

Key Stakeholders' Perception About Engagement of Virtual Tools for Learning During Covid-19 Pandemic for Church Sabbath School Classes in Zambia: A Framework Analysis on the Possibility of an Integrated Model.

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Abstract—Virtual tools technology has influenced even religious communication as it has become the modern day toolbox for knowledge sharing. It is a very exponential form of knowledge sharing that happens in virtual spaces reaching out to masses in a dynamic manner and in real time as compared to physical tools. Realizing the engagement of virtual tools for learning for church sabbath school classes cannot go on without first analyzing the impact of Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Zambia key stakeholders perception during Covid-19. In this work, a descriptive and survey design was employed. The study population was made up of church members, church workers, and administrators of the Seventh-day Adventist Church from all the ten provinces of the country which has a membership of 1,295,153. The research objectives were subjected to both qualitative and quantitative methods with an interpretive or constructive paradigm with an embedded subjectivism philosophy and SPSS was used for thematic and content analysis. The finding from this research establishes that key stakeholders perception significantly impacts the engagement of virtual tools for sabbath school class as was established during Covid-19 Pandemic. It was recommended that the church invests in a virtual infrastructure that should be manned by professionals who can effectively implement the the integrated model for its mission existence and effectively use virtual tools.

Keywords—virtual tools, perception, Covid-19, Seventh-day-Adventist, sabbath school class.

I. INTRODUCTION

There was an experience of varying lockdowns around the world during the Covid-19 pandemic which saw many entities experience temporal restrictions on how to go about in the day to day business, worse still as public gatherings were stopped. This didn't spare even religious meetings reducing the contact and number of those attending worships, and any other sort of physical church business meetings, Kołodziejska (2021). This scourge devastating impact has left mementos on how it disadvantaged especially the womenfolks, ethnic minorities, and the poor as a whole, Daniel Muzio and Jonathan Doh, (2021). The Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Zambia started in about 1905 when it was set as a mission station near Chisekese at place now known as Rusangu which is 15km south of Monze town. A missionary, XX Anderson from North America was organized the first church there after baptizing seven named locals, Kanondo V.M. (2005). Since then, this church that is known as a Protestant from the already established denominations in United States of America has experienced an exponential surge.

In Zambia it boasts of almost 1, 295, 153 members from a total of 7, 834 congregations, ZAP (2021). The phenomenon growth especially for southern province of the country is attributed to its strategic establishment of mission entities such as schools and the evangelistic campaigns that are conducted every quarter of the year. Needless to say the emergence of Covid-19 suddenly halted most if not all of its mission activities. The church mission purpose is indoctrinated into the congregants by three main methods which happen on every Saturday gathering.

There is the sabbath school class where congregants break into small classes of between eight to twelve students and that includes a teacher who coordinates the weekly lesson from the study guide for about 45 minutes. Then there is the main service which is more of sermon and then afternoon is used for presentation of a study. These three teaching / learning segments of the church had to be shifted to virtual space during the said pandemic and posed challenges in the long run.

The switch as posited by Kołodziejska (2021) exposed challenges such as technological inequalities from accessibility, proficiency, affordability, and more unavailability of a blue print in how to manage the members' perception about engagement of virtual tools for learning.

For lack of a well integrated virtual church sabbath school classes model, there has been a growing trend among church members to shun from full participation in the mission. There remains the need to establish empirical evidence if the church in Zambia has effectively engaged any dimension such as teaching presence, cognitive presence in community of inquiry, constructivist process of meaning making, and computer mediated communication competences in relation to outcomes on its mission existence amidst the covid-19 pandemic.

II. AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study is to analyze key stakeholders' Perception about engagement of virtual tools for learning during Covid-19 pandemic for the church in Zambia, review teaching practices, evaluate and develop a model to manage the perception.

III. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

There is not much scholarly work that has been done in the recent past in relation to integration of models in managing stakeholders' perception about engagement of

virtual tools for learning especially in the face of Covid-19 pandemic for the church in Zambia. This is a review what is so far available science that is somewhat close in helping to design a fitting model. In this analysis this scholar is looking at six different frameworks in order to come up with an integrated conceptual framework.

A. Community of Inquiry Model

The Seventh-day Adventist church frequently used tool of sense making and sense giving is through core mission mandate found in the scriptural book of Matthew 28:19-20 which implores the clergy and its members to proclaim and teach about the good news of Jesus’s second coming. Community of Inquiry Model somewhat fits in as far as the church gospel mission is concerned and its application has recently become a marvel in the education environment. It can not be overemphasized that many education institution at a higher level are seeing CMC especially with an integration of virtual tools as a robust medium for knowledge sharing “anytime, anyway.”

For the purpose of this paper, the model’s variables and their linkages are here briefly explained with much emphasis on how these vital parts of knowledge acquiring can be maintained when the process is shifted to an environment of CMC. As shown in Fig. 1 a learning experience is casted in the boundaries of this CI model that is comprised of knowledge givers and knowledge receivers who are both participants of the process. This is so because it is assumed from this model that knowledge acquisition occurs within the boundaries of a community with the involvement of three core variables which are cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence, as shown in the figure above, Garrison et al. (2000).

The capabilities of CMC model in light of this cannot be overemphasized except that its impact on church mission’ sense making process and outcomes have not been fully endeavored and its social presence variable falls flat when it comes to virtual space.



Fig: 1 Community of Inquiry Model (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2002)

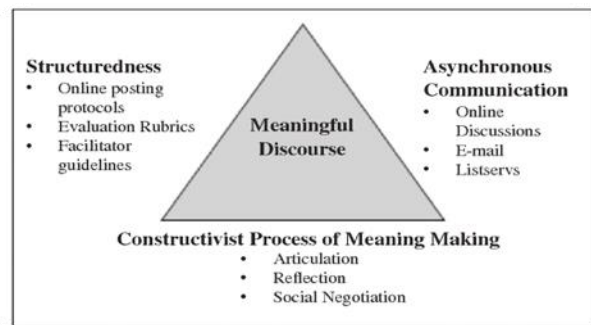
B. Meaningful Discourse Model

The best definition for meaningful discourse, “a process of collaboration and social negotiation where the goal is to share different viewpoints and ideas and collaborate on problem solving and knowledge building activities,” (Duffy & Cunningham, 1996). In the occasion when learners are engaged in social negotiation and working together it tells

that they are capable of elaborating by memory what they know by explaining to others and being mindful about the said knowledge by studying their action in relation to professionals and friends, (Collins, 1991).

Its important to point here that one variables of the model pyramid; asynchronous communication is a vital didactic tool that allows communities that are separated in space and time to interact in the active formulation of shared discourse. A very vital instructional advantage of this variable therefore is its ability to support the co-construction of knowledge via discourse.

Brannon and Essex (2001) posit that facilitators guideline as ascribed by the structuredness variable gives learners straightforward communication protocols and clear conditions for reading discussions and posting entries so as to avoid feasible failures of asynchronous communication such as ‘feeling of social disconnection ’ensuing from (a) absence of feedback in real time, (b) absence of participation in the discourse, (c) absence of adequate time for knowledge receivers grow mature dialogues (p.36). Figure 2 suggests that in order for meaningful discourse to occur, there must be a meaningful interaction between structuredness, asynchronous communication, and the constructivist process



of meaning making must ensue.

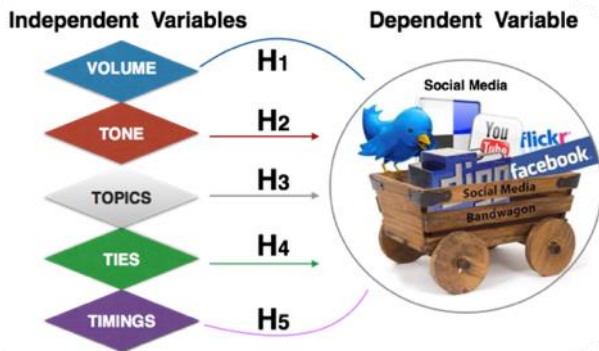
Despite the model tools having the ability to align with knowledge formulation, its elements remain limited to help sense givers in the construction of impacting online discourse, Gunawardena, Lowe and Anderson (1997).

Figure 2. Meaning Discourse Model.

C. Computer Mediated Communication Competence Model

The computer-mediated communication competence model is a theory established necessarily for identifying the environment for communication, the types of media tool for knowledge sharing and how these users related among themselves. The model posits that technology is more realized and fully accepted when used by a competent individual, Spitzberg, B.H. (2006). Needless to say, computer-mediated communication has evolved the way mankind interact socially, forward their identities, display their relationships, and come up with their prefers communities, Thurlow, C., Lengel, L. and Tomic, L. (2012).

Competency in computer-mediated communication (CMC) so well clears the difference in overall social distance involvement. Some scholars admit that much of computer-mediated communication research had focused on the effects of technology and media at the fate of littel attention to social

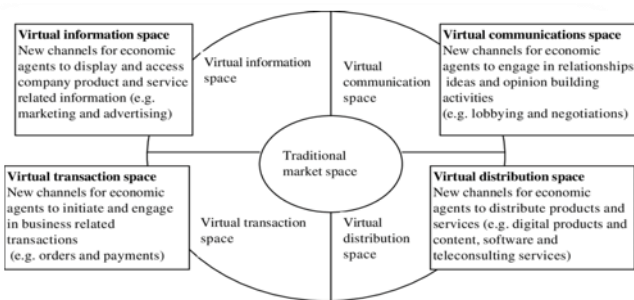


mechanisms and their similar elements. Tate, T.D., Lartey, F.M. and Randall, P.M. (2019)
Figure 3. CMC Model.

D. ICDT Model

Virtual tools have ensued a dynamic space in which to conduct knowledge sharing. This has given agents of change be it at personal or organizational level options for platforms for knowledge sharing, communicating or distributing many types of services and products. This reason makes the ICDT model user friendly as it has already been used to confirm the Internet capabilities in enabling knowledge sharing [Press 1994; Cockburn & Wilson 1996]. Suffice to say that this model helps to diagnose how the virtual platforms can ably enhance an organization’s external linkages in propelling its mission existence .

Angehrn’s (1997) ICDT model as depicted in figure 4 below gets its name from the four virtual spaces as necessitated by the Internet. These spaces are virtual information, virtual communication, virtual distribution and virtual transaction. Lightly put ICDT stands for Information, Communication, Distribution and Transaction. These spaces are never treated the same because of their capabilities in correlating to different strategical plans and demand different



kinds of build up and corporate modifications.
Figure 4: ICDT Model (source: Angehrn & Meyer 1997)

E. VT4 Model

The VT4’s five elements propel prominence, public esteem, properties, plexes and positioning which can not be contradicted that they are effective for knowledge sharing in the same way they are to communication strategy. Theses media components compose what is known as VT4 framework of digital media salience. VT4 stand for volume, tone, topics, ties, and timing.

Beside being effective in influencing the salience an organizational’ mission reputation management, the VT4 falls short in explaining why both the organization and its

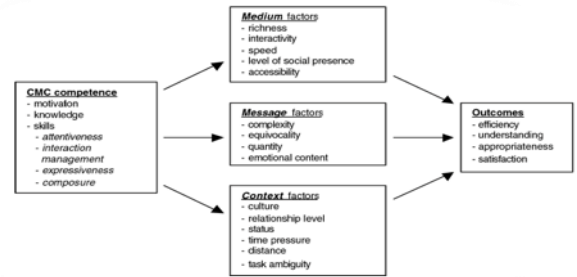
key stakeholders choose to remain ether indifferent or inactive towards engagement of virtual tools for sabbath school class learning.

Figure 5. VT4 Model.

F. Technological Acceptance Model

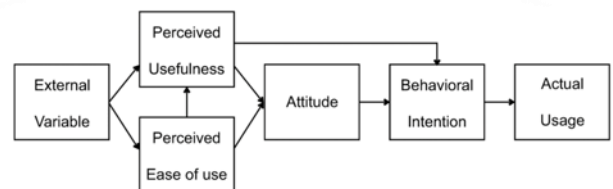
The most important aspect of information systems study and execution is IT acceptance and actual usage. Although companies have made significant investment in the progressive growth of hardware, software, and IT, a productivity paradox is occurring because of the limited understanding of IT usage, which requires urgent improvement, Sichel, D.E.(1997).

The study of IT acceptance has gradually developed over the past 20



years. Some researchers have studied the relationship between the usefulness and ease of use of IT, 4. Chau, P.Y.K. (1996) In particular, Davis proposed TAM—a major contribution to the theory and study of IT usage and acceptance, Davis, F.D.(1989). Davis studied and analyzed why people do or do not accept information systems. The actual behavior of an individual is decided by behavioral intention, which is determined by the attitude and subjective norms, which in turn are determined by beliefs or other factors.

Davis developed the TAM to explain IT users’ behaviors and anticipate them based on the TRA, which came from the social psychology field, Davis, F.D. (1989). Perceived usefulness and ease of use are specified as the main factors impacting attitude in the TAM, which utilizes only the relations among belief, attitude, intention, and behavior. All other external factors are supposed to influence intention and attitude indirectly through perceived usefulness and ease of



use.
Figure 6. Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by Davis (1989).

IV.HYPOTHESIS MODEL: TAM+ICDT+VT4

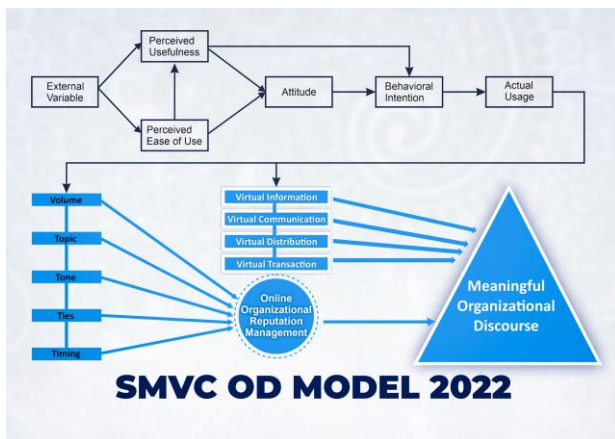
In order for the Seventh-day Adventist church to accomplish fully its mission, the local church must be organized effectively to produce the results required by its mission. For the purpose of this research, we adopted a combination of three models in order to tackle the objectives.

Five of the variables were from VT4 model used by Njuka, D. and Phiri, J. (2021) in their research that dwelt less on perceptions on adoption of use of digital media for organizational discourse communication.

The said research lacked a thrust on understanding the key stakeholders perceptions and knowledge about engaging of Virtual tools by the organization. Hence the combination of VT4 and ICTD can give an in-depth understanding of the perception by combining them with Davis' Technological Acceptance Model of 1998, Davis, F. D. (1989).

TAM objective is ascertain the user's acceptability of a given communication technological tool in line with the two major components of TAM which are perceived utility (PU) and perceived ease if use (PEU) (Brock, V., & Khan, H. U. (2017)., Zhong, H., & Xiao, J. (2015, September)). The degree of effectiveness of the two model tools is quite dependent on the knowledge, skill and familiarity by the users and also the accessibility and speed of the medium being used.

In the end when this hybrid of the nine variables of this Social Media and Virtual Conferencing Organizational Discourse Communication Model are effectively applied, the end results gives understand and efficiency and satisfaction, and this entails that a meaningful organizational discourse



has taken place as shown in the model below.
Figure 6. SMVC OD Model (Njuka, Phiri and Simui 20023).

V. METHODOLOGY

In order to speak to the four objectives of the this research, the methods were carefully plotted into a a methodology matrix that covers research paradigm or philosophy, approach or designs models employed, data instrument used

for collection, the targeted population, sampling procedures used and how data was analyzed.

to the shaping of perception in somewhat negative ways.

VI.SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

For the purpose of this paper, the section will only highlight on the findings for one objective thus to analyze the key stakeholders perception on engagement of virtual tools for learning.Perceptions are shaped mostly by the void of knowledge. In this case the lack of knowledge and subsequently technological competence contributed greatly

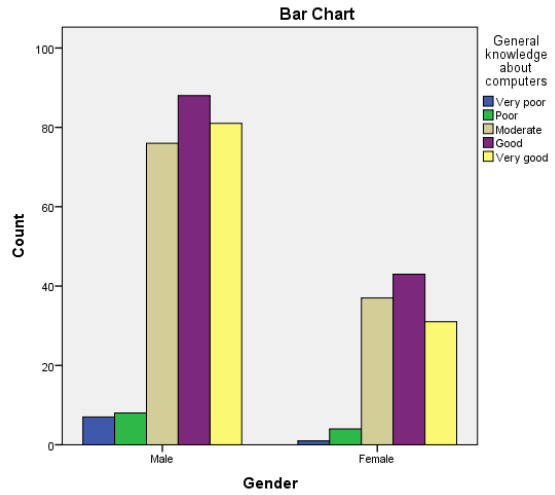


Fig 7: General Knowledge about Virtual tools.

	Objective 1	Objective 2	Objective 3	Objective 4
Objective	To review existing conventional teaching practices	To evaluate current teaching models with integration of digital media	To analyze key stakeholders' Perception engagement of virtual tools for learning.	To develop a model that will address the perception.
Research Paradigm/Philosophy	Interpretivist/Constructivist Paradigm [8] with embedded Subjectivism Philosophy.			
Approach/ Design/Model	Qualitative approach	Embedded Mixed Methods-Quantitative embedded over Descriptive Qualitative	Embedded Mixed Methods-Quantitative embedded over Descriptive Qualitative	Exploration and modelling study
Instrument/ Data Collection Method	Document Review, Interview Guide	Interview Guide Questionnaire Document Review	Questionnaire Surveys Interview Guide	Document Review on Case Studies
Target Population	2 national offices, All 10 provincial offices	2 national offices, All 10 provincial offices	Church members	2 national offices, All 10 provincial offices
Sampling	Non-probability sampling-Purposive sampling 4 representatives per provincial office	Non-probability sampling- Purposive sampling [10] 5 representatives per target population (administrative office)	Probability-Stratified random sampling 385 members distributed accordingly (sampling calculator used)	Document Review on Case Studies
Data Analysis	Content analysis Thematic analysis	Content analysis Thematic analysis SAS analysis tool	Content analysis Thematic analysis SPSS	Content analysis Thematic analysis
Ethical Considerations	Participants consent forms Ethical Clearance from UNZA Zambia		Confidentiality, Honesty and trust Research outcome will be shared to relevant to church bodies in Zambia	

The digital divide that was as a result of inequalities either financially or by gender as the table X below shows indicated

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Mi	Ma	Me	Std. D
Knowledge Sharing	375	1	5	4.1	.911
Church Visible	375	1	5	3.7	1.073
Membership Growth	375	1	5	3.7	1.086
Imparting Spirituality	375	1	5	3.5	1.067
Church Reputation	375	1	5	3.2	1.144
Valid N (listwise)	375				

that women are the most affected on how they perceive use of technology for learning.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics about knowledge sharing.

There is a high percentage of those interviewed that are technologically informed about use of virtual tools agreeing that the church can use the digital space for knowledge sharing as is seen in the descriptive statics table 1 above that shows the highest mean score of 4.1 than it can be used to for church reputation management as can be seen by the least mean score of 3.2. Some of the data collected from the key stakeholders was to determine the usefulness of virtual tools in effective teaching the mission of the church. This was done by first determine how much in terms of volume was being taught compared to teaching that is conducted via brick and mortar.

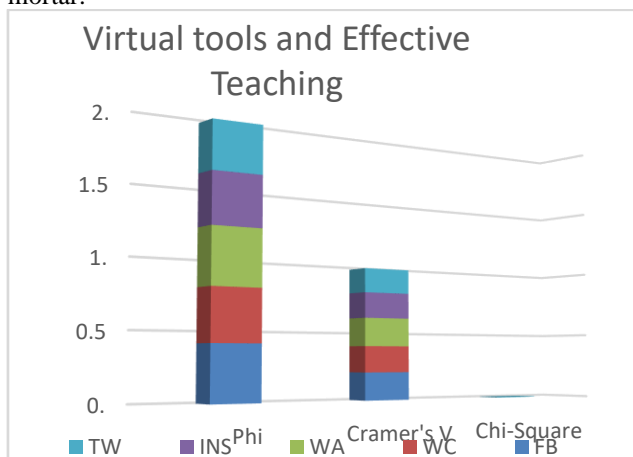


Figure 8. Virtual tools and effective teachings.

From the graph above, Facebook remained the most preferred social network site for virtual learning as seen the all the three tabulations of Phi, Cramer's V and Chi-Square.

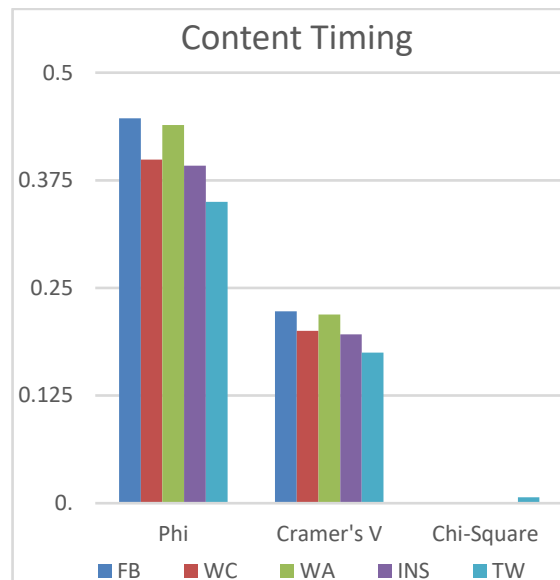


Figure 9. Content timing.

The content schedules and timings remained significant component as far as virtual teaching is concerned. The times played a role on how and when the learners were available. Virtual learning kind of tempted the learners to multitask whilst they were in the virtual class which in the end had a negation on the attention span. The timing also played a pivotal role to counter propaganda and conspiracies that would be negating the church mission objectives. How long it took the church to bring about discussions on such pertinent issues be it as study, discussion or lesson had an impact on the overall virtual attendance

Because of the advent of dynamic virtual tools, there is great need for the church to tap into the digital space on how it goes about its sabbath school classes in order to remain relevant and effective in its mission. The coming of digital technology has made the church members to converse with the church in a dialogical manner and not as the case was in the past. To what degree the church taps into this is yet to be established.

VII. CONCLUSION

This research established some disparities in how perceptions resulting from this transition into virtual space are managed. Regarding the impact of the digital divide on engagement of virtual tools for learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, the following conclusions have been drawn:

- I. The data mined indicates that the church has a youthful membership, as 67 percent of respondents were not above 30 years of age. This drives the point home that about two-third of the key stakeholders are screenagers who are impacted so by their demographics and so the church can use them to become the bridge in reaching out to the older population.
- II. There are specific virtual tools that these stakeholders would prefer the church uses for its missions. The church uses less of its lessons content for virtual tools such as twitter, or instagram or TikTok.
- III. The church doesn't have an immediate and deliberate plan to equip its pastors and elders who themselves are not so technologically competent so that they could be a guide to the members during the virtual interaction. Instead the lack of competence of the said clergy hypes some perception amongst the congregant to think otherwise about technology user friendliness.

VIII. RECOMMENDATION FOR CHANGE OF PRACTICE

The following are recommendations for the Seventh-day Adventist church in Zambia regarding its key stakeholders perception about engagement of virtual tools for learning for sabbath school classes.

- I. It is advised that the church invests in a virtual infrastructure that should be manned by professionals who can effectively implement the the integrated model of for its mission existence and effectively use virtual tools.
- II. There is need to evaluate and monitor the implementation of the online communication policy so that this is policing and quality assurance in the deliverables.
- III. The church to adopt the SMVC OD model adopted for this study as it establishes solid virtual system.

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