Strategies for Bridging Digital Inclusion in Rural South Africa: A Comparative Study

Kgomotso Mokgobu[1]**, Siyabonga Cele**[2]**, Nokuthula Pondechery**[2,3]

[1] Department of Cybersecurity, University of Cape Town

[2] University of Cape Town

[3] Mintek

Correspondence: kmokgobu@aol.com

Author notes

Kgomotso Mokgobu is affiliated with Department of Cybersecurity, University of Cape Town and focuses on Computer Science research in Africa.
Siyabonga Cele is affiliated with University of Cape Town and focuses on Computer Science research in Africa.
Nokuthula Pondechery is affiliated with Mintek and focuses on Computer Science research in Africa.

Abstract

Rural areas in South Africa face significant digital inclusion gaps due to limited access to technology infrastructure and services. The study employed a comparative analysis of case studies from three different regions within South Africa. Data was collected through surveys, interviews, and observations. A notable finding is that the implementation of low-cost mobile internet solutions in one region significantly reduced access barriers by 40% compared to traditional broadband approaches. The comparative study underscores the effectiveness of tailored strategies for digital inclusion, particularly those involving community-led initiatives and affordable technology solutions. Policy makers should prioritise funding for low-cost mobile internet infrastructure in underserved rural areas. Community leaders should be encouraged to develop local training programmes. digital inclusion, rural South Africa, technological adoption, community engagement, low-cost mobile internet Model estimation used $\hat{\theta} = argmin\{\theta\} \, sumi \, ell(yi, f\theta(\xi)) + \lambda lVert\theta rVert \, 2^2$, with performance evaluated using out-of-sample error.

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