



Bridging Digital Divide Strategies in Rural South Africa: A Technological and Socioeconomic Approach

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Abstract

Rural areas in South Africa face significant digital divide challenges, hindered by limited access to technology infrastructure and inadequate training. A mixed-methods approach combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews was employed to gather data from rural communities in South Africa. Rural households displayed a preference for locally developed, user-friendly digital devices (e.g., tablets) over imported models. The adoption rate of these devices exceeded 50% among surveyed participants. The study underscores the importance of culturally sensitive and technologically adapted solutions in addressing rural digital inclusion challenges. Policy makers should prioritise community-driven technology development initiatives to ensure sustainable and effective digital services delivery. digital divide, rural South Africa, technological adaptation, socioeconomic strategies

Model estimation used $\hat{\theta} = \text{argmin}_{\theta} \sum_{i=1}^n (y_i - f(\theta; \xi_i))^2 + \lambda \|\theta\|_2^2$, with performance evaluated using out-of-sample error.

Keywords: *Sub-Saharan, African, Gini, index, Socioeconomic, Ethnicity, Qualitative, Technological*

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