of people, rather than solely maximizing access to these technologies. There is a need to assess not only the array of communications options available but also the ability of people to effectively use and benefit from each option (Zheng 2009:73). It is no longer enough to simply determine if people have the ability to access and use ICT; research must now seek to understand what people are able to achieve by using these new technologies (Alampay 2006:14-15).

Also of importance is the availability of relevant content that will make a difference in the daily life of the user (Ali 2011; Flor 2001:15); this relevant content should address appropriate issues in priority areas such as health, education, agriculture, and human rights (Heeks 2008:28; Gerster 2004:207). Access and effective usage of ICT can expand people's choices, especially in terms of useful information that will affect critical lifestyle areas. This is especially important for younger generations, and access must be provided which is conducive to "productivity, personal meaning, and freedom" (Gerster 2004:221). The content creation process inherent in social media use will help ensure information is culturally and linguistically relevant to its users.

5.4 The 8 Cs of the Digital Economy

The vision of an information-enabled globally connected society has been driven largely by the integration of new media (such as ICTs) with more traditional media (Rao 2005:271). However, as detailed above the information society is not solely about connectivity but about the content that is accessible, the communities that congregate online and offline, the cultural attitudes that emerge, and the capacity for creating and governing information spaces (Rao 2005:275).

Maturation of digital societies has previously been analyzed using the "8 Cs" of the digital economy, as proposed by Rao (2005) and defined in the figure below.

THE "8 Cs" OF THE INFORMATION SOCIETY	
Connectivity	How affordable and widespread are ICTs for the common citizen?
Content	Is there useful content (both foreign and local) for citizens to use in their daily lives?
Community	Are there forums (both online and offline) where citizens can discuss ICT and other issues of concern?
Commerce*	Is there infrastructure for e-commerce for citizens, businesses, and government? How much commerce is translated electronically?
Capacity	Do citizens and organizations have the human resources capacity to effectively harness ICTs for daily use?
Culture	Is there a forward-looking, open, progressive culture at the level of policymakers, businesses, educators, citizens and the media in opening up access to ICTs and harnessing them? Or is there nervousness and phobia about the cultural and political impacts of ICTs?
Cooperation*	Is there adequate cooperation between citizens, businesses, academic, NGOs and policymakers to create a favorable climate for using ICTs?
Capital*	Are there enough financial resources to invest in ICT infrastructure and education?

Figure 1: The 8 Cs (Rao 2005:278-279)

While these parameters are often used to judge the progress of nations in terms of their ICT initiatives or to compare digital sophistication of various societies (Rao 2005:271), modification allows for analysis at a more personal and individual level. Indeed, analyzing within each of these parameters and the corresponding increase in capabilities afforded by introduction of new technologies can prove insightful.

6. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

Analysis will proceed with how SNT can help young people increase capabilities and choices within the parameters of the digital economy. Since analysis is at an individual level (rather than at a country level), focus of this study will be on five of the 8 Cs: connectivity, content, capacity, community, and culture. Additionally, these Cs will be redefined slightly from their original definitions proposed by Rao (2005). One additional

dimension will be added to the five parameters above: communication. Many of these parameters are cross-cutting, and various insights could likely apply to two, three, or even all parameters. However I have tried to group insights, and the corresponding quotes from informants, under the parameters that I think are most appropriate.

As mentioned by all informants, the main SNT used by young people in Zimbabwe are currently Facebook and Whatsapp, and these two tools remain the primary way for young people to access social networking services. Indeed, there was a general feeling that the social media environment in Zimbabwe is strong, and young people are eager to become active, consistent users of these technologies.

6.1 Growth of Social Media?

But that's what I use if I want information, … from my peers, information on social issues, what's happening in your life, what's happening in mine. I use social media. Because it's easier! You just express who you are through social media.
TM, female, 25

The two reasons most often cited for adoption of social media among young people were cost and speed. As PS, a 23-year-old female from Harare expressed, social media allows information to travel "across geographical barriers but using cheap methods and not using much of your money." This reduction in cost in comparison with the high tariffs normally charged by the telecom industry was cited as the most important aspect of these tools; for example, a standard SMS using normal mobile networks costs about 9 cents, whereas a message using Whatsapp is less than 1 cent. The increased communication resulting from the increase in communicative capacity within various networks frequented by young people also comes at a much faster pace. Many informants spoke about the feeling of general empowerment that resulted from this increased ability to communicate quickly, cheaply, and easily.

The growth of social media among young people was linked to social media's growth as a status symbol. As more young people join social media sites, an account becomes the "cool thing to have", and young people do not want to be left out of a growing dynamic

social network. As one informant mentioned, Facebook has become a platform for young people to "bling bling[3]" and show off.

It's also recently becoming about showing off. Like young people putting their pictures, showing the world who they are, who they want to be seen as, who they want to be portrayed as…… It's now on achievement to be on social media because you're now connected to everyone.
CR, female, 21

This connection with status is likely due to the fact that using social media tools requires money, both for the device and the actual access; acquisition of these tools thus becomes an achievement amongst young peers. Additionally, this status could be linked to Facebook's origins as a connector of students at elite American universities.

6.2 Connectivity

Connectivity refers to the ability of young people to physically access digital services, and the information available through those services. According to Rao (2005:275), this is the aspect where the digital divide becomes most apparent.

The Postal and Telecommunications Act was cited by one informant as the reason for low levels of industry competition and the resulting high costs and poor Internet connectivity in Zimbabwe; additionally, major service providers that have the widest coverage still charge "exorbitant prices" that prohibit many citizens from accessing broadband through mobile devices.

In many countries, the prohibitive knowledge factor in using ICTs is often general literacy. However, due to the high level of general literacy the average Zimbabwean is likely to already have the capacity to read, learn, and understand social media tools upon first encounter. The primary issue in Zimbabwe then becomes physical accessibility, especially in the rural areas. As expressed by BM, a 24-year-old male, who stated "The coverage of internet cafes and other … office network services is limited, especially to the major cities." As is seen from the above quote, the issue of accessibility can extend to both the network connection as well as the devices used to access these networks, such as computers or smartphones. However, the majority of informants also expressed that this was more of a concern in rural areas.

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[3] "Bling bling" is a slang term referring to flashy, ostentatious, or elaborate accessories; it is often associated with expense and wealth. The term denotes a wish to impress others with this flashy lifestyle.

Some people are just not interested in this modern-day way of doing things. To them it's complicated and it complicates their life, they are not encouraged, they are not motivated to do that. Some because of ignorance, some because of religious beliefs.
TN, male, 22

As seen in the quote above, informants expressed that even with physical access certain parts of the population have little or no interest in using these tools to connect. Informants attributed this lack of interest to a variety of factors: religion, culture, or simple lack of knowledge and understanding. People might think these tools are too complicated or difficult to learn in the first place; alternatively, for some people these tools might simply not fill any usage gap. TM, a 25-year-old female, highlighted that "when there is a lack of access of a certain product, people really don't get it, they really don't mind, they don't know anything, they can't learn about it." Thus, the initial unavailability of these tools can also exacerbate these feelings of disinterest.

While informants expressed a firm belief that SNT have helped to increase connectivity for young people because they are free tools available to anyone, it is important to keep in mind that the method of accessing these tools (an internet-enabled phone or computer for example) might actually be the prohibiting factor.

6.3 Content

Content can be considered as the amount of local and relevant information available to the user that can be applied in useful ways to his or her daily life. Hamel (2010:6) argues that promoting choices in peoples' lives includes increased access to information that leads to knowledge. In this way, an increase in relevant content that allows the user to make more informed choices helps to increase capabilities.

By turning every user into a potential creator and publisher of information, social media technologies are an inherent creator of localized content about Zimbabwe, much of which is relevant to the users themselves.

And in terms of the availability of information, I think that social media has also increased the availability of information about Zimbabwe itself…… So you will find that you almost get all the information that you require about any sector, any topic: political issues in the country, economic issues in the country.
TC, male, 32

As expressed by TC above, social media has helped to increase the amount of information about Zimbabwe. People are now able to publish their own views on issues occurring within Zimbabwe. Users' creation of their own content through these platforms directly relates to how those users will make use of that information in their own lives.

The increase in available information also limits the possible control and exclusion of information by certain actors (such as politicians or religious leaders) that may have been experienced by some Zimbabweans.

They would sit as adults and exclude the young people. But now what social media has done, you cannot be excluded from a site because you have joined it, and information is not as … exclusive.
CR, female, 21

As CR highlights above, social media has given young people an additional, more democratic platform through which to be informed. This argument can be made on a more national level as well. Before introduction of these alternative media sources, the media environment in Zimbabwe tended to be characterized by government restriction (as detailed in the section 3.2). However, by extending creative ability to all Zimbabweans using social media, total control of information becomes impossible. By allowing anyone to publish anything at any time, the information space has broadened and democratized.

In addition to sharing relevant information, many of the community pages share information, studies, news, and upcoming events relevant to the groups' intended focus. As IK, a 26-year-old female, commented, "you're given information but you know that behind this information there is someone who is engaging with me. It's not just a book." Oftentimes this information comes from supposedly trusted sources operating behind the scenes, such as health representatives, program officers at NGOs, or national facilitators for the network in question. Users can request information that might difficult to find through other, more traditional channels, as seen below.

I need help!! have been looking for some references related to PMTCT program such as the national PMTCT guidelines – EID plans/guidelines or reports, and the MTCT elimination and could not find any online. The MOHCW website is very nice but the HIV, STD, and TB tab is empty and no info on MCH, the lib tab is also empty. Any suggestions?

Like · Comment · Follow Post · Share ·

This sharing process often occurs without judgment as to why that information might be needed; information about issues ranging from SRHR to politics to education is often shared immediately and without bias. This process is turning Zimbabwe's youth population into an informed, active citizenry, an aspect that was highlighted by many of the informants.

> *But because of the way information has been brought out, people have been giving testimonies via Facebook. You can actually see that this is something that is livable with, that you can actually accept someone who is HIV+ and you can actually gain access to information on SRH issues via Facebook, via organizations that have their profiles on Facebook or anywhere else.*
> *TM, female, 25*

As TM highlights above, spread of information in this form has not only made information more personal and relevant to the users, but has also humanized certain messages (such as HIV), making the overall subject more personal and relatable. Even though users might not know each other personally, informants commented that creation of a profile with a name and picture instills a certain level of trust. Additionally, many informants expressed that information is often shared and disseminated through social media in a more interesting way than traditional information channels, causing users to pay more attention.

Unfortunately, many informants also commented that there is no fact-checking mechanism behind Facebook and thus it can be easier for young people to become misinformed, especially now that information is not coming from traditional cultural sources.

Sometimes we'll give each other the wrong information, we might lie to each other, or because someone read something somewhere they post it on their Facebook, someone else thinks it's the truth or it's a fact, they use it for their life and it's not always a good thing.
IK, female, 26

Social media was cited by informants as efficient and effective at providing information but not necessarily reliable. In other words, information gets to a user quickly but the accuracy of that information may be in question. However, many informants in turn commented that the accuracy of traditional news sources has also long been in question.

Nevertheless, informants consistently mentioned the incredible increase in relevant and relatable information now available to young Zimbabweans using social media as one of the most positive aspects of social networking's introduction into Zimbabwe. Zheng (2009) contends that it is important for people to be able to effectively take advantage of relevant information for meaningful purposes in order to expand capabilities. This increase in relevant content allows more informed users to make more informed choices, expanding the freedoms available to young people
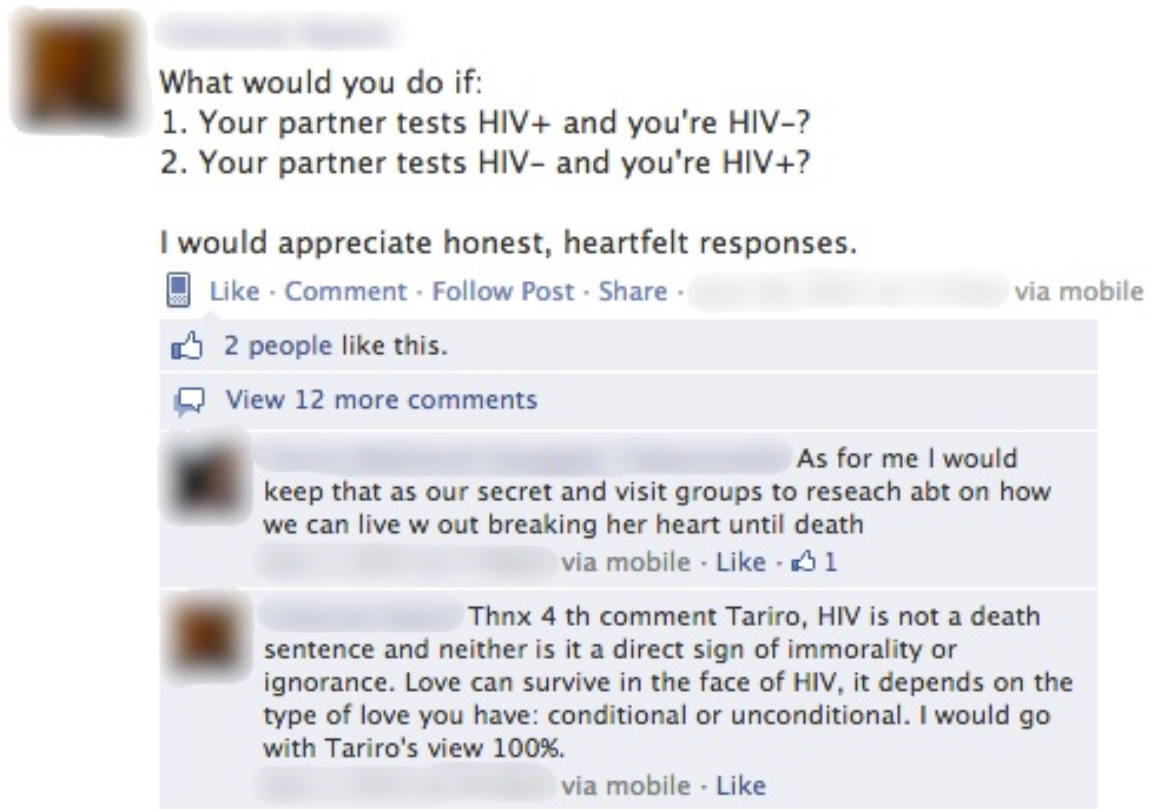
6.4 Communication

The ability for increased communication was an important aspect of social media that was referenced by many informants. Oftentimes this was spoken of in terms of SNT having allowed Zimbabweans to connect with the global community, and especially with friends and family in the Zimbabwean diaspora.

It has helped to build relationships within communities; a community can have a Facebook page. For example, the Zimbabwean community in the UK has a Facebook page whereby all those Zimbabwean residents who are living in the UK right now can post comments… And you can actually help each other because you know that I'm helping someone from home, from where I come from, and there's that bond that you're all Zimbabweans and you have to stick with each other.
TM, female, 25

The exchange of ideas and information that comes from these new and alternative connections was highlighted as an extremely important factor. The diaspora as a source of information is vital in democratizing the information and communication space, as argued by Thondhlana (2010). Additionally, the importance of developing new relationships through these avenues was stressed, as a sense of trust seemed to be inherent because of common national bonds.

As discussed in the preceding section, social media has also allowed young people to communicate and dialogue with organizations posting information relevant to their lives. An added bonus is that the information flow that take place between young people and these organizations is no longer unidirectional but multidirectional. As conversations on the Internet have moved from "1-to-many" to "many-to-many", users are no longer simply told but are instead able to engage in dialogue.

What would you do if:
1. Your partner tests HIV+ and you're HIV–?
2. Your partner tests HIV– and you're HIV+?

I would appreciate honest, heartfelt responses.

Like · Comment · Follow Post · Share ·   via mobile

2 people like this.

View 12 more comments

As for me I would keep that as our secret and visit groups to reseach abt on how we can live w out breaking her heart until death
via mobile · Like · 1

Thnx 4 th comment Tariro, HIV is not a death sentence and neither is it a direct sign of immorality or ignorance. Love can survive in the face of HIV, it depends on the type of love you have: conditional or unconditional. I would go with Tariro's view 100%.
via mobile · Like

As seen above, questions asked on social media can be answered immediately and personally, tailored to the specific situation required; these questions are, once again, often asked and answered without bias. The act of dialogue also decreases the potential for misunderstanding. This process of engagement further excites users more than traditional channels.

The increase in communicative capabilities afforded to young Zimbabweans has broadened information options, and thus the choices young people are able to make. By allowing conversations to develop, amongst different people with different views on different topics, young people are exposed to alternative modes of thinking about

important issues in their own lives. According to one informant, this broadened space and the availability of information alternatives has allowed for people to discuss, to question, to interrogate, and to have different opinions in critical areas (such as politics or traditional values and beliefs).

6.5 Capacity

According to Rao (2005:277), to be competitive in the global information age, emerging economies need to improve the capacity of their workforces in terms of Internet capability and roles in order to be competitive in the global information society. However, rather than looking at capacity solely in terms of the Internet, I will take a broader view to investigate the ways social media is increasing more general capacity of young people.

6.5.1 Knowledge

Informants gave mixed accounts of people's breadth of knowledge about social media tools. This was especially true for citizens living in the rural areas; even though there was much disagreement on the amount of knowledge rural young people might have about social media, informants who had strong ties to rural homelands agreed that even if rural young people did not use social media tools, they knew what they were and had a strong desire to use them. Some informants had stories of rural young people creating accounts by borrowing a friend's phone.

Social media tools help to increase the capacity of young people by increasing information and knowledge, and thus available choices, on subjects in which the user is interested. One informant expressed the critical importance of the initial availability of additional information as an important first step, an idea that has been highlighted in previous sections.

> *It has enabled me to be in touch with broader issues on development and politics in the country, on the continent, and globally. Through social media it becomes very easy for you to just know what is happening, it has enabled me to join various groups that focus on specific interests and that have broadened my horizons and understanding of the world and everything.*
> *TC, male, 32*

Through an increase in information, young people become more knowledgeable about key issues affecting them. These youth are now quite competent on issues that relate

directly to their lives, and one informant directly attributed this increase in competence to social media.

The immediacy of social media also plays a role in capacity building. With more immediate access to information, informants expressed that young people are now able to make faster decisions.

> *So in that sense, it can be a positive thing that someone needing urgent information before they do something bad can get it right there, rather than having to wait for a visit to the clinic or maybe walk to someone else's place for information. You're getting your information right there and then.*
> *IK, female, 26*

This is especially true if the decision requires an extended answer more appropriately handled through dialogue or conversation with another person. This dialogue can also help legitimize, clarify, and personalize the information being received, as long as it is coming from an appropriate source.

6.5.2 Participation

Informants expressed that social media tools can be serious enablers for discussion of issues that are brought to the public platform through other media, allowing people to input valuably and have their own voices heard. Additionally, informants mentioned that use of social media has allowed young people to bypass previously restrictive measures put in place. TC states "for the average citizen, the Internet is providing some fantastic opportunities to participate freely without any backlash from state institutions." In this way, social media has become a democratizing tool, allowing any user to participate meaningfully.

In terms of usage, informants believed that currently there is only a small cross section of young people using these tools for advocacy work, while the majority of young people are still using them as means for entertainment. People often use social media to connect with old friends or link with organizations they are fond of and wish to follow.

> *And then also be a part of dynamic groups on the sites, discussions, and just get to know what's happening …… so it's made life easier, it's keeping me informed. So that's helped me. And it has helped me have people involved in my own life.*
> *CR, female, 21*

Indeed, informants most often mentioned social media's ability to network and have instant access to information, as well as to stay up to date on the latest information in a variety of different sectors. In this way, social media tools were viewed as inclusive, allowing a range of people to participate and be involved in online life.

However, negative aspects of capacity and usage were also mentioned. All informants commented on the distractive nature of these tools, saying that usage of social media could lead to a loss in productive use of time if not managed properly. Informants felt that it is possible that the new obsession with social media could replace real relationships and time spent with family and friends.

Nevertheless, in terms of capacity building of young people, the overwhelming response from informants was one of positivity. With social media tools, young people in Zimbabwe are now constantly connected to their peer groups and family. Older informants expressed that today's youth are more social and more modern in how they think and interact. For a number of young people, the freedom of acting within social media and the connections made can be a source of confidence. Social media has provided a safer platform for young people to be themselves, and thus express themselves online in a more natural way without fear of being reprimanded, restricted, or judged.

6.6 Community

When speaking of communities within the digital economy, Rao (2005:277) refers to both the online and offline forums in which individuals are active, creating diverse sections of community in which to discuss common issues of interest. In this discussion, I will focus primarily on the relationships formed through social networking, as well as the communities constructed within these online spaces.

Community creation is another aspect inherent in SNT design. The social interaction provided by these tools, and the ability to link easily with people that share similar interests, allows quick creation and growth of relationships

> *That networking that happens between people, we might actually get to meet someone that you never thought you'd meet in a hundred years because maybe they are friends with your friend on Facebook and therefore interaction is much easier because you know there's a link between the two of you …… Maybe if you want to get in contact with them you can actually easily introduce yourself on*

Facebook. If they reject you, well it's OK because you never met that person before. And if they accept you then even better, that's an opportunity for you.
TM, female, 25

As these relationships are established, and similar interests uncovered, online communities with specific focuses start to form and grow. The informal and depressurized nature of social media facilitates meeting and interaction; this is due in part to shared connections, as well as the ease of connecting with someone that you don't know through social media. Thus, social media helps to facilitate increase of freedoms by creating a space where young people can meet and interact with other like-minded youth.

6.6.1 Relationships

The creation of new relationships was often mentioned in reference to dating. Young people are now able to meet and date online, without the requirement of actually meeting physically. However, this was rarely seen as positive, and informants often expressed concern that some young people might be using social media for seduction. As mentioned by one informant, this feeling of concern is likely due to the traditional Zimbabwean belief that relationships are a physical process requiring a physical meeting. By moving this interaction to a digital space, the novelty of these "online relationships" has caused confusion for some people, as culture and social media now start to clash.

Many informants expressed concern that SNT could be antisocial for relationship building, especially at the detriment of relationships and friendships formed outside of online communities; older generations had also expressed similar concerns to informants. However, the majority of young people felt that social media does not replace relationships but rather "cements", enhances, and strengthens existing relationships while also allowing for the possibility of creating new relationships.

The truthfulness of online relationships was also often in question; without meeting someone physically, it is impossible to know the extent to which the information a person has shared about themselves online is factual. However, informants believed that as people continued to interact within online communities over time, trust naturally developed between participants. As the majority of these communities are built around a common thread, there is often a focus that helps to initially bond group members. As activity within the group increases and group members interact based on this common

interest, informants felt that digital friendships start to form that mirror the qualities of physical friendships.
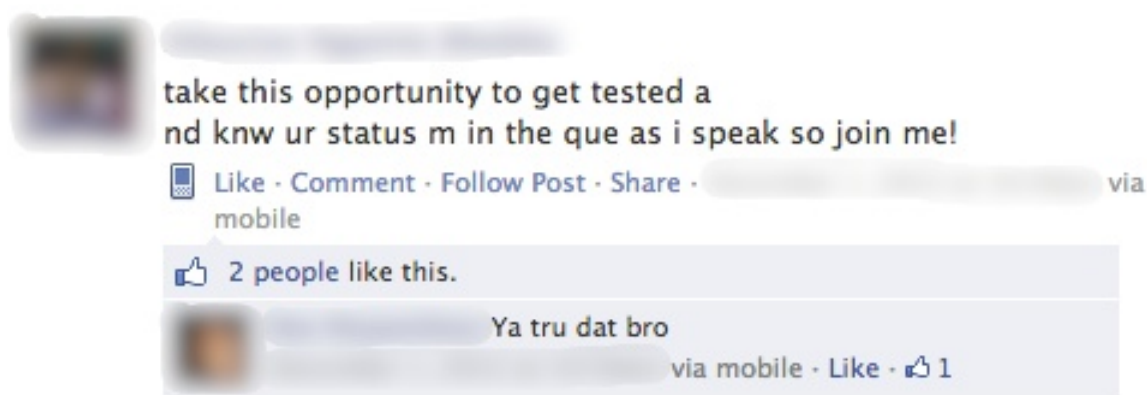
6.6.2 Groups as Communities

As detailed briefly above, social media can be a connector and uniter of people with similar interests. Through this process, a variety of different sized communities with different focuses can be created online; in essence communities of young people dealing with similar issues, ranging from SRHR to tertiary education, have been created giving instant access to a community of peers, their viewpoints, and relevant questions and advice.

> *Because they are always online, you see you just check the online list and you see that a very lot of people… they are young people all of them and they are my friends and they are in these groups.*
> *BM, male, 24*

Informants expressed that many youth are now using these platforms to advocate for their sexual and reproductive health rights, creating spaces where their voices can be heard loudly and constantly. Additionally, the informal nature of interaction on social media is reinforced, as these communities tend to be composed primarily of similarly aged friends and peers.

Group members can communicate information that is inherently relevant to the community in question; for example SRH information for a Facebook group built around SRH issues such as the Young People's Network. In this way, a large audience can be reached to disseminate relevant information, while also encouraging discussion at the same time by asking advice or posing questions to other group members.

take this opportunity to get tested and knw ur status m in the que as i speak so join me!

Like · Comment · Follow Post · Share · _____ via mobile

2 people like this.

Ya tru dat bro
via mobile · Like · 1

Relevant news and events can also be shared with group members who may be interested in reading or attending. Communities can encourage positive behavior in other members. With a large group of individuals interested in the group focus, communities can also help in finding information that might be difficult to find through other more conventional channels.

Social media tools, and thus the communities created in them, are notable for somewhat of a semi-anonymous characteristic. While a user may not personally know the peers with whom they are sharing information, the picture and name associated with the accounts and later group interaction help to create an initial sense of trust. This trust allows for more sensitive issues to be discussed in these online forums than at the family dinner table.

This dichotomy allows for frank, open, honest discussions without the fear of judgment. Thus, these communities provide a safe space for youth to convene and discuss, and the nature of these communities means that a range of issues can be handled, especially those that might be difficult to talk about in person as it removes the difficulty of a face-to-face interaction.

> *It has made information more easily accessible to people, more easily acceptable to people. Because it's unlike when you're talking about HIV to someone face-to-face; maybe then they have reservations on a certain topic you're talking about.*
> *TM, female, 25*

As seen above, this is especially true of topics and questions surrounding sex, which are traditionally posed to older family members; however conservative traditional values make approaching an elder about an uncomfortable topic a difficult task for any young Zimbabwean. Thus, as one informant mentioned, it can be easier for someone to open up on social media due to the informal nature of these tools. This also means that it is

possible for young people to get more information (and possibly more accurate information) than from traditional outlets.

However, the relevancy and focus can be difficult to maintain in some groups, leading to their eventual disuse and abandonment. In communities that are formed around previously established friendships (such as the YPN) rather than a collection of random individuals sharing the same interest, there is a risk that some of the conversations turn towards gossip and jokes rather than productive discussion. As users are already comfortable with each other before formation of the online community, the likelihood of "joking around" within these groups is higher. Of course this can occur in all groups, and moderation is sometimes required to remove off-focus posts.

Creation and growth of these online communities is still very socially driven (members are invited by their friends who are already members) rather than an organic process (members join a group out of pure interest). As NN, a 22-year old female, commented, "Most probably those subscribers who would have joined a certain group have been tagged or have been invited by another person, they have not personally or voluntarily joined." This was cited as both a positive and a negative, as some informants believed that relevancy and interest would be easier to maintain if interest drove group growth rather than friendships.

Informants commented that when people join groups based on invites from friends, they often tend to ignore the messages and discussions that occur within the groups. Members require encouragement to participate in group discussions. As such, active participation by all group members has still been a struggle.

The ease of connection also extends to these communities, allowing the linking and connecting of relevant communities. TC stated, "Even when people have got different groups, they are linking these groups together and promoting each other in building the communities and in linking the various communities that actually exist." This process has been easier for certain sectors, such as SRH, where natural linkages already exist and efficiencies can be developed between organizations to ensure that unnecessary overlap does not occur. Indeed, groups and pages will often post in other similarly focused groups to garner likes and increase membership. This process also helps to increase the efficient spread of information amongst young members, further enhancing capabilities.

6.7 Culture

Likely the biggest challenge in adoption and effective use of any Internet-related technology is overcoming cultural inhibitions and insecurities about developing competence, as argued by Rao (2005:279). For this thesis, culture is understood as the traditional values of the Shona and Ndebele people native to Zimbabwe. While certain traditions are highlighted in examples below, an exhaustive discussion on culture will not

be possible due to the extremely broad nature of the topic itself and limited space available in this thesis.

6.7.1 Traditional Values and Religion

Informants had mixed impressions on whether traditional values hindered or facilitated social media usage, and often there was little agreement. BM, a 24-year-old male, stated that some Zimbabweans "try by all means to protect the social norms of a society." Informants stressed the role that the conservative nature of Zimbabweans, especially in relation to religious morals, played in attitudes towards social media, and how these attitudes could hinder adoption of SNT. This was put bluntly by PS, a 23-year-old female, when she said "you find that people may not want to be using social media, especially if they have got deep cultural roots." When asked why people would not want to use SNT, answers often linked to traditional values.

Alternatively, informants also commented on the role that traditional values play as a facilitator of adoption; rather than being limited by culture, social media usage would be limited by other factors (such as background, economic status, or education level). Some informants stated that traditional Zimbabwean values no longer had a strong influence, especially for young people. Informants believed that today's young Zimbabweans are more often influenced by the pop culture, or even the remnants of colonial Britain. Some Zimbabwean traditions even help drive social media adoption.

Our culture basically puts much emphasis on keeping relations, especially those people who are your kinsmen and clansmen; usually you want to keep strong ties with them. So social media to a large extent has helped Zimbabweans connect'
TN, male, 22

As TN states, the importance of family ties engrained in the traditional values of Zimbabweans, and the necessity of keeping contact with family members in rural homelands can help facilitate adoption of tools such as social media that will make the process of connecting with relatives easier.

Rather than traditional values per se, informants commented on the strong influence of religion and religious morals; indeed religion was a lengthy discussion in every interview and focus group, showing just how important and integrated religion is into Zimbabwean life. Informants gave accounts of satanic practices that had occurred

through the use of social media. However, these were often stories with little hard evidence, and no informant could give a specific example of satanic events. Nonetheless, all informants expressed a fear about the ability of SNT to expose users to immoral content such as Satanism or pornography.

There was a worry that increased exposure to culturally irrelevant information from other users overseas could be harmful. As such, many informants commented that SNT might be slowly eroding the morals of young Zimbabweans, especially as information seeps in from unfamiliar sources abroad:

> *I think it's also tampered with morality of our culture. So it's also tampered with moral issues and you know, values of young people that they might have had but now, because you're using Whatsapp Facebook, you just take it lightly and yet you are already losing some of those morals and cultural values that you had.*
> *CR, female, 21*

Erosion of morals was generally linked to sex and religion, now that users have "access to everything" including pornography and other immoral material. However, rarely did informants cite this potential degradation as a fault inherent in the social media tools themselves, but rather as the improper use of social media by young people.

> *And although there has been negative impact, the negative impact has not been caused by Facebook or social media because it's there, but the ill use or the poor use of the social media.*
> *NN, female, 22*

Informants spoke of both the positive and negative effects these technologies have had, but recognized that social media can be a source of temptation for certain users to engage in immoral things online.

6.7.2 Changing Values

No matter the effect of social media on the morals of young people, many informants expressed that social media is also altering the traditional value system itself. People are now beginning to question potentially harmful cultural practices or practices that might contradict or are no longer seen as important.
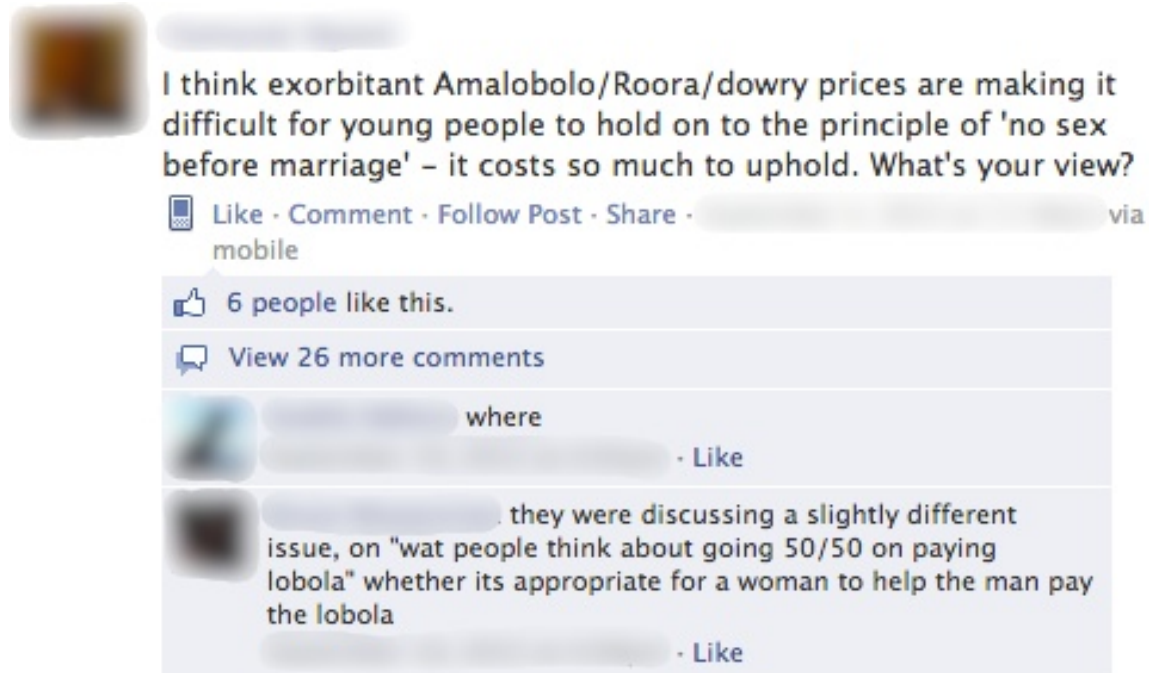
Social media provides a space to discuss these cultural issues, including with the wider and more exposed diaspora. The alternative sources of information (especially from the diaspora) offered by social media allow for people to start questioning certain traditional practices. Informants cited this as both a positive and negative aspect, as some informants felt that online forums are not an appropriate place to address certain cultural practices.

> *You also have a lot of these groups on social media that discuss a lot of the cultural practices, and beginning to question whether some of the cultural practices that are negative are really necessary and what needs to be done.*
> *TC, male, 32*

> *I would agree in that yes it's affecting our traditions, but it's not always negative. Like what I'm saying that we need a society that accepts things and accepts that certain issues or certain things exist. And through engaging and through understanding those issues, people can actually start making a difference and having a better life.*
> *IK, female, 26*

Social media is breaking down barriers in talking with youth about certain important that may have been ignored in the past (such as sex, drugs, LGBTI rights, etc.). Young people are posing questions about these "sensitive" issues, which are beginning to be addressed out of necessity, and can be addressed in the safe spaces offered by these tools.

Furthermore, informants referenced the ability of social media to shift power and gender relations.

> *Because this is your private space, before in Africa there had never been a space that is private, especially for the women. Everything is known, yet there was never that space…; now there is a sense of possession …… Because there are so many of them competing, I could have different sites, I could have different spaces that I'm on …… Women create their own accounts, they have their own friends…… So it's a private space, social space. Our safe space. And no guys are in that group so we can talk about anything and everything.*
> *CR, female, 21*

Gender relations are changing now that women have a space that is their own (something many women might not have had before) and now have a sense of possession and ownership of something (even if it is only a digital account) that a husband cannot easily take. Female informants spoke of the sense of empowerment that comes with offering an easily accessible platform equipped with a password. Additionally, all-female groups allow for issues to be explored that might otherwise be impossible.

Similarly, respect for traditional leaders and the traditional spaces in which they operate is also evolving.

> *In terms of how young people use these platforms, they [older generations] are actually asking us the young people to show them how to use the social media …… So already the roles have been switched, the young people are on top in terms of technology and because we have more access and we are eager to learn naturally because we are young people. So we get to teach them how to use it.*
> *CR, female, 21*

As mentioned previously, traditional community and family relationships and bonds have been informalized, and power relations due to age differences are also changing as a result. The popularity of social media is driving older users to join these sites as well; however, as CR expressed, these older members often require assistance from their younger counterparts in order to learn how to use these tools. Young peoples' knowledge of social media tools brings with it a sense of empowerment, especially when other people require this knowledge.

Finally, SNT was cited as a potential way of integrating the different value systems and communities found in Zimbabwe, connecting the wider group of people in the process.

The issue of Facebook is cross-cutting. Facebook is Facebook, it's not designed Ndebele, it's not designed Shona, it's designed in one universal language that makes everyone have access. In other words, it's a good way of integrating people…… So social media is just something that is cross-cutting. It integrates societies, it integrates nations, it integrates personalities of people.
BM, male, 24

Social media creates a space that is not geographical, a space that enables people from different backgrounds with different agendas and different ways of seeing things to interact. Prior research argues tools that do not account for local conditions, and factor these conditions into the design process, are much more likely to fail. However, as TC and BM both stress, the and cross-cutting characteristic of popular social media sites could help to explain the increase in global popularity of these tools. The unstructured and open nature of social media seems to be what has made it so popular. In the end, it seems as if young Zimbabweans have fallen in love with social media because it allows them to easily connect with the wider world in ways that were previously impossible.

7. Concluding Remarks

In this section, general remarks are made about the importance of social media to young people in Zimbabwe, and the ways which these technologies can increase capabilities. As this area of research is so new, this section also focuses on consequences for the future, including future research and programmatic implications.

7.1 Social Media and Capabilities

In this thesis, I have argued that the unique characteristics of social media as an ICT tool have helped to increase capabilities for young people in key areas of the digital economy, as introduced by Rao (2005). This increase in capabilities is primarily through increased availability of information that is useful and relevant to the lives of young people, thus increasing the opportunity for people to make informed choices in critical lifestyle areas.

Sen (1999) argues that development must be concerned with enhancing the lives people lead and their freedom of choice. Hamel (2010) further argues that promoting choices in people's lives, and thus increasing freedoms, means increasing access to information that then leads to knowledge. Social networking can provide expanded opportunities for its users, exposing people to new viewpoints, ideas, and opinions. The

personal nature of social media allows young people to tailor their accounts, such that they receive information that they deem interesting and relevant. Young people are also now constantly connected and informed; information is always available (on a Facebook newsfeed for example) and does not need to be viewed at a specific time, further increasing the usefulness of these platforms for young people. By persistently providing information that might otherwise not have been available, and democratizing the information process, social media has become an enabling and empowering tool in many aspects of life for young people. This is due in large part to social media's characteristic as a simple content creation and publishing tool.

The framework developed for this thesis, namely application of the 8 Cs of the digital economy to Sen's CA, provided a valuable analytical basis from which to start. Additionally, the CA proved to be an appropriate mode of thinking when trying to judge social media. I firmly believe that using a more quantitative and economic approach would certainly not capture many of the benefits of social media that informants themselves saw as important. Additionally, exploring online communities with a health focus proved insightful for this study, since so much of the health sector is involved with information sharing and behavior change. For this, social media appears to be a very appropriate tool.

Unfortunately, this framework was not developed in full until late in the research design process. While it was interesting to see how insights provided by informants seemed to naturally fit within these categories, starting with the 8 Cs from the outset of my study would likely have helped facilitate empirical analysis. However, the fact that these themes also seemed to emerge from the discussions means that slight modification could produce an improved framework for analysis. These categories were originally developed with a national perspective in mind, and a more individualized approach could be extremely valuable for future exploration.

7.2 Implications for the Future

While the lack of substantive qualitative academic research on social media in Sub-Saharan African may initially seem to be a daunting deterrent, this further confirms the

necessity of conducting research in this area. There were a number of questions that arose during my own study that I feel could be addressed in further research.

Research should continue to look into the ways that youth in environments outside of the Western world are using social media. This includes how these technologies can be used as powerful information dissemination tools, and precisely what effect social media is having on the digital divide and general inequality. Additionally, there is a need to look into any gender aspects of social media usage, and what these technologies mean for evolving gender relations in patriarchal societies (such as Zimbabwe).

There is still a need to further develop the capacity of Zimbabwean citizens in educating them about social media and its potential. This includes understanding how broad social media is and what it can do for community advancement. As discussed previously, social media is still used primarily for entertainment and connecting with friends and family; while these uses are important in and of themselves, there is certainly more that can be done, especially in terms of disseminating important information in new and interesting ways to previously hard-to-reach communities.

For NGOs and other development organizations, social media is a potentially valuable tool to connect and interact with target groups, and ways of accomplishing this should be explored. However, as important as these technologies might be, one cannot forget about other traditional methods which at this point are often more widespread and popular than social media. An approach aimed at integrating all of these technologies is key to reaching as many people as possible.

Clearly SNT have not yet reached all Zimbabweans. But for those people currently using SNT the influence thus far has been noticeable, especially by informants themselves. This influence is likely to expand as the devices necessary for accessing social media continue to drop in price and further penetrate Zimbabwean society. Thus, it is very important to look at how these technologies can be further integrated and expanded in rural areas, including development of necessary infrastructure in these areas.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I – Record of Informants

RECORD OF INFORMANTS[4]					
Interview Type[5]	**Date (YMD)**	**Demographic**	**Interview Type**	**Date (YMD)**	**Demographic**
II 1	12/12/11	Male, 24	FG 4	12/12/19	Female, 20
KI 1	12/12/13	Male, 32			Female, 21
FG 1	12/12/17	Male, 20			Female, 17
		Male, 20			Female, 20
		Female, 22			Female, 22
		Male, 18			Male, 20
		Female, 20			Male, 23
		Male, 24			Male, 13
FG 2	12/12/18	Male, 22	II 2	13/01/10	Male, 22
		Female, 18	II 3	13/01/11	Female, 22
		Male, 23	II 4	13/01/11	Female, 21
		Male, 23	KI 2	13/01/15	Female, 26
		Male, 20	II 5	13/01/16	Female, 23
		Female, 20	FG 5	13/01/18	Female, 23
		Female, 24			Female, 21
FG 3	12/12/18	Female, 19			Male, 26
		Male, 17			Female, 20
		Male, 19			Male, 21
		Male, 19			Male, 23
		Male, 17	II 6	13/01/23	Female, 25
		Female, 22			

BREAKDOWN OF CHARACTERISTICS		
Type of Interview	**Gender Ratio**	**Age Breakdown**
5 Focus Groups (all mixed gender)	14 Females 19 Males	Average age: 20.5
8 Individual Interviews (incl. 2 Key Informants)	5 Females 3 Males	Average age: 24.4
41 People Interviewed Total	19 Females 22 Males	Average age: 21.3

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[4] All informants were Zimbabwean citizens currently residing in Harare or the surrounding suburbs. Due to confidentiality, informants' names have been withheld.

[5] II = Individual Interview; KI = Key Informant; FG = Focus Group

Appendix II – Interview Guide

Listed below are topics and themes that I touched upon during focus groups and in-depth semi-structured individual interviews:

1. Ask permission to record the discussion/interview. Gain informed consent to proceed with the interview (either verbally or written), and inform that anonymity can be guaranteed if requested; note whether this request is made.
2. Welcome participants. Inform participants about the study and how the information gathered from this study will be used in my research; then inform that I would like the following discussion to be kept confidential.
3. Ask if there are any other questions before proceeding with the interview.
4. Ask for general demographic information (such as name, age, nationality, hometown, current city, education, occupation). Ask participants to fill this information out on the sign in sheet as well.
5. The interview can now begin, and the following topics will be covered:
   a. General information about social media and Zimbabwe:
      i. What comes to mind when one says social media?
      ii. What social media platforms are you using?
         1. How do you use these platforms primarily?
         2. What do you mainly use these sites for?
      iii. What are the reasons young people are using social media in Zimbabwe? What social media is most common in Zimbabwe?
   b. Social media and the potential for change:
      i. What is social media's value in Zimbabwe?
      ii. What possibilities/obstacles do you see for the future of social media usage in Zimbabwe?
      iii. What do you think prevents young people from using social media?
         1. What effect has social media had on the digital divide in Zimbabwe?
         2. What role does culture play in social media usage in Zimbabwe? Are there any major cultural changes that have occurred since the introduction of social media?
      iv. What impact has social media had on your day-to-day life? Has social media changed the way that young people act?
      v. What impact has social media had at the individual, relationship, community, and societal levels?
   c. Social media and HIV:
      i. What effect has social media had on the HIV response? Or sexual reproductive health (SRH) in general?
   d. Do you have any other comments?
6. Thank the respondents for having participated. Give out my contact information (email address) in case anyone would like to get in touch with me to follow up, or if there is anything they forgot to mention or want to mention in private.
7. Ask permission to take a picture for records (focus groups only).
8. Record quick notes about how the interview went (anything that might not have been captured in the voice recording).