

# **Impact of improved anonymity on the storytelling experience**

Student ID: 517917



## **Abstract**

The aim of this research was to establish the role anonymity plays in influencing the likelihood of creators of stories to share accurate stories and the likelihood of people to believe the shared stories. The background information presented in chapter 1 and evaluations in chapter 2 revealed that the use of blockchain technology in digital storytelling has been quite useful since the immutability of information on blockchain platforms ensures that no third parties can access and use the content of creators without permission. In that regard, the technology is beneficial since it protects content from piracy. However, the question of how anonymity affects trust was not addressed in previous studies. A qualitative research approach based on secondary data was chosen to respond to the specific questions of this study. From the secondary sources selected it was established that blockchain-mediated digital storytelling has achieved a sufficient level of trust among people in different parts of the world. However, fraud and the lack of regulation could significantly undermine the likelihood of people to trust digital stories shared in some contexts. The findings also show that the likelihood of content creators to share accurate stories on blockchain-mediated digital platforms is dependent on the moral standing of content creators. Overall, the ability to share accurate stories and the likelihood of consumers to believe shared stories on anonymous blockchain platforms is subjective and entirely dependent on the individual. Primary research involving content creators and consumers of digital stories is required to confirm or dispute this finding.

**Keywords:** *Anonymity, Blockchain, Storytelling, Trust*

## Contents

Abstract	2
1. Introduction	5
1.1 Topic Covered	5
1.2 Keywords	5
1.3 Problem Description	5
1.4 Justification, Motivation, and Benefits	7
1.5 Research Questions	8
1.6 Planned Contributions	9
2. Literature Review	10
2.1 Trust in Digital Storytelling	10
2.2 Impact of Anonymity on the Storytelling Experience	13
2.3 Impact of Improved Anonymity on the Tendency to Share accurate Stories and Believe Shared Stories	15
2.4 Gaps in the Literature	16
3. Methodology	18
3.1 Research Design	18
3.2 Research Philosophy	19
3.3 Research Method	20
3.4 Data Collection	20
<i>Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria</i>	22
<i>Data Search Procedures</i>	22
3.5 Data Analysis	23
3.6 Milestones, Deliverables, and Resources	24
3.7 Feasibility Study	24
3.8 Risk Analysis	24
3.9 Ethical and Legal Considerations	25
4. Findings	26
4.1 Theme 1: The Role of Trust in Digital Storytelling Experience	26
4.2 Theme 2: Impact of Improved Anonymity on the Storytelling Experience with Regard to the Desire to Share Accurate Stories	28
4.3 Theme 3: Impact of Improved Anonymity on the Storytelling Experience with Regard to the Tendency to Believe Shared Stories	29

5. Discussion	32
5.1 The Level of Trust Towards Digital Storytelling in Different Contexts	32
5.2 The Effect of Anonymity on the Accuracy of Shared Stories	34
5.3 The Likelihood of People to Believe Stories Shared on Anonymous Blockchain Platforms	37
6. Conclusion, Limitations, and Recommendations	40
6.1 Conclusion	40
6.2 Limitations	41
6.3 Recommendations	42
7. References	44

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Topic Covered

This research seeks to establish how anonymity and consumer trust affect the adoption of blockchain integrated story-sharing systems.

## 1.2 Keywords

**Anonymity:** In the specific context of blockchain technology, anonymity refers to the inability of any individual or player in a given blockchain transaction to trace or connect the transaction to a specific user (Cooper, 2020).

**Blockchain:** A decentralized technological platform where different parties rely on a peer-to-peer network in the sharing of transaction data without an intermediary (Sri & Bhaskari, 2018).

**Digital Storytelling:** The sharing of stories that incorporate digital media such as images, audio, and video in the process of telling stories through technological platforms (Bouchrika, 2022).

**Trust:** In the context of blockchain technology, trust refers to the extent to which individuals believe that the transactions and information shared on the system are true (Cooper, 2020).

## 1.3 Problem Description

Blockchain technology has been found to contribute to multiple benefits ranging from security to anonymity in a wide range of contexts including commercial transactions. This argument is confirmed by Haro-Olmo et al. (2020) and Jindal and Bassi (2022) who highlight the fact that information security is one of the most important benefits of blockchain technology in the general context. The adoption of the technology in story-sharing as established by Bouchrika (2022), Sanchez (2020), and Creighton (2022) is a fairly recent development. As a

result, not much in terms of its overall benefits has been established definitively. Although Sanchez (2020) and Creighton (2022) show that the adoption of blockchain in story-sharing has allowed content creators to have more control of what gets to their audience, they do not provide any details of how this freedom has affected the level of trust the target consumers of the stories they access on blockchain platforms. In the traditional setting where publishers were responsible for determining what was published and what was not as highlighted by Bouchrika (2022), there is some form of control of what the public has access to. In blockchain-mediated story sharing however, such checks are not in place hence any content can reach the market. With such deficiency in elaborate checks of content, it is difficult to ascertain whether the public is accessing good and high quality content. Failures in checking content on blockchain also bring into question the level of trust the public has with stories shared over blockchain platforms.

This thesis will attempt to address this problem by first establishing how the anonymity of blockchain influences how the audience of stories perceive story sharing on blockchain platforms. Addressing the issue of anonymity should provide insights on whether audience would be more likely or less likely to seek stories on blockchain platforms as a result of not knowing their origin or their target. Secondly, this thesis will attempt to establish whether or not consumers of stories on blockchain platforms trust the content they access on such platforms. From the information presented in sources such as Sanchez (2020) and Creighton (2022), it is highly likely that blockchain platforms have not yet achieved the same level of trust as traditional publishers. Based on this assertion, this thesis takes the position that most consumers do not have a high level of trust on blockchain story sharing, but this is likely to change with time as blockchain technology advances further and more people are convinced of its capabilities. Generally therefore, this thesis will seek to establish whether the current level of

trust towards blockchain story sharing is low, and how this trust will evolve with time as the technology becomes much more mainstream in different sectors of the global economy. In order to address the identified problem, an elaborate set of research aims, questions, and objectives will need to be addressed.

#### **1.4 Justification, Motivation, and Benefits**

Digital storytelling has been used in a wide range of niche contexts including pedagogy and helping individuals with different kinds of mental disorders as revealed in SAMHSA (2021). From the insights provided by Sanchez (2020), it emerges that blockchain technology plays a profound role in enhancing the sharing and access to digital stories. In that regard, blockchain technology would be a very important technology in enhancing the availability of stories to consumers in different contexts including academia through decentralization of story sharing. Before story sharing on blockchain platforms can be adopted as the mainstream method of access to creative content, however, it is necessary to establish how the elements of anonymity on such platforms would affect consumer trust. This argument is based on the fact that the full benefits of blockchain integrated story sharing systems might not be realized if there are issues of trust among the different stakeholders supposed to use them. In that regard, it is imperative to address the issues of trust on blockchain-mediated digital storytelling if the benefits of the technological innovation are to be realized.

Data presented by Bouchrika (2022) shows that digital storytelling has been found to lead to 45% improvement in students' understanding of various subjects, 35% improvement in research skills of students, and 27% improvement in overall academic performance. From this data, it is evident that digital storytelling has profound benefits in pedagogy. The mass adoption of the innovation, especially on the blockchain platform will depend on how the content



provided is trusted by the target audience. In this regard, the findings of this research will be of benefit to students and teachers.

Evidence presented by Sanchez (2020) and Creighton (2022) shows that in the traditional context where stories are published, publishing houses a high level of control with regard to what gets to consumers and what does not. As a result, the creative work of many storytellers does not reach the market. On blockchain platforms, however, all stories have access to the market. The identification of high trustworthiness on blockchain platforms in this research should contribute to boosting the level of confidence the public has towards digital stories provided on blockchain platforms. This high level of confidence will be beneficial to content creators since a large number of people in schools and other contexts will be likely to purchase their content.

## **1.5 Research Questions**

This research will be guided by three research questions which are:

**RQ1:** What is the role of trust in digital storytelling experience?

**RQ2:** How does improved anonymity impact the storytelling experience with regard to the desire to share accurate stories?

**RQ3:** How does improved anonymity impact the storytelling experience with regard to the tendency to believe the shared stories?

In responding to the above research questions, this research will be seeking to achieve the following objectives:

1. To establish how trustworthy blockchain integrated story-sharing systems are among the key stakeholders in storytelling.

2. To find out how anonymity on blockchain integrated story-sharing systems influences the likelihood of content creators to provide accurate stories.
3. To establish how anonymity on blockchain integrated story-sharing systems influences the likelihood of consumers to believe the stories shared on blockchain platforms.

### **1.6 Planned Contributions**

While this research study will not, individually, provide findings comprehensive enough to be used in making decisions on the kind of actions that should be taken in improving blockchain-mediated digital storytelling, it will point to important research directions in digital storytelling that future researchers should consider. Together with the findings of the studies of these future researchers in the specific context of the role of trust in blockchain-mediated digital storytelling will be used in the development of strategies on how story sharing platforms can be improved for the benefit of both the creators of stories and the consumers of those stories. In summary, therefore, this research will contribute to scholarly knowledge by providing important insights that will stimulate further research. The findings of all this research combined will form the basis of making important decisions on how to improve blockchain-mediated digital storytelling.

## **2. Literature Review**

This chapter will provide a detailed evaluation of what has already been established in research as far the issues of anonymity and trust on the blockchain are concerned. More specifically, this chapter will seek to establish whether there have been any attempts by previous researchers to evaluate how anonymity in blockchain-mediated digital storytelling platforms. In addition to identifying the works that have already been done and highlighting the important findings they present, the aim of this chapter is to establish what is yet to be covered as far as the impact of anonymity on the level of trust people have on blockchain mediated digital storytelling platforms. The identified gaps will form the basis of carrying this research. In that regard, this chapter will be divided into a number of sub-topics which are trust in digital storytelling, impact of anonymity on the story sharing experience, and Impact of Improved Anonymity on the Tendency to Share accurate Stories and Believe Shared Stories. The chapter will end by discussing some of the gaps identified in the literature.

### **2.1 Trust in Digital Storytelling**

Although there has been a significant amount of attention on digital storytelling in general, the issue of trust has not been addressed extensively. Several studies nevertheless show that digital storytelling has achieved a significant level of trust in a number of different contexts. In a research study by Nassim (2018) on the use of digital storytelling as a learning tool, it was established that the technology is viewed as being highly effective in enhancing student involvement in lessons and as a result, leading to a profound improvement in their creative skills, reading skills, and writing skills. While the researcher does not directly explore the issue of trust, the fact that digital storytelling is found to lead to multiple learning outcomes in students is an indication that it is a technology that is trusted by both teachers and students. The significance of

digital storytelling in education is supported in the research by Robin (2016), who confirmed that indeed digital storytelling leads to positive outcomes in pedagogy not only at the early childhood education level but also in the secondary and post-secondary education levels. In this regard, it is evident that indeed digital storytelling has been able to achieve a high level of trust among students and teachers at all levels of education. The specific focus of this research, however, is on digital storytelling on blockchain. In that regard, after establishing that indeed digital storytelling in general has been able to achieve a high level of trust among different stakeholders in different contexts, it is imperative to evaluate how the integration of blockchain technology has affected this trust.

Similar to digital storytelling in the general context, there has been hardly any research specifically focusing on linking digital storytelling on blockchain platforms with trust. Nevertheless, a number of important insights can be drawn from studies that have researched other aspects of digital storytelling on blockchain. One such study is Oyelere et al. (2020). In their study, Oyelere et al. (2020) investigated the usefulness of digital storytelling on blockchain platforms in smart learning. The researchers established that in addition to directly supporting the learning process, digital storytelling on blockchain platforms allows teachers to more effectively analyze student progress using the analytical features available on blockchain and also allows students to access learning material much more easily regardless of their locations. Similar to digital storytelling in the general context as found in research studies by Robin (2016) and Nassim (2018), digital storytelling on blockchain achieves a high level of trust among teachers and students as a result of its direct impact on the learning process. Digital storytelling on blockchain as found by Oyelere et al. (2020) is much more advanced than traditional digital storytelling since it includes a wide range of functionalities including analytics and access. The

fact that these additional functionalities are appreciated as being useful by both teachers and students is an indication that digital storytelling on the blockchain achieves a much higher level of trust than traditional digital storytelling.

Blockchain technology has been found to assist in the achievement of a high level of trust in different contexts. According to Cooper (2020), for example, blockchain technology has specifically significantly improved the level of trust in financial transactions and in the delivery of goods and services. In the specific context of digital storytelling, the findings by Oyelere et al. (2020) show that blockchain technology profoundly improves access to stories by consumers. Since there are no studies that specifically focus on the impact of blockchain digital storytelling on the levels of trust the consumers of such stories, an important question to consider is whether the heightened level of trust in financial transactions identified by Cooper (2020) is also observed in the case of the sharing of stories. While not specifically focusing specifically on the sharing of stories, Tan and Saraniemi (2022) established that blockchain-enabled exchanges significantly enhance trust in the exchange of digital assets based on the fact that it enables the verification of the ownership of the assets. Although the research does not specifically investigate trust in the sharing of digital stories, it provides very important insights that also apply in digital storytelling. The first measure of trust in any given transaction is the confidence the has consumer that they are receiving their product from the rightful owner. In the traditional digital storytelling context, studies such as Robin (2016) and Nassim (2018) do not mention any such guarantees. However, the findings by Tan and Saraniemi (2022) indicate that in blockchain-mediated digital storytelling guarantees that any content that consumers access actually comes from the authors and not from any other party. In that regard, it can be argued that the integration of blockchain technology in digital storytelling enhances trust in the sharing of

stories. This conclusion is, however, purely based on inferences made from studies conducted on the general capabilities of blockchain technology. Studies that focus specifically on digital storytelling will be necessary in order to confirm whether this inference is actually true or not.

## **2.2 Impact of Anonymity on the Storytelling Experience**

Anonymity is another important feature of blockchain technology. Evidence presented in the previous section shows that it is highly likely that blockchain-mediated digital storytelling achieves a high level of trust since consumers are guaranteed that the material they are accessing is actually from the owners and not from third-parties. However, transactions on blockchain platforms are carried out anonymously (Cooper, 2020). It is imperative to evaluate how this anonymity affects the experiences of consumers in order to determine whether blockchain-mediated digital storytelling has any advantages over traditional digital storytelling. Similar to the case of trust, the link between anonymity and the outcomes of digital storytelling on blockchain platforms has not been sufficiently researched. Nevertheless, some general studies including Wallbach et al. (2020) can provide some important insights that can be applied to the storytelling context. In their experimental research study involving 455 participants, Wallbach et al. (2020) established that while traceability and immutability of information on blockchain platforms has a positive impact on the level of trust users have in the technology, anonymity contributes to a decline in trust. Generally, people want to purchase goods and services from people they can identify. Anonymity on the blockchain platforms makes it impossible for sellers and buyers to know who they are transacting with at any given time. Based on this finding, it follows that despite the fact that digital storytelling on blockchain platforms significantly benefits from the traceability and immutability of information, anonymity undermines the level of trust on the part of the consumers since they cannot be sure from whom they are acquiring

their stories. For example, an individual who likes the work of a given author, would opt to acquire digital stories from a traditional source rather than relying on blockchain since they do not have a high level of trust on anonymous sources.

Despite the fact that anonymity could be one of the drawbacks of blockchain-mediated storytelling as far as trust is concerned, it is one of the most appreciated features of blockchain technology in general as established in a number of studies. In a research study by Fabian, Eramakova, and Sander (2016) involving 125 Bitcoin users, for example, it was established that anonymity is actually one of the elements of blockchain that users of the technology are interested in. In that regard, the loss of anonymity on blockchain platforms leads to a loss in confidence on the platforms by users. Comparing the findings by Fabian et al. (2016) that anonymity is essential in maintaining the confidence of users with blockchain platforms with those by Wallbach et al. (2020) that anonymity reduces the level of trust some individuals have towards blockchain is an indication that the impact of anonymity on blockchain is dependent on the specific use. Since many consumers of stories have specific interest such as knowing the source of the stories they are purchasing, it follows that they would trust blockchain-mediated storytelling more if it was less anonymous. Bray (2016) in a research study involving 71 participants established that anonymity on blockchain platforms has both positive and negative outcomes. For example, while anonymity allows individuals to engage in cybercrime without being identified, it also protects the privacy of blockchain users from individuals who may use it for malicious ends. From the finding that anonymity has a positive impact on the privacy of individuals, it follows that the level of trust towards blockchain-mediated digital storytelling will increase if consumers of stories on blockchain platforms are educated more on how anonymity enhances privacy.

## **2.3 Impact of Improved Anonymity on the Tendency to Share accurate Stories and Believe Shared Stories**

In the previous section it has emerged that anonymity has a profound impact on the level of trust people have on blockchain-mediated digital storytelling. An exploration of why anonymity leads to this low level of trust is important if practical solutions are to be developed and implemented. While there are hardly any studies that specifically seek to establish this link between anonymity and trust, important insights can be derived from the findings by Wallbach et al. (2020). The researchers established that people have a higher level of trust in transactions where they can identify the parties they are transacting with as opposed to those which they cannot identify the other parties. In the specific context of blockchain-mediated digital storytelling, this argument points to the high likelihood that consumers of digital stories do not believe in the credibility and accuracy of stories shared anonymously. The fact that the individuals sharing these stories cannot be identified on blockchain platforms implies that they can share inaccurate stories without risking their reputation as content creators. Although this seems a very possible scenario that could undermine the integrity of blockchain-mediated, hardly any studies have been conducted to address the issue. Even studies such as Fabian, Eramakova, and Sander (2016) and Tan and Saraniemi (2022) which present findings showing the benefits of anonymity, do not address the issue of how blockchain platforms would ensure individuals actually provide legitimate goods to their customers. The fact that anonymity would encourage some people to engage in vices such as cybercrime as established by Bray (2016) points to the likelihood that some individuals could also take advantage of anonymity to share stories that are not credible. Based on this assertion, therefore, it is plausible to argue that improved anonymity could reduce the tendency of people to share inaccurate stories.



Thus far, it is evident that there are no systems in blockchain-mediated storytelling to ensure that content creators share accurate stories. Another issue that should be considered at this point is whether the intended consumers believe in the credibility of the shared stories. Since there are no studies that actually address this issue, studies investigating the extent to which people purchasing on blockchain platforms would give some important information that can be used to gauge how likely people are to believe shared stories. Ostern (2018) established that despite the fact that blockchain is argued to be risk free and devoid of the numerous uncertainties of traditional transactions, there have been numerous cases of fraudulent activity on the platform. As a result, the level of trust many individuals have on blockchain transactions is low. According to Werbach (2018), one of the most profound factors that undermine trust in blockchain transactions is the fact that the technology is not regulated in many parts of the world. This lack of regulation has important implications in the specific context of blockchain-mediated digital storytelling. In addition to anonymity protecting the identity of individuals providing content on blockchain platforms, the lack of regulation implies that no legal action can be taken against them even if they could be identified. The fact that there have been widespread cases of fraud as established in the research by Ostern (2018) and the fact that individuals engaging in unethical practices would not face any legal consequences as highlighted by Werbach (2018) means that public confidence with anything purchased via blockchain is low. Although these studies do not directly address blockchain-mediated digital storytelling, their findings suggest that a significant number of people do not believe shared stories.

## **2.4 Gaps in the Literature**

This literature review shows that although there has been a lot of research covering different topics related to blockchain technology, there has been hardly any focus on the impact

on anonymity on the level of trust in blockchain-mediated digital storytelling. Most of the information used in addressing different elements of this research was drawn from general research studies that address different issues relating to trust and anonymity on blockchain platforms. Although some very important information is drawn from these sources, their lack of focus on digital storytelling means that their findings cannot be used to respond to the specific research questions presented in chapter 1. More specifically, while anonymity is one of the important features of blockchain technology in general, research shows that it is one of the factors that undermines trust in transactions since people do not trust goods and services from people they cannot identify. This general finding is used to make the argument that the fact that the providers of digital stories on the blockchain are anonymous makes it difficult for the target audience to trust the credibility of the provided stories. Anonymity has also been linked with a wide range of vices on the blockchain including fraud and cybercrime. The occurrence of such vices on the blockchain points to the likelihood that unethical practices could also be carried out in the context of digital storytelling. The lack of research in this direction, however, implies that such an argument cannot be made authoritatively. This research will bridge these gaps by specifically seeking the link between anonymity and trust in digital storytelling and how anonymity influences the likelihood of content creators providing accurate stories.

### **3. Methodology**

In order to respond to the research questions presented in chapter 1, it is important to come up with an elaborate set of procedures that will be used. This chapter provides the specific steps that will be taken in the data collection and analysis of the data. More specifically, the chapter will discuss important elements such as research philosophy, research design and approach, data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations. The specific aim in all of these sections will be to provide detailed procedures that can be replicated by other researchers seeking to replicate the study.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The initial step in any research, according to Aggarwal and Ranganathan (2019), is determining the most appropriate research design to apply. A Research design provides the general structure that should guide any given research (Akhtar, 2016). The most common research designs available are explanatory, diagnostic, descriptive, correlational, and experimental (Thakur, 2021). The experimental research design according to Thakur (2021) evaluates a given research problem in a controlled environment. The correlational design seeks to establish the cause and effect relationship of a number of variables with the aim of providing insights about a given phenomenon (Thakur, 2021). The explanatory research design, on the other hand, according to the author, seeks to address gaps that exist in theory while the diagnostic research design specifically seeks to identify the cause of a given observed issue or problem. Finally, the descriptive research design is based on the premise that phenomena can be understood through the descriptions provided by individuals that have observed the phenomena of interest. In that regard, the descriptive research design relies on the subjective descriptions people give to different phenomena in their environment.

From the evaluation of research designs provided above, it is evident that the specific aim of any given research is what determines the most appropriate design. From the definitions of different designs provided above, correlational and experimental designs are not appropriate since there are no cause and effect relationships sought by any of the research questions in chapter 1. In order to establish how trustworthy the users of blockchain-mediated story sharing systems feel these systems are and how anonymity influences their trust towards shared stories, it is reasonable to acquire information the users of these technologies. The only research design among those presented by Thakur (2021), which can address this issue is the descriptive design. The descriptive research design allows the researcher acquire subjective information from individuals meaning that it will be easy to acquire data on how different parties perceive the technology influences consumer trust using the design.

### **3.2 Research Philosophy**

Chowdhury (2014) argues that research philosophy is concerned with the processes used in the generation of knowledge in research. There are four major research philosophies which are interpretivism, pragmatism, positivism, and realism (Chowdhury, 2014). The interpretivist research design selected in the previous section will require the collection of qualitative data. From the descriptions of pragmatism, positivism, and realism provided by Chowdhury (2014), it is evident that all three rely heavily on quantitative data. According to Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2012) and Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), the interpretivist research paradigm is the one that is well suited for studies using qualitative methods. Interpretivism is thus chosen as the guiding research philosophy for this research because of its alignment with the selected research design and its suitability in addressing the research questions.

### **3.3 Research Method**

Research methods are categorized into two general groups which are qualitative and quantitative (Hammarberg, Kirkman, and de Lacey, 2016). These two, according to Hammarberg et al. (2016), are combined to form the mixed methods research which is the third research method commonly used by scholars. In quantitative research, the research phenomenon being investigated is usually reduced to a set of quantifiable variables for which a relationship is sought (Vasileiou et al., 2018). The specific focus of this research is not to establish how different elements of digital storytelling relate with each other. For that reason, coming up with a set of variables to quantify digital storytelling on blockchain platforms and the resulting trust will be impractical as far as the overall aim of this study is concerned. The elimination of the quantitative method automatically eliminates the possibility of using mixed methods as well since the latter also requires the quantification of some elements of the phenomenon being studied. The qualitative research method is found to be the most appropriate for this research since, according to Vasileiou et al. (2018) it allows researchers to gain in-depth information about a given phenomenon without being constrained within the limits of a few predetermined variables. Depth of information is confirmed as one of the main advantages of qualitative research by Agius (2013), Eyisi (2016), and Rahman (2017). There could be a wide range of perceptions people have towards anonymity and trust in the context of digital storytelling on blockchain platforms. These diverse perceptions can only be acquired through detailed narratives or interpretations and not a few variables hence the choice of the qualitative research method.

### **3.4 Data Collection**

Primary and secondary data collection are the two overall methods of collecting data available (Ajayi, 2017). According to Lowry (2015), both primary and secondary research have

proved to be very useful in almost all research contexts. However, each has its own strengths and weaknesses that makes it more suited in some studies than in others. Sindin (2017) points out that one of the main strengths of primary data is that it is collected directly from first-hand sources that the researcher can engage directly and acquire information that is specifically aligned with their specific research problem. This argument on the advantages of primary data is confirmed by Thakur (2018), who highlighted that, in addition to being contextually aligned, the originality of primary data collection enhances the level of authenticity of the findings of any given research. One of the main challenges of primary data, according to Tran and Khuc (2021) is that it is usually costly and time consuming and therefore would not be feasible in academic research studies in which time and finance constraints are very significant.

In contrast to the collection of primary data, secondary data collection is less time consuming and less expensive based on the fact that the data is acquired from already existing sources (Pederson et al. 2020). However, according to Kalu, Unachukwu, and Ibiam (2018), one of the main challenges of secondary data is that it is usually not exactly related to the specific focus of the study relying on it. In order to use such data, researchers are usually required to only utilize parts of the data in secondary sources that address their objectives and ignore the rest (Olabode et al., 2019). In the specific context of this research, there are major time and financial constraints that undermine the ability of the researcher to collect primary data. Although secondary data presents a number of challenges related to context as highlighted in studies such as Kalu et al. (2018) and Olabode et al. (2019), the use of secondary sources remains as the only option in data collection as a result of the time and financial constraints. In that regard, the data for this research will be collected from secondary sources in a desk based research. In order to ensure only the most relevant data is collected and overcome some of the contextual challenges

highlighted by Kalu et al. (2018) and Olabode et al. (2019), the process of selecting sources for this study will be guided by a number of inclusion and exclusion criteria as discussed in the following section.

### ***Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria***

From the evaluation of previous studies in the literature review, it is evident that there are hardly any research studies that specifically address issues of anonymity and trust in blockchain-mediated digital storytelling platforms. This lack of specifically aligned research studies implies that previous studies addressing issues of anonymity and trust in contexts related to digital storytelling will be used in this study. For that reason, the included studies will not be required to specifically address the issue of anonymity and trust in the blockchain-mediated digital storytelling. However, the included studies will be required to provide information that can be used to make the relevant inferences on how anonymity could affect the likelihood of content creators to share accurate stories and consumers of content to believe the shared stories.

All the sources included in this study will be required to have been published within five years of writing. More specifically, only studies published from 2017 to 2022 will be used in this research. Sources published before 2017 will be excluded to avoid the inclusion of information that is not relevant at the time of writing. A lot of information can be lost or misinterpreted if translated from one language to another. To avoid information loss resulting from translation, only sources that are published in English will be selected for this study.

### ***Data Search Procedures***

A number of databases that contain information technology studies were searched for the relevant sources to be used in this study. Some of these databases include Computer Science Database, IEEE Computer Society Digital Library, ProQuest Central, Web of Science, and

Scopus. Search terms such as ‘Anonymity’, ‘Trust’, ‘Blockchain’, ‘Digital Storytelling’ and ‘Story sharing’ were combined using Boolean operators ‘AND’ and ‘OR’ to come up with searchable terms. However, there were hardly any studies that explore issues of anonymity and trust in blockchain-mediated digital storytelling. For that reason, most of the identified sources addressed other closely related topics such as the sharing of art on blockchain and the sharing of humanitarian stories in conflict areas. The use of these procedures led to the identification of 6 previous research studies that would provide satisfactory answers to the research questions presented in chapter 1.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

Thematic analysis will be used in analyzing the data drawn from the 6 sources selected for this study. According to Alhojailan (2012) thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis method in which a researcher reads through available information and categories it into groups that best address their research aims. One of the benefits of thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clarke (2012) is its flexibility. More specifically, Braun and Clarke (2012) mention that in thematic analysis, the researcher has the freedom to categorize the data in a set of predetermined codes or identify codes in the data and use them in categorizing their data. The first approach, therefore, gives researchers the ability to align the contents of secondary data to the specific context of their research questions. In the specific context of this research, the researcher will categorise the information drawn from the selected sources under general themes aligned specifically with each of the three research questions presented in chapter 1. One-to-one correspondence between the derived themes and research questions will ensure that all questions are answered without providing unnecessary information.



### **3.6 Milestones, Deliverables, and Resources**

The overall milestone that this thesis seeks to achieve is to respond to each of the three research questions presented in the first chapter of this thesis. In achieving this, the analysis presented in the findings chapter will be carried out under three themes aligned with each of the three research questions. The key deliverable after this analysis is a thesis that meets all the research objectives and achieves the overall aim of this thesis. The primary resources that will be used in the achievement of the key milestone specified are the 6 previous research studies selected in accordance with the inclusion criteria outlined in this chapter.

### **3.7 Feasibility Study**

According to Drury and Williams (2022), a feasibility study is a detailed evaluation of a project that aims at establishing whether it is doable or not. In the specific context of this thesis, the only measure of the practicality of the research is the availability sources to respond to the research questions presented in chapter 1. By utilizing the inclusion and exclusion criteria specified in this chapter, 6 sources that sufficiently address the research questions were identified. Based on the availability of sources to respond to the research questions, this research is found to be feasible.

### **3.8 Risk Analysis**

Risk analysis refers to an assessment carried out to identify any potential adverse effects that could affect a given project (Hayes, 2022). In the specific context of this research, there are no major risks since no human participants will be involved. Since all data that will be used in this thesis will be drawn from secondary sources, it is unlikely that the data collection process will expose any individual to any kind of adverse situation. In that regard, therefore, the level of perceived and actual risk in this study is low.

### **3.9 Ethical and Legal Considerations**

Observing ethical standards is one of the most important consideration in any research study, especially those involving human participants (Tripathy, 2013). According to Yip et al. (2016), in addition to adherence to ethical standards, there are international legal guidelines that researchers need to adhere to when conducting research. These legally enforceable guidelines include confidentiality and informed consent. From the information provided by Yip et al. (2016), however, it emerges that the ethical and legal requirements of informed consent and confidentiality are formulated to guide research involving human participants and not secondary research. In fact, Jol and Stommel (2016) highlight that obtaining informed consent from the participants of numerous secondary sources is extremely difficult and impractical. In that regard, it is not necessary to seek informed consent a second time in a secondary study when the sources used explicitly indicate that they acquired consent from their participants. In secondary research, however, using the research of other scholars without permission could have serious legal implications as highlighted by Tripathy (2013) and Yip et al. (2016). In addressing this legal issue, only sources that are freely available on the internet will be used. The researcher will not be required to acquire permission to use information from the authors of sources that are open access on the internet since the fact that they are freely available implies the authors allow their content to be used by other researchers. Nevertheless, all information derived from the selected sources will be properly referenced to avoid the issue of plagiarism.

## 4. Findings

From the literature search, it was established that no previous study exactly responds to the research questions of this study. Nevertheless, the findings of multiple studies will be combined in this chapter to give general indications on the impact of anonymity and trust in blockchain-mediated digital storytelling. To ensure all the research questions presented in chapter 1 are answered satisfactorily, the information drawn from the selected sources will be evaluated under themes directly aligned with each research question.

### 4.1 Theme 1: The Role of Trust in Digital Storytelling Experience

Trust plays a very profound in the adoption of blockchain technology in the digital storytelling context. This argument is supported by Yagarajah (2022) in a research study that sought to determine the role played by digital storytelling in the development and evolution of the cryptocurrency market. Yagarajah (2022) specifically conducted an ethnographic study on digital stories on 4chan and Reddit. According to the researcher, much of the storytelling on 4chan is driven by memes. Yagarajah (2022) establishes that although the cryptocurrency market is highly volatile and presents investors with a very high risk of losing money, blockchain-mediated digital storytelling on both 4chan and Reddit has a more profound role on participants in the market than any perceived risk. An interesting observation made by Yagarajah (2022) is that messages on 4chan are anonymous but still individuals are able to influence each other so profoundly to the extent of subverting economic reason. The high level of trust that blockchain technology has been able to achieve in the storytelling context is confirmed in the research study by McConaghy et al. (2017) who conducted a study to establish how blockchain acts as an ownership attribution enabler for digital creative works shared on the internet. The findings presented by the researcher show that the creators of works such as film, music,

literature, and art have a high level of trust towards sharing their content on blockchain platforms since it ensures that their work cannot be used by unauthorized third parties. In their study, McConagy et al. (2017) establish that the immutability of data on blockchain platforms makes it impossible for third-parties to access creative works and use it as their own. This immutability of data on the blockchain ensures that all creative works is attributed to the rightful owners and any payments made for such works are actually received by the owners of the creative works (McConagy et al., 2017). In both studies evaluated, there seems to be agreement that trust is one of the main drivers of the adoption of blockchain technology in sharing information in different settings.

Combining the findings drawn from McConagy et al. (2017) and Yagarajah (2022) provides very important details on the influence of blockchain technology in the sharing of information. Yagarajah (2022), for example, reveal that people investing in cryptocurrencies have a very high propensity to believe the stories and information provided on blockchain by their fellow investors despite the fact that such information is not based on any sound financial analysis. McConagy et al. (2017) on the other hand show that information shared on blockchain platforms achieves a similar level of trust both among content creators and consumers in the sharing of creative works. In the evaluation of cryptocurrency investment in the research by Yagarajah (2022) it is found that messages on 4chan are anonymous but still individuals are able to influence each other so profoundly to the extent of subverting economic reason. Based on the findings of these two sources, therefore, it is evident that digital storytelling, especially in the context of trading cryptocurrencies and in the sharing of creative content achieves a very high level of trust among consumers. The finding by McConagy et al. (2017) specifically shows that blockchain technology has the ability to promote trust between the providers of digital content

and their customers. For the customer, blockchain technology guarantees that any digital story acquired on blockchain is actually from the owner and not a counterfeit. For the owners of digital stories, on the other hand, blockchain gives the assurance that the work they share is not being used fraudulently by other parties on the internet. Generally, therefore, despite the fact that the research studies by McConagy et al. (2017) and Yagarajah (2022) are carried out in very different contexts, they show strong agreement that indeed there is a sufficient level of trust for information and creative content shared on blockchain platforms. By extension, these findings indicate that blockchain-mediated digital storytelling could achieve a high level of trust from both the creators and consumers of digital stories regardless of the context.

#### **4.2 Theme 2: Impact of Improved Anonymity on the Storytelling Experience with Regard to the Desire to Share Accurate Stories**

In addressing this theme inferences will need to be made from the findings of sources not specifically addressing anonymity in the context of digital storytelling due to the lack of sources that address this specific question. Some of the studies that will be used under this theme are Peace Direct (2020) which explores the role of digital storytelling in promoting global peacebuilding and Austen, Jones, and Wawera (2018), which explores the impact of using digital storytelling in ensuring anonymity in the context of the collection of interview data in higher education research. In the peacebuilding context as presented in the case study research by Peace Direct (2020), digital storytelling has played a profound role in the sharing of conflict prevention information on digital platforms including social media. More specifically, the authors point out that anonymity has been one of the critical facilitators of the sharing of stories relating to conflict and other crises on story sharing spaces such as Platform4Dialogue. In many cases, as highlighted in Peace Direct (2020), the providers of stories touching on violence and conflict

prefer to be anonymous in order to be guaranteed of their safety. Similarly, Austen et al. (2018) established that anonymity and confidentiality are among the most important considerations that research participants make before choosing what to share during research. In realm of research in higher education, participants in most cases prefer not to be easily identified in published papers. Researchers, on the other hand, are required to protect the identities of the participants involved in their studies. In that regard, it is evident that both researchers and research participants have a profound interest in anonymity in the research setting.

In the context of highly sensitive topics, participants would most likely withhold some information in case they feel that their anonymity is not guaranteed. Improved anonymity in the context of blockchain-mediated digital storytelling would provide research participants a higher level of confidence to give even more detail during research based on the fact that the sensitive information they provide can it be traced back to them. The information presented in the studies by Austen et al. (2018) and Peace Direct (2020) agree that anonymity in digital storytelling profoundly empowers people providing some specific information to provide it in sufficient detail regardless of how sensitive it might be. This empowerment results from the fact that anonymity guarantees informers and research participants that they would not exposed to any risk for providing sensitive information on a given topic or about any individuals in the context of conflict. Overall therefore, the findings by Peace Direct (2020) and Austen et al. (2017) point to the high likelihood that the enhanced anonymity on blockchain-mediated digital storytelling improves the desire of research participants to share accurate stories.

### **4.3 Theme 3: Impact of Improved Anonymity on the Storytelling Experience with Regard to the Tendency to Believe Shared Stories**

Boukis (2019) explored the impact of blockchain technology on the ability of brands to establish and maintain relationships with consumers. One of the key observations in the research is that blockchain technology enhances brand storytelling capabilities. Despite the anonymity on blockchain platforms, the findings of the research shows that consumers believe the stories shared about brands owing to the fact that such stories are found to significantly improve the perceptions consumers have towards brands. The impact of anonymity in digital storytelling is also explored in the context of academia. In this regard, Gachago and Livingston (2020) in a case study set in a higher education institution in South Africa highlighted the fact that students sharing digital stories in the academic context feel much safer when sharing their stories with a small circle of peers. The need for anonymity increases significantly when the stories are shared in a much broader context such as in conferences. On such large platforms, according to Gachago and Livingston (2020) anonymity could deny students the chance of receiving recognition for their creative work. Also, according to the researchers, people in such large setting like in conferences actually have interest in knowing the identities of individuals that create the specific digital stories presented to them. In this regard, anonymity would not be appreciated by audience in such setting.

Comparing the findings by Boukis (2019) and Gachago and Livingston (2020), it is evident that the likelihood of people to believe stories shared anonymously is dependent on the specific context. Boukis (2019) notes that consumers search stories shared about brands on blockchain platforms so as to gain deeper understanding of brands before making purchase decisions. The fact that consumers use digital stories on brands shared on blockchain platforms

to make purchase decisions is an indication that they believe the shared stories. According to Boukis (2019) one of the reasons why blockchain-mediated storytelling in the context of marketing communication is trusted by consumers is the privacy it affords involved parties. In this regard, the anonymity of blockchain storytelling allows consumers to be more confident in voicing their dissatisfactions with brands and sharing information on what to do to improve. From the findings by Gachago and Livingston (2020), on the other hand, peoples being provided with academic or other content in contexts such as conferences, anonymity would lead to very low levels of trust as people in such settings are actually interested in identifying the owners of the presented works.



## **5. Discussion**

This chapter will provide an evaluation of the findings presented in the previous chapter in relation to the insights derived from previous studies presented in the literature review chapter. The specific aim of this chapter is to respond to the research questions presented in chapter 1. For that reason, this chapter will be structured in terms of the three research questions that this research seeks to answer.

### **The Level of Trust Towards Digital Storytelling in Different Contexts**

The sources used in the first part of the findings section show that there is a sufficient level of trust for digital storytelling in a wide range of contexts ranging from retail to investment in digital assets. The two sources evaluated under theme 1 in the previous chapter show that digital storytelling achieves a high level of trust in different contexts. According to the findings presented by Yagarajah (2022), for example, digital stories shared on the blockchain have been very effective in influencing people on making decisions in cryptocurrency investments. In addition, McConaghy et al. (2017) establish that the immutability of information on blockchain causes people to have a high level of trust that whatever they are purchasing is actually from the real owners and not from any unauthorized party. These findings are strongly corroborated in the literature review in studies such as Robin (2016), Nassim (2018), Cooper (2020), and Oyelere et al. (2020). In the research studies by Robin (2016) and Nassim (2018) for example, digital storytelling is highly trusted in the academic context to the extent that it has been adopted as one of the learning tools in different schools all over the world. One of the reasons why digital storytelling could be highly trustworthy in the academic context as established by Robin (2016) and Nassim (2018) is the immutability of blockchain transactions and its role as an enabler of ownership attribution for works by specific individuals as established in the research by

McConaghy et al. (2017). In the specific context of education, the use of blockchain mediated digital storytelling guarantees both teachers and students that they are actually using content from the right owners and not from other parties. Based on this evaluation, therefore, it is evident that one of the roles of trust in digital storytelling is that it gives audience confidence on the genuineness of the content they are purchasing.

The data collected under the first research questions shows that trust plays a profound role in the success of blockchain technology in any given context. According to the findings derived from Yagarajah (2022), it is trust in blockchain that makes people believe the investment information provided by anonymous individuals on blockchain platforms. In McConaghy et al. (2017), on the other hand, immutability of information is one of the factors that makes blockchain technology very trustworthy among users. People accessing information on blockchain platforms are actually interested in the fact that it is extremely difficult for third parties to access and interfere with information shared on blockchain platforms. Based on this finding, therefore, it follows that the immutability of information on blockchain-mediated digital storytelling guarantees consumers of stories on such platforms that the content that they are accessing is actually accurate. The trust made possible by the immutability of information therefore makes blockchain technology very trustworthy among people in a wide range of contexts. Overall, therefore, the evaluation presented in this section shows that trust plays a very important role in the likelihood of people to adopt blockchain technology in different industries ranging from business to education as established in the results provided by McConaghy et al. (2017) and Yagarajah (2022). In that regard, the findings of this research show that trust is one of the most important driving forces in the adoption of blockchain platforms in different contexts. In the specific context of storytelling, the findings of this research point to the high likelihood to

the fact that an enhancement of trust in blockchain in general will lead to the adoption of the technology as the mainstream option in digital storytelling.

### **5.1 The Effect of Anonymity on the Accuracy of Shared Stories**

The utility of blockchain-mediated digital storytelling in global issues is most evident in the research presented in Peace Direct (2020). One key highlight from the case studies presented in the source is that digital storytelling has played a very instrumental role in the sharing of stories relating to conflict. In the specific context of anonymity, a number of the case studies shared in Peace Direct (2020) show that victims and witnesses of national conflicts are more likely to share their stories if they are assured of the protection of their identities. The sharing of very sensitive information especially that which would implicate specific powerful people could make the individuals providing such information targets and so anonymity is highly appreciated in such contexts. Blockchain-mediated digital storytelling, in this regard, promises higher capacity to protect the identity of the providers of sensitive information compared to traditional approaches to storytelling. In that regard, the findings by Peace Direct (2020) points to the fact that anonymity increases the people's desire to share accurate in the context of humanitarian crises. In other contexts, however, studies such as Bray (2016), Werbach (2018), and Wallbach et al. (2020), show that anonymity could encourage fraudulent activity including the sharing of inaccurate stories. In fact, Bray (2016) explicitly pointed out that some people could take advantage of the fact that they cannot be identified to share stories that are not true. In the context of the stories on violence and conflict presented in Peace Direct (2020), the revelation by Bray (2016) points to a high likelihood of blockchain-mediated digital storytelling being used in the spread of wrong information including propaganda. The combination of the findings of this research and the findings of previous studies shows that the impact of anonymity on the

likelihood of people to share accurate stories is subjective. Blockchain-mediated digital storytelling platforms do not guarantee that all shared stories are true. For that reason, the impact of anonymity on the accuracy of shared stories is wholly dependent on the morality of the individuals sharing stories.

Similar to the arguments made for anonymity based on the case studies presented in Peace Direct (2020), the research study by Austen et al. (2017) provides arguments showing that anonymity increases the chances of people sharing accurate stories. More specifically, the researchers establish that anonymity in digital storytelling significantly enhances the confidence of participants in research to provide accurate information during the collection of data in research. Based on the criticisms made against anonymity in research studies such as Bray (2016), Werbach (2018), and Wallbach et al. (2020), an important question to consider is how an individual would determine that the information provided by an anonymous respondent is accurate. Austen et al. (2017) do not provide any insights in relation to this question meaning that their conclusion that anonymity encourages respondents to share accurate stories is impossible to ascertain. A keener evaluation of the assertions presented by Austen et al. (2017) is that reveals that the researchers also mention the level of detail in the provided information as one of the benefits of anonymity in the data collection process. The level of detail in information on anonymous platforms is also supported in Peace Direct (2020) where it is mentioned that anonymity gives individuals the confidence to provide highly detailed narrations without fear of mentioning events that could implicate specific individuals. The corroboration between these two sources is an indication that indeed anonymity in blockchain-mediated digital storytelling would allow the originators of stories to provide highly detailed information without fearing any negative consequences that they would experience on platforms where their identities are known.

The sharing of highly detailed information should, however, not be confused with sharing accurate stories. Nothing on blockchain-mediated digital storytelling prevents individuals from sharing highly detailed but inaccurate stories. For that reason, it is plausible to argue that improved anonymity only increases the desire of people to share highly detailed stories but the accuracy of these stories is dependent on the willingness of the creators of stories to share accurate information.

Responding to the second research question, evidence presented by Austen et al. (2017) and in Peace Direct (2020) shows that anonymity could improve the desire of people to provide more detail on stories they share on blockchain-mediated digital storytelling platforms. When it comes to the accuracy of these highly detailed stories, the evaluation of previous research such as Bray (2016), Werbach (2018), and Wallbach et al. (2020), points to the fact that anonymity does not in any way compel people to share accurate stories. For that reason, the high level of anonymity on blockchain-mediated digital storytelling platforms does not encourage or discourage the creators of stories to share accurate stories. The accuracy of stories on anonymous platforms is ultimately determined by the objectives, motives, and general morality of the creators of stories. The implication of this finding is that there is no way the consumers of stories on blockchain-mediated digital storytelling platforms can determine the accuracy of shared stories. This inability to determine the accuracy of shared stories on anonymous platforms leads to the need to explore how likely people that access stories via anonymous blockchain-mediated digital storytelling platforms are to believing the shared stories. If, for example, an anonymous reporter shared a news article using blockchain-mediated digital storytelling platform, how likely will it be for the target audience to believe the news in the article? The response to this question is addressed under the third and final research question in the section below.

## **5.2 The Likelihood of People to Believe Stories Shared on Anonymous Blockchain Platforms**

Inferences drawn from Boukis (2019) on the impact stories shared on blockchain platforms on brands have on consumer preferences indicate that many people actually believe the stories shared on digital platforms despite their anonymity. This inference is based on the fact that the only way consumers would show preference for brands whose stories they have accessed via blockchain platforms is if they actually believe the claims made in those stories. Findings of the studies evaluated in the literature review, however seem to contradict this finding. According to Ostern (2018), for example, blockchain technology in general has been at the centre of numerous high profile fraud cases. As a result, people in many parts of the world do not actually trust blockchain technology in general. Based on this observation, it is likely that a majority of people in different parts of the world would not trust stories shared on blockchain-mediated digital storytelling platforms. In explaining the discrepancy between the findings of Boukis (2019) with those presented by Ostern (2018), it is imperative to evaluate the specific focus areas of these studies. In the study by Boukis (2019) the transfer of money is not involved in the sharing of anonymous stories on brands and products. In this case, as long as the provided products actually match the stories shared about them on blockchain platforms, people are highly likely to believe them regardless of their anonymity. In the case of transactions involving money on the other hand, cases of fraud have undermined public confidence with blockchain technology in general as established by Ostern (2018). In that regard, it is evident that people believe stories shared on blockchain-mediated digital storytelling platforms as long as no money is involved in accessing these stories.

From the findings by Gachago and Livingston (2020), anonymity in the sharing of stories is actually not appreciated by audience in both the academic context and in the conference setting. In the academic context, for example, students share stories amongst themselves in non-anonymous settings. In the context of conferences, anonymity has two potentially adverse outcomes for the involved parties. First, if shared anonymously in conferences, students would not receive the necessary recognition for their work. Secondly, since people attending conferences expect individuals to be recognized for their work, anonymity in blockchain-mediated storytelling platforms would make them doubtful of the shared stories. While this finding is not confirmed or disputed in any of the previous studies evaluated in the literature review, Werbach (2018) provides some insights as to why the likelihood of people to trust content shared on blockchain-mediated digital storytelling platforms could be low. According to the researcher, blockchain technology is not regulated in most parts of the world. This lack of regulation implies that there is no control as to what is shared on the blockchain platform. Based on this assertion, the lack of regulation, even without anonymity raises doubts on much of the information presented on the blockchain. Anonymity can be argued to significantly increase the level of doubt based on the fact that people would be more confident to share untrue stories on an unregulated platform on which they cannot be identified. Based on this assertion, it is evident that anonymity could profoundly undermine the likelihood of people to believe stories shared on blockchain-mediated digital storytelling platforms. The implication of this observation is that the establishment of proper regulatory frameworks to guide content creation and sharing on blockchain and the consistent sharing of accurate digital stories will lead to an improvement in the likelihood of people to believe shared stories regardless of the level of anonymity. In that regard, although confidence with anonymous content shared on blockchain

platforms is low, taking deliberate actions such as introducing regulations will contribute to more trust for shared digital stories in future.

In summary, the evidence drawn from sources such as Boukis (2019) show that digital stories shared on blockchain-mediated platforms are believed by people in the commercial setting. However, their belief is dependent on the level to which the products whose stories are shared actually match the information provided in stories. In the commercial context, therefore, it is plausible to argue that if corporations ensure that information shared about their brands is on blockchain platforms is accurate, then consumers will show a high level of trust towards such stories. In the academic context, evidence presented by Gachago and Livingston (2020) shows that anonymity undermines the likelihood of people to believe in stories shared on blockchain-mediated digital storytelling platforms. Unlike in the case of products where consumers can confirm whether the product characteristics mentioned in digital stories are true, it is much more difficult to verify stories on diverse topics shared on anonymous blockchain-mediated digital storytelling platforms. For that reason, in the academic context, people are more likely not to trust anonymous stories than in the business context. Generally, therefore, the evidence presented under the third research question shows that the likelihood of people to believe stories shared anonymously on blockchain platforms is dependent on the specific context in which the stories are shared.



## **6. Conclusion, Limitations, and Recommendations**

### **6.1 Conclusion**

This research is based on the premise that blockchain technology is becoming a significant player in almost all sectors of the global economy, hence the study of its effects in some niche applications is imperative. More specifically, the background information presented shows that one of the niche applications where the technology is being used is in the sharing of digital stories. Generally, the technology has been found to significantly enhance the sharing of digital stories and also guaranteeing content creators the security of their work based on the fact that it is very difficult to pirate content on blockchain platforms. Despite its numerous potential benefits in the digital storytelling context, there are still doubts as to whether a high level of trust can be maintained in the face of the anonymity on blockchain platforms. In this regard, this research sought to explore the how anonymity on digital storytelling platforms affects the desire of content creators to share accurate stories and the likelihood of the audience to believe the shared stories.

In responding to the set of questions presented in chapter 1, a qualitative research approach was selected. The researcher chose to use secondary sources that have dealt with issues related to anonymity and trust on blockchain platforms in different contexts. A total of 6 sources were selected to address the three research questions and achieve the overall aim of this research. The findings drawn from the selected sources reveal that people have some level of trust on digital stories shared on blockchain platforms. More specifically, it is established that in contexts such as the sharing of brand information and provision of investment information, digital storytelling achieves a high level of trust. However, the acquired evidence shows that even with this high level of trust, many people would still not make purchases on blockchain. In response

to the second research question, the findings drawn from secondary sources show that anonymity on blockchain platforms does not, in any way influence the creators of stories to share accurate stories. In this regard, the accuracy of stories shared via blockchain-mediated digital storytelling platforms is dependent on the specific individual creating and sharing the stories. In some cases, anonymity increases the confidence of people to share stories that are not accurate so as to mislead people towards specific perceptions and beliefs. In cases where there are no such motives, content creators are likely to share accurate stories regardless of the level of anonymity. Finally, the information drawn from the secondary sources used in this study show that many anonymity undermines the ability of some people to believe shared stories in some contexts but not in others. Generally, the findings point to the fact that blockchain platforms will need to be regulated and the kind of content shared more strictly evaluated so that the level of trust towards niche applications of the technology such as digital storytelling can increase.

## **6.2 Limitations**

The main limitation of this study is that it was based exclusively on secondary sources. No primary data was used. One challenge that was experienced, in this regard, especially in the data collection process is that there are hardly any previous research studies that exactly address the issue of anonymity and trust in the specific context of digital storytelling. As a result of this limitation, the research relied on previous studies that have evaluated the issues of anonymity and trust in contexts that are in some way related to digital storytelling. Although the evaluation carried out with these sources provides some very important insights on how anonymity affects the likelihood of content creators to share accurate content and the likelihood of consumers to believe shared content, the findings cannot be said to exactly reflect the absolute reality of block-chain mediated digital storytelling. The findings of this research, therefore, only point to

some of the outcomes that could be expected if primary research was conducted specifically in the blockchain-mediated digital storytelling context but cannot be said to be an absolute true reflection of reality in that specific context. The lack of specifically aligned secondary sources also points to the fact that this research had to rely on a very small sample of secondary sources. The small number of secondary sources utilized coupled with the lack of studies specifically addressing the specific context of this research puts into question the overall reliability of the findings.

### **6.3 Recommendations**

In future, researchers should consider using primary data collection methods such as surveys and interviews involving users of blockchain-mediated digital storytelling platforms as the research participants. Such participants will be able to provide specific information on how anonymity affects their likelihood to believe stories shared on digital stories shared on blockchain platforms. In responding to questions relating to the likelihood of content creators to tell accurate stories on anonymous blockchain platforms, future researchers will need to include a number of content creators that share their stories on blockchain-mediated digital storytelling platforms. From this group of participants, the researchers will be able to acquire very useful information on whether or not anonymity could influence content creators to share inaccurate stories. While the findings of this research are not drawn from sources that specifically address digital storytelling, their findings provide important insights that can be used in the development of hypotheses that will be used as the foundation of future quantitative studies.

From the findings presented in the studies evaluated in this research, it is established that cases of fraud on blockchain have profoundly undermined the level of trust people in different parts of the world have towards the applications of blockchain technology in general. One of the

main causes of this propensity of blockchain to fraud is its apparent lack of regulation in almost all parts of the world. If a high level of trust for all blockchain applications including the sharing of digital stories is to achieve and maintain a high level of trust, then the relevant stakeholders in different countries need to come up with effective regulations to control the activity of individuals on blockchain platforms. With such regulations, there will be a strong basis to seek legal action against people that share inaccurate stories on blockchain-mediated which will lead to a lower likelihood of content creators to share inaccurate stories and in consequence an increase in the level of trust the public has towards shared stories.

## 7. References

- Aggarwal, R. and Ranganathan, P. (2019) 'Study designs: Part 2 – Descriptive studies', *Perspectives in Clinical Research*, 10(1), p. 34. Available at: [https://doi.org/10.4103/picr.PICR\\_154\\_18](https://doi.org/10.4103/picr.PICR_154_18).
- Agius, S. J. (2013). Qualitative Research: Its Value and Applicability. *The Psychiatrist*, Vol. 37, pp. 204-206.
- Ajayi, O. W. (2017). *Primary Sources of Data and Secondary Sources of Data*. Benue: Benue State University.
- Alhojailan, M. I. (2012). Thematic Analysis: A Critical Review of its Process and Evaluation. *West East Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol.1(1), pp. 39-47.
- Akhtar, I. (2016). Research Design. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/308915548\\_Research\\_Design?enrichId=rgreq-b7676260af0c460bfda8340e85132094-XXX&enrichSource=Y292ZXJQYWdlOzMwODkxNTU0ODtBUzo0MTQ0MTk3NjM5MDg2MDhAMTQ3NTgxNjc3OTc3NA%3D%3D&el=1\\_x\\_2&\\_esc=publicationCoverPdf](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/308915548_Research_Design?enrichId=rgreq-b7676260af0c460bfda8340e85132094-XXX&enrichSource=Y292ZXJQYWdlOzMwODkxNTU0ODtBUzo0MTQ0MTk3NjM5MDg2MDhAMTQ3NTgxNjc3OTc3NA%3D%3D&el=1_x_2&_esc=publicationCoverPdf). Accessed November 9, 2022.
- Austen, L. Jones, M. & Wawera, A. (2018). Exploring Digital Stories as Research in Higher Education. *SRA Journal*, Vol. 7(1), pp. 271-280.
- Bouchrika, I. (2022, October 5). *Digital Storytelling: Benefits, Examples, Tools & Tips*. Retrieved from Research.com: <https://research.com/education/digital-storytelling>

- Boukis, A. (2019). Exploring the Implications of Blockchain Technology for Brand-Consumer Relationships: A Future Research Agenda. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, ISSN 1061-0421.
- Bray, J. D. (2016). *Anonymity, Cybercrime, and the Connection to Cryptocurrency*. Eastern Kentucky University.
- Chowdhury, M.F. (2014) 'Interpretivism in aiding our understanding of the contemporary social world', *Open Journal of Philosophy*, 4(3), pp. 432–438. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4236/ojpp.2014.43047>.
- Clarke, V. & Braun, V. (2016). Thematic Analysis: Providing Accessible Guidance on Doing and Understanding. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, Vol. 12(3), pp. 1-2.
- Drury, A. & Williams, P. (2022, July 29). *Feasibility Study*. Retrieved from Investopedia: <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/f/feasibility-study.asp>
- Eyisi, D. (2016). The Usefulness of Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches and Methods in Researching Problem-Solving Ability in Science Education Curriculum. *Journal of Education and Practice*, Vol. 7(15), pp. 91-98.
- Fabian, B. Ermakova, T. & Sander, U. (2016). Anonymity in Bitcoin - The Users' Perspective. *Thirty Seventh International Conference on Information Systems*, (pp. 1-12). Dublin.
- Gachago, D. & Livingston, C. (2020). The Elephant in the Room: Tensions Between Normative Research and an Ethics of Care for Digital Storytelling in Higher Education. *Reading and Writing*, Vol. 11(1).

Hammarberg, K., Kirkman, M. and de Lacey, S. (2016) ‘Qualitative research methods: when to use them and how to judge them’, *Human Reproduction*, 31(3), pp. 498–501. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/humrep/dev334>.

Haro-Olmo, F. J. Varela-Vaca, A. J. & Alvarez-Bermejo, J. A. (2020). Blockchain from the Perspective of Privacy and Anonymisation: A Systematic Literature Review. *Sensors*, Vol. 20(7171), pp. 1-12.

Hayes, A. (2022, November 02). *Risk Analysis: Definition, Types, Limitations, and Examples*. Retrieved from Investopedia: <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/r/risk-analysis.asp>

Jindal, T & Bassi, P. (2022). *Security and Privacy Issues of Blockchain Technologies*. Punjab, India: Chitkara University.

Jol, G. & Stommel, W. (2016). Ethical Considerations of Secondary Data Use: What About Informed Consent? *Dutch Journal of Applied Linguistics*, Vol. 5(2), pp. 180-195.

Kalu, A. O. Unachukwu, L. C. & Ibiom, O. (2018). Accessing Secondary Data, A Literature Review. *Singaporean Journal of Business Economics, and Management Studies*, Vol. 6(6), pp. 53-63.

Kivunja, C. & Kuyini, A. B. (2017). Understanding and Applying Research Paradigms in Educational Contexts. *International Journal of Higher Education*, Vol. 6(5), pp. 26-41.

Lowry, L. D. (2015). Bridging the Business Data Divide: Insights into Primary and Secondary Data Use by Researchers. *IASSIST Quaterly*, pp. 14-24.

Maxwell, D. S. (2017). Story Blocks: Reimagining Narrative Through the Blockchain. *Convergence*, Vol. 23(1), pp. 79-97.

McConaghy, M. McMullen, G. Parry, G. McConaghy, T. & Holtzman, D. (2017). Visibility and Digital Art: Blockchain as an Ownership Layer on the Internet. *Strategic Change*, Vol. 26(5), pp. 461-470.

Nassim, S. (2018). Digital Storytelling: An Active Learning Tool For Improving Students' Language Skills. *International Journal of Teaching, Education and Learning*, Vol. 2(1), pp. 14-29.

Olabode, S. O. Olateju, O. I. & Bakare, A. A. (2019). An Assessment of the Reliability of Secondary Data in Management Science Research. *International Journal of Business and Management Review*, Vol. 7(3), pp. 27-43.

Ostern, N. (2018). Do You Trust a Trust-Free Technology? Toward a Trust Framework Model for Blockchain Technology. *Thirty Ninth International Conference on Information Systems*, (pp. 1-14). San Francisco.

Oyelere, S. S. (2020). Digital Storytelling and Blockchain as Pedagogy and Technology to Support the Development of an Inclusive Smart Learning Ecosystem. In A. A. Rocha, *Trends and Innovations in Information Systems and Technologies* (pp. 397-408). Cham, Switzerland: Springer.

Peace Direct. (2020). *Digital Pathways for Peace: Insights and Lessons from a Global Online Consultation*. London, UK: Peace Direct.

Pederson, L. L. (2020). Use of Secondary Data Analyses in Research: Pros and Cons. *Journal of Addiction Medicine and Therapeutic Science*, Vol. 6(1), pp. 58-60.



- Rahman, S. (2017). The Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches and Methods in Language "Testing and Assessment" Research: A Literature Review. *Journal of Education and Learning*, Vol. 6(1), pp. 1-13.
- Ramageri, B. M. (2020). Applications of Blockchain Technology in Various Sectors: A Review. *International Journal of Future Generation Communication and Networking*, Vol. 13(2), pp. 94-99.
- Robin, B. R. (2016). The Power of Digital Storytelling to Support Teaching and Learning. *Digital Education Review*, Vol. 30(1), pp. 17-29.
- SAMHSA. (2021). *Share Your Story: A How-To Guide for Digital Storytelling*. New York, USA: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.
- Sanchez, F. (2020, March 28). *Once Upon a Time in Blockchain: The Revention of Storytelling*. Retrieved from Blockchain News: <https://blockchain.news/analysis/once-upon-a-time-in-blockchain-the-reinvention-of-storytelling>
- Schwarz-Shea, P. & Yanow, D. (2012). *Interpretive Research Design: Concepts and Processes*. New York: Taylor & Francis.
- Sindin, X. P. (2017). Secondary Data: Sources, Advantafes, and Disadvantages. In M. Allen, *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods* (pp. 1-5). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications Inc.
- Tahkur, K. S. (2018). *Concept and Sources of Primary and Secondary Data*. Gwalior, India: Jiwaji University.

- Tan, T. M. & Saraniemi, S. (2022). Trust in Blockchain-Enabled Exchanges: Future Directions in Blockchain Marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 7(2), pp. 1-27.
- Tran, T. & Khuc, Q. (2021). *Primary Data*. Hanoi, Vietnam: Center for Open Science.
- Tripathy, J. P. (2013). Secondary Data Analysis: Ethical Issues and Challenges. *Iranian Journal of Public Health*, Vol. 42(12), pp. 1478-1479.
- Vasileiou, K. et al. (2018) 'Characterising and justifying sample size sufficiency in interview-based studies: systematic analysis of qualitative health research over a 15-year period', *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 18(1), p. 148. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12874-018-0594-7>.
- Wallbach, S. Lehner, R. Roethke, K. Elbert, R. & Benlian, A. (2020). *Trust-Building Effects of Blockchain Features - An Empirical Analysis of Immutability, Traceability, and Anonymity*. AIS Electronic Library.
- Werbach, K. (2018). *Trust, But Verify: Why the Blockchain Needs the Law*. Pennsylvania, US: The Wharton School.
- Yip, C. Han, N. & Sng, B. L. (2016). Legal and Ethical Issues in Research. *Indian Journal of Anaesthesia*, Vol. 60(9), pp. 684-688.
- Yogarajah, Y. (2022). 'Holding' on: Memetic Storytelling and Digital Folklore within a Cryptocurrency World. *Economy and Society*, Vol. 51(3), pp. 467-488.