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Article

Assessing the Decision Usefulness of Integrated Reports of Namibian Listed Companies

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Abstract: The study evaluates the decision usefulness of integrated reports by listed Namibian companies using specially designed control checklists. A manual content analysis of the sampled 2018–2019 integrated reports was performed, using the control checklists for the decision usefulness' qualitative characteristics. The study finds that the integrated reports produced in Namibia are generally decision useful, though the reports' usefulness varies from company and industry. The study's findings have policy implications, such as the need to prepare integrated reports for decision-making. The findings also provide detailed insights into the decision usefulness and quality of the Namibian listed companies' integrated reports and can serve as feedback for companies, especially the report preparers. This study has ramifications for company leadership (e.g., financial managers, boards) and regulators, as it urges businesses to produce decision-useful annual integrated reports if they want their transparency disclosures to be viewed as "informative" by their significant stakeholders, thus improving the decision usefulness of their corporate reports.



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Keywords: integrated reports; decision usefulness; disclosure quality; corporate reporting; reporting quality; Namibia

1. Introduction

In the last decade, integrated reporting has received a lot of attention from several groups, such as academics, regulators, governments, companies, and stakeholders (Eccles and Krzus 2010; Mertins et al. 2012; de Villiers et al. 2014, 2016; Frias-Aceituno et al. 2014; Barth et al. 2015). It is a much-discussed matter both regionally and internationally, because today's stakeholders see a business organization not only as an economic unit, but also as a socio-economic entity. As a result, the companies are under a lot of pressure to go beyond their current annual reporting practices (Boonlua and Phankasem 2016; Stubbs and Higgins 2018), which are mostly based on economic transactions, to resolve wider issues such as the company's integrated effect on all of the capital resources other than financial capital. As a result, integrated reports have emerged as the primary communication means through which the companies communicate the various aspects of its operations to the stakeholders (Bhimani et al. 2016).

The traditional corporate reporting has primarily concentrated on delivering financial data to stakeholders (Beck et al. 2017; McNally et al. 2017; Dissanayake and Ekanayake 2018; Lopes and Coelho 2018; Stollowy and Paugam 2018). The goals of corporate reporting include the ability to communicate information to help the users make informed decisions. When the information assists the users in making decisions about investing in or doing business with a company, it is considered decision useful. As a result, decision usefulness is an important part of the International Integrated Reporting Council (IIRC) integrated reporting framework for preparing integrated reports.

Integrated reporting, therefore, in the same way as financial reporting, has the primary purpose of providing information that can be used to make decisions (Boerner 2013; Lewellyn and Logsdon 2017; IASB 2018). Therefore, providing integrated information without first ascertaining the needs of the user has cast doubt on the value of integrated reports for decision making. If the integrated reports do not satisfy the informational needs of the stakeholders, the reports' information can be considered worthless. Furthermore, since integrated reporting is voluntary and mostly unregulated, the companies do not use the same reporting practices as they do for financial reporting, that are regulated through international financial reporting standards. As a result, the decision-making usefulness of integrated reporting continues to differ from company to company, depending on the individual company's reporting practices.

As a result of the numerous integrated concerns that have arisen in the last decade following the introduction of the international integrated reporting framework (Flower 2015), the stakeholders have turned their attention to integrated protection and sustainable development. As a result, the businesses are under more pressure to move beyond their current annual reporting procedures, which are primarily based on economic transactions, to address broader issues, such as the company's integrated effect and value creation. As a result, integrated reporting has become critical for businesses to efficiently convey their long-term growth to stakeholders. It covers all of the major segments of the businesses "that could be impacted by the business response to integrated business challenges, including new eco-accounting" (Bebbington and Gray 2001).

It appears that the number of integrated reports generated by businesses has increased without consideration for the needs of users (Laud and Schepers 2009). While most organizations began implementing integrated reporting without first determining what the stakeholders need and with little stakeholder involvement, they have had little control over the information delivered in the reports to meet their informational needs. This has cast doubt with regards to the usefulness of the integrated reports in decision making. Hence, the high financial costs of generating useful integrated reports have been affected as a result of this situation (Marquis et al. 2016).

The foregoing observations motivated a study on the decision-making usefulness of the integrated reporting produced in Namibia. The current study thus examines the decision usefulness of integrated reporting prepared by the Namibian listed companies, and to what degree the reports are helpful to the stakeholders for decision making. The study, however, does not establish the extent to which the stakeholders make use of the reports. Furthermore, most of the previous studies have evaluated the decision usefulness of integrated reports and other corporate reports using quantitative methodologies (Dandago and Hassan 2013; Robertson and Samy 2015; Drake et al. 2016; Abhayawansa et al. 2019), whereas this study utilizes a qualitative decision useful information criterion. In addition, the study investigates whether there is a balance of qualitative characteristics of decision useful information in the preparation of the annual integrated reports by Namibian companies.

All of the stakeholders, including investors, managers, policymakers, regulators, and society, are expected to benefit from the findings of this study. Additionally, the companies can comprehend the advantages of integrated reporting through reflections on how they can utilize the integrated reporting process to achieve a better business performance. Furthermore, the findings add to the existing research on integrated reporting, especially in the context of emerging countries such as Namibia, where there is a scarcity of literature on this field of reporting.

Having provided the background above, the rest of the paper is organized as follows: Section 2 lays out the study's theoretical foundation, summarizes the findings of the previous research on the subject, and highlights the research needs. Section 3 outlines the research approach, population, and sample, the operationalization of the variables, and the analytical methodologies used in the study. The penultimate section, which is Section 4 contains the analysis and discussions. The conclusion and a summary are presented in Section 5.

2. Literature Review

Despite widespread interest in the need to produce high-quality corporate reports that help users make decisions, empirical research has emerged with conflicting results on the factors that influence the usefulness of corporate reports for decision-making (de Villiers et al. 2016; Al-Htaybat and von Alberti-Alhtaybat 2018; Stubbs and Higgins 2018). The prior research studies have observed evidence of principle-based accounting standards (IFRS) improving the quality of the accounting reporting (Psaros and Trotman 2004). Other studies examining the impact of the US Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and IFRS on financial reports' content have found positive, marginal, and unfavorable differences (Amir et al. 1993; Ashbaugh and Olsson 2002; Psaros and Trotman 2004; van der Meulen et al. 2007; Barth et al. 2008). For example, Barth et al. (2008) noted that the US companies using US GAAP have better accounting quality than those using the International Accounting standards (IAS), while Leuz et al. (2003) observed no substantial variations in the 'bid-ask distribution between the IAS and US companies (Deegan and Rankin 1999; Alsaeed 2006; Wang 2017; Dissanayake and Ekanayake 2018).

The companies today cannot restrict their emphasis solely on financial objectives' quality; they must also pay attention to their interconnected activities through internal and external reporting (Guthrie and Farneti 2008). In the early and mid-1990s, companies' communication practices involved the use of annual reports (Baron 2014; Herremans and Nazari 2016). Furthermore, as reporting practices became more common, some organizations began to publish integrated disclosures in their own social and integrated reports (Deegan and Rankin 1999). These disclosures have grown in importance, as they provide details on a company's overall results and have an effect on the capital markets (de Villiers and van Staden 2011). Thus, investors and other stakeholders have begun using such information in their decision-making processes (Gray et al. 2006; Dandago and Hassan 2013; Slack and Tsalavoutas 2018).

It is only when the information presented is valuable to the stakeholders that it has the ability to be used to make decisions. The information's usefulness is also determined by the qualitative characteristics. The decision utility of integrated reporting can be questioned due to the lack of a proper context. Wiseman (1982) argues that, rather than recorded quantities, the consistency of integrated reporting should be the primary concern.

The researchers, such as Al-Tuwaijri et al. (2004), Cho and Patten (2007), Jennifer Ho and Taylor (2007), van der Meulen et al. (2007), Barth et al. (2008), Clarkson et al. (2008) and Dias et al. (2019), have established a series of metrics or key words to quantify the perceived integrated quality, but they have not been able to relate these measures to clear qualitative aspects. In general, their findings indicate that most organizations do not include the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) in their integrated reporting, resulting in a misalignment of the stakeholders' expectations and the details disclosed in the annual integrated reports.

Despite emphasizing the importance of disclosing information that is of a good quality, credible, relevant, and useful in decision-making, it was observed that these scholars (Adams and Larrinaga-González 2007; de Villiers et al. 2016; Dienes et al. 2016) did not develop a framework for disclosure quality. As a result, this research employs the decision useful hypothesis, which assumes that the primary goal of accounting information, including the annual integrated reporting, is to provide users with information that helps them to make well-informed judgments and decisions (IASB 2018; FASB 2006; Ernst&Young 2010).

The theories that are commonly used in integrated reporting include theories of stakeholder, legitimacy, and accountability. These theories are ineffective for this study because they not only explain why organizations prepare integrated reports, but also how the integrated reports can be used to make decisions and impact decision-making by users. As a result, such hypotheses disregard the viewpoint of users (de Villiers and van Staden 2010).

The accounting information is only useful for decision making if it is perceived to be relevant and faithfully represented, as explicated in the decision usefulness theory (IFRS 2018). As a result, the users or stakeholders who do not believe that the accounting informa-

tion is relevant or faithfully represented are unlikely to read or even use it. Furthermore, the decision usefulness theory identifies the characteristics that promote the decision-making ability of accounting information, such as understandability, comparability, timeliness, and verifiability (FASB 2006; Ernst&Young 2010; IASB 2018). The enhancing characteristics, on the other hand, cannot make disclosed information useful for decision making if it is not relevant or faithfully represented, whether individually or collectively.

As a result, the users are likely to choose the information with more fundamental characteristics over the information with enhanced qualitative attributes. Furthermore, according to the decision usefulness theory, the users' expectations of accounting information's decision usefulness are limited by cost, which means that the information can be useful, while still being expensive to access (FASB 2006; Ernst&Young 2010; IASB 2018). In other words, the cost remains a constraint in the provision of decision useful information.

The cost of obtaining accounting information does not always have to be monetary, but can also be measured in terms of the amount of time taken and the difficulties encountered in doing so (FASB 2006). This means that the users are likely to prefer quick and easy access to accounting data. Despite the fact that the financial reporting frameworks are designed to provide the information that meets the needs of shareholders, their decision useful characteristics are often important and useful to other users: "as investors are risk capital providers to the entity, the disclosures in the integrated reports that meet their needs would also meet the majority of the needs of other users" (IASB 2018).

As a result, it is fair to conclude that when assessing the decision usefulness of the information provided by integrated reports, similar to financial reporting, it is conceivable that other users would expect the same qualitative characteristics from the information provided. This means that, while the integrated reports might not be solely focused on users' economic decision-making, the information found within them should have decision-useful characteristics for those users, to ensure the information's credibility.

Furthermore, it was suggested that the qualitative criteria for evaluating integrated reporting should be based on those criteria used in financial reporting (Gray et al. 1995; Bartolomeo et al. 2000). However, Cornell and Shapiro (1987), Roberts (1992), and Donaldson and Preston (1995) suggest that companies disclose integrated information simply to please their stakeholders.

As a result, the value of such information to stakeholders' decision-making is debatable, since voluntary reporting disclosures by individual companies have given ad hoc and incomparable information both within and across firms, as well as within and across industries (Gray et al. 1995).

2.1. Decision Usefulness: Qualitative Characteristics

The two fundamental qualitative characteristics and four enhancing characteristics are identified in the conceptual framework for financial reporting. The lack of fundamental qualitative characteristics renders the information not useful for decision-making. The relevance and faithful representation are two of the fundamental criteria. Furthermore, the framework defines the enhancing qualities as those that do not make information valuable, but do improve the information quality for decision-making. These qualitative characteristics were used to evaluate the decision-making usefulness of the integrated reports by companies in Namibia.

2.1.1. Relevance

When information in integrated reports affects the users' decisions, whether economic or otherwise, it is relevant. To achieve the desired level of relevance, the user of the integrated information must be able to make choices based on the disclosures made in the integrated reports. The relevance can be operationalized, using three concepts based on previous literature (FASB 2006; Ernst&Young 2010):

- Predictive ability (i.e., aiding economic decision makers in evaluating the historical, current, or possible activities related to a business entity);

- Confirmatory value (i.e., confirming or correcting the previous evaluations); and
- Materiality (i.e., the evidence is considered as material where an omission or misstatement could affect the users' economic decisions).

2.1.2. Faithful Representation

The economic phenomena are described in terms of words and numbers in financial and corporate studies. Integrated reports must not only represent the relevant phenomena, but also correctly represent or communicate the phenomena they purport to represent or convey to be useful for decision-making. A faithful representation depiction should have three characteristics, namely:

- Completeness (i.e., sufficient, or full disclosure of all of the required information);
- Neutrality (i.e., fairness and free from bias); and
- Error-free (i.e., no inaccuracies and omissions).

2.1.3. Understandability

The information may be made clearer by classifying, characterizing, and describing it in a straightforward and concise manner. However, some of the phenomena are inherently complicated as they are business models that cannot be simplified easily, thus making them difficult to understand. Whereas it is possible that excluding the information about these complex phenomena from integrated reports would make the information in those reports more understandable by the users, those exclusions, on the other hand, may make the reports inaccurate and therefore deceptive for decision making (MIA-ACCA 2016). The information therefore should be disclosed and summarized in a way that makes the users understand the underlying business activities, without causing deception (Figure 1).

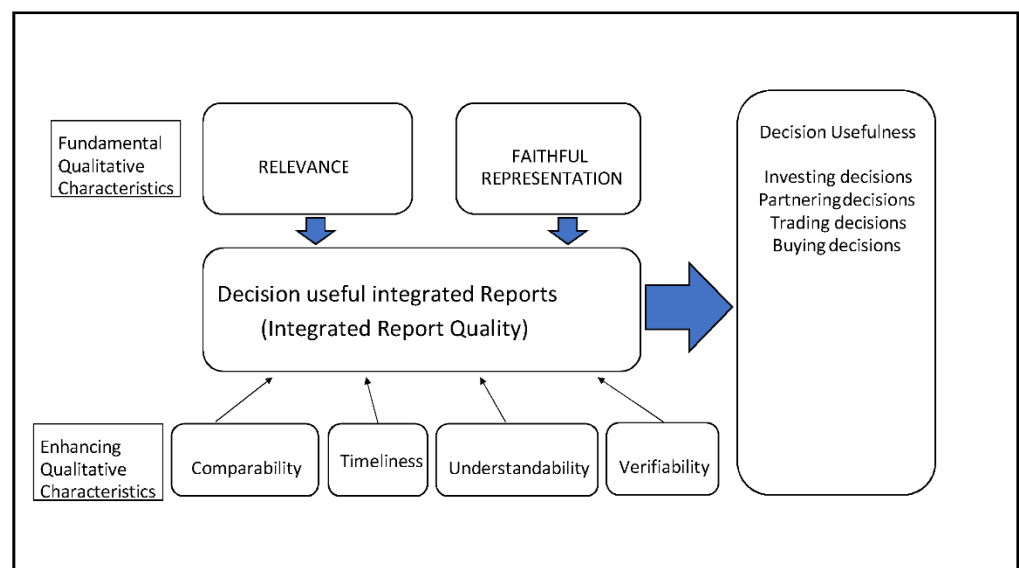


Figure 1. The Qualitative Characteristics of Financial Reporting. Source—Authors' own illustration.

2.1.4. Comparability

The users must be able to compare an organization's integrated reports across time to detect the changes in performance. The users must also be able to compare the integrated reports from various businesses to assess their relative performances, efficiency, and improvements in financial and other non-financial conditions. As a result, the impact of the related business activities must be measured and shown consistently over time and across diverse organizations, for ease of comparability—which enhances decision making.

2.1.5. Timeliness

The users should have access to the integrated information in a timely manner. The value or usefulness of the integrated reports for making decisions is enhanced by their timeliness (i.e., to be useful, information must be provided to users within the period in which it is most likely to impact their decisions).

2.1.6. Verifiability

Verifiability is a feature that gives the users assurance that the integrated reports content accurately represents what it claims to communicate. Verifiability is when competent and unbiased independent observers affirm that everything is real and reasonable. It does not, however, imply full agreement, but rather a general consensus that a given representation is true and fair (IASB 2010). However, the non-financial data are difficult to verify (Dumay et al. 2017). Since there are no specific criteria or rules for assurance, the procedures used by different assurers vary, resulting in different types of assurance reports, which reduces their reliability (Gürtürk and Hahn 2016).

2.2. Quality of Integrated Reports

The Integrated Reporting Framework and GRI recommendations for integrated reports do not emphasize one or a subset of the qualitative characteristics of reported or disclosed information, even though the fundamental qualitative characteristics are rated higher than the enhancing qualitative characteristics in judging the usefulness of information. Rather, they advocate for a compromise among all of them, stressing that one qualitative characteristic cannot be substituted for the other. However, the current study investigates whether the integrated reports produced by companies in Namibia are biased towards specific qualitative characteristics.

3. Data and Methodology

The study used conceptual content analysis to determine the presence of the qualitative characteristics of decision useful information. The method was adopted because it provided a powerful tool for analyzing the annual integrated reports to determine trends over time. Moloi (2015) supports the use of content analysis. Moloi (2015) posits that the content analysis methodology is an acceptable method to apply when coding documents. Similar studies on the decision usefulness of accounting information have also used content analysis (Kamala 2014; McCartney 2004; Unerman 2000; Davis and Searcy 2010).

In addition, the content analysis approach provides deeper insights into the complex business models of companies, enabling the researchers to make inferences and interpret the action of companies in their report disclosures. These were assessed using six themes derived from the decision usefulness theory and adopted from the conceptual framework for financial reporting. These themes are: relevance; faithful representation; verifiability; understandability/clarity; timeliness; and comparability. Each of the themes was further broken down to sub-themes/indicators.

3.1. Population and Sample

The population consists of all of the listed companies of the Namibia Stock Exchange (NSX), as of 31 December 2019. There were 43 listed companies on the NSX, out of which 24 companies were selected as the sample of the study and this was completed proportionally for the represented sectors. The selected companies represented over 70% of the Namibian stock market capitalization.

With regards to the number of firms listed on the Namibia stock market (NSX), there are 43, just a handful of which are indigenous/local. These companies operate in a variety of industries. The companies were classified by sector in this study, and a simple nonprobability random sample of the companies from each sector was generated, using proportionate allocation as per Table 1. However, in a stratum where a local firm exists, that firm was given precedence in the sample, and the rest were selected using a basic

nonprobability random sampling method. This selection strategy guaranteed that all of the sectors and local/international companies were represented.

The following was a sample of the companies:

Table 1. Sampling frame.

Sector Name	Number of Companies	Sampled Companies
Integrated services	12	6
Mining	7	4
Banks	4	2
Real estate	3	2
Insurance	4	3
Manufacturing, Oil and Gas	4	2
General retailers/industrial, food and support services	9	5
Totals	43	24

Source: Authors' own illustration.

A lower sample size is usually necessary in qualitative analysis. It should, however, be comprehensive enough to gather feedback on the vast majority, if not all, of the impressions. The findings will not provide any new viewpoints or information after the saturation of perceptions was reached (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Morse (1994) recommends 30–50 people for the interviews and at least six for the phenomenological investigations, however Creswell (1998) recommends just 20–30 people for the interviews and 5–25 for the phenomenological investigations. Bertaux (1981) proposed that the minimum acceptable sample size in qualitative research was fifteen. This is supported by Guest et al. (2006), who believed that there are no hard and fast rules when it comes to determining the sample size for qualitative analysis. As a result, the qualitative sample size is best determined by the time given, resources available, document content, and research aims, but within the limits described above. The sample size of 24 met the criteria and was considered adequate to meet the study objective due to the voluminous nature of the integrated reports, each running into hundreds of pages and the fact that data saturation was achieved with the 24 sampled companies.

3.2. Data Sources and Data Collection

The data on integrated reporting and decision making were gathered using the published annual integrated reports of the selected companies covering the period from 2018 to 2019. Although the integrated disclosures could take various means, only the annual integrated reports were examined because they were the statutory reports which all listed companies are required to prepare and thus are easily accessible. In addition, the annual integrated reports are often regarded as the primary vehicle for communicating with stakeholders. The annual reports have previously been utilized by academics to identify Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and integrated reporting practices (Gray et al. 1995).

The decision usefulness of the integrated reports produced by selected Namibian publicly traded firms was evaluated, using a specially developed checklist that highlighted the decision-relevant qualitative characteristics in the reports. The reports were scrutinized for decision-making-relevant qualitative characteristics before being loaded onto the Atlas TI version 8 program for the qualitative analysis. For each of the specified qualitative characteristics, the coding in the Atlas TI version 8 was completed consistently with the developed control checklists for each characteristic.

The reports' decision usefulness was assessed using six themes/criteria: relevance; faithful representation; verifiability; understandability/clarity; timeliness; and compara-

bility. Each of the themes was further subdivided into sub-themes/indicators and rated on a scale of 0–3 where 0 means not disclosed, 1 means narrative disclosure, 2 means quantitative disclosure but not monetization, and 3 means quantitative disclosure and monetization. The other ratings that were used were whether the report was specific to Namibian company's operations and whether the reports were specific and had futuristic information. Although the checklist was rated, the ratings were used for the purpose of highlighting the sections of the reports determined to represent the aspect of disclosure (as sub-themes) and the extent of disclosure rather than the rating disclosures on the scale. The frequencies of the sub-themes were used for analysis.

The theme of comparability was assessed using the following scales: 0-not disclosed; 1-narrative disclosure; 2-quantified for current year; 3-relative to prior years; 4-disclosed relative to current year plans/targets; and 5-disclosed relative to industry averages. The themes were based on the decision usefulness theory-driven qualitative characteristics of valuable accounting information for decision-making. The research did not aim to assess the compliance with the international integrated reporting framework, but it recognized the framework's vital role in the preparation of decision-making-relevant integrated reports. The integrated reports prepared by the selected companies in Namibia were subjected to a content analysis to determine their decision-making usefulness.

The data were coded using the content analysis framework by the researcher and an experienced volunteer-chartered accountant who was conversant with corporate reports. The Kappa was calculated as per Table 2 to ensure the internal accuracy and reliability, after each coder separately coded the same three companies before proceeding to the other companies.

Table 2. Symmetric Measures—Kappa Analysis.

Symmetric Measures					
		Value	Asymptotic Standard Error ^a	Approximate T ^b	Approximate Significance
Measure of Agreement	Kappa	0.692	0.040	14.120	0.000
	N of Valid Cases	241			

^a Not assuming the null hypothesis; ^b Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis. Source: Authors' own illustration.

Table 2 shows that a rating agreement of 69.2% was achieved, which is statistically significant. A Kappa value greater than 60% indicates a high degree of agreement. The study data agreement rating is rated as substantial (0.6–0.80) and therefore the data were considered reliable for analysis (Stemler 2001).

4. Results of the Study

The data of the content analysis phase were captured in Atlas TI version 8 and two thematic tables were extracted to aid in the analysis of the data. The two tables were necessitated by the differentiated control list used to capture the qualitative characteristics of comparability.

4.1. Decision-Useful by Individual Companies

The themes were assessed and compared for each of the observed companies. Figure 2 summarizes the outcomes of this process.

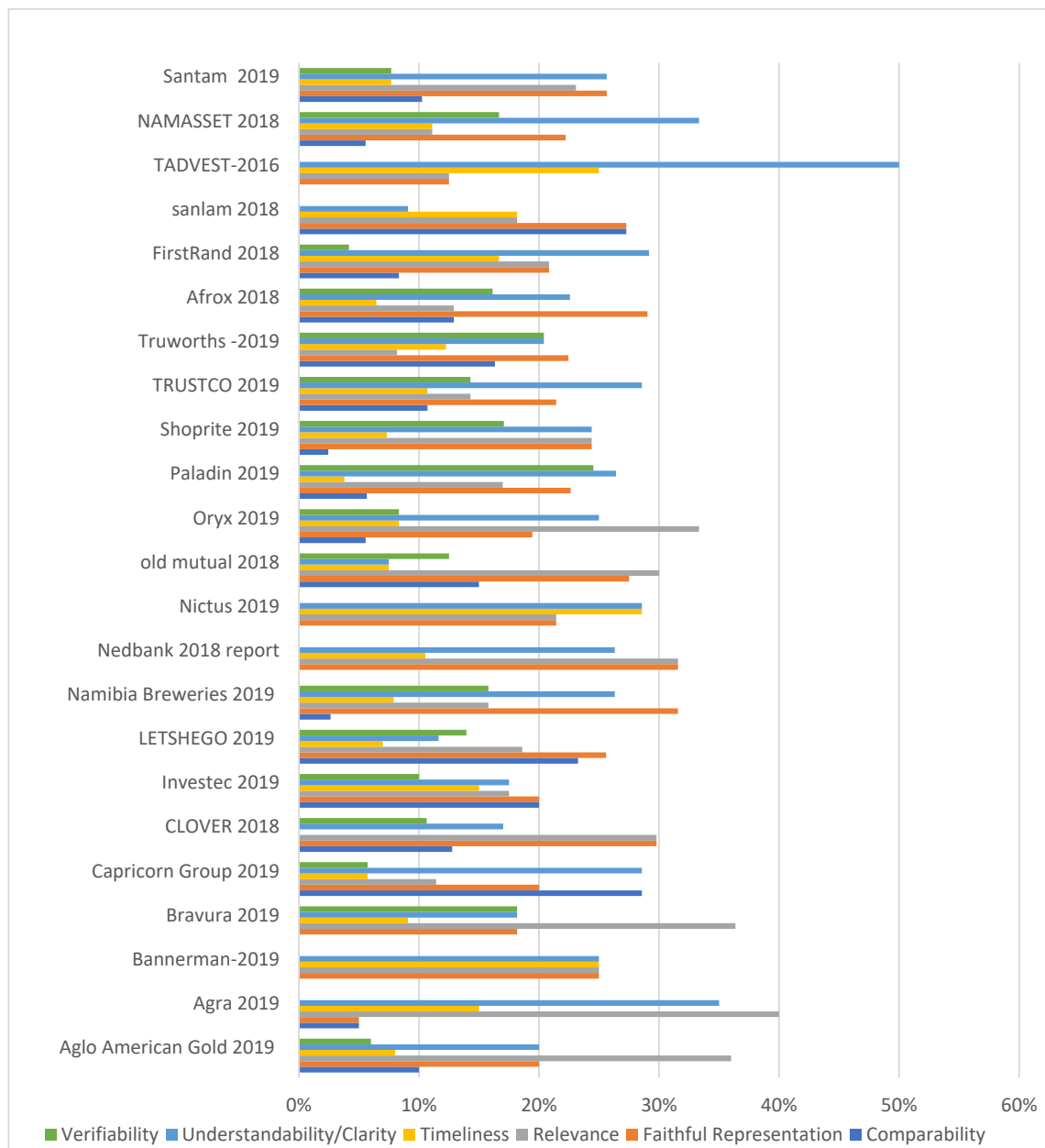


Figure 2. Decision usefulness of integrated reports by Namibian listed companies. Source: Authors' own illustration.

Figure 2 shows that the decision usefulness of the reports produced by selected companies in Namibia varied significantly from one company to another. Further, the companies placed an emphasis on the different aspects of decision usefulness e.g., the Tadvest company report was more understandable and less relevant, whereas the Oryx report was more relevant and less understandable. This finding is consistent with the findings of [Chow and van Der Stede \(2006\)](#), who observed that the different companies adopt different strategies for reporting purposes, resulting in varying types of reports, especially in relation to their non-financial performance.

4.2. Decision Usefulness by Sector

The results in Figure 3 indicate that the insurance companies' reports are more decision useful in comparison to other companies from other sectors. This may be because the insurance companies in Namibia are under the tight and strict supervision and monitoring

of the regulator—NAMFISA. These findings contradict the findings of [Aljifri and Hussainey \(2007\)](#), who concluded that the amount of forward-looking information in a company's reports is unrelated to the market, firm size, or auditor size.

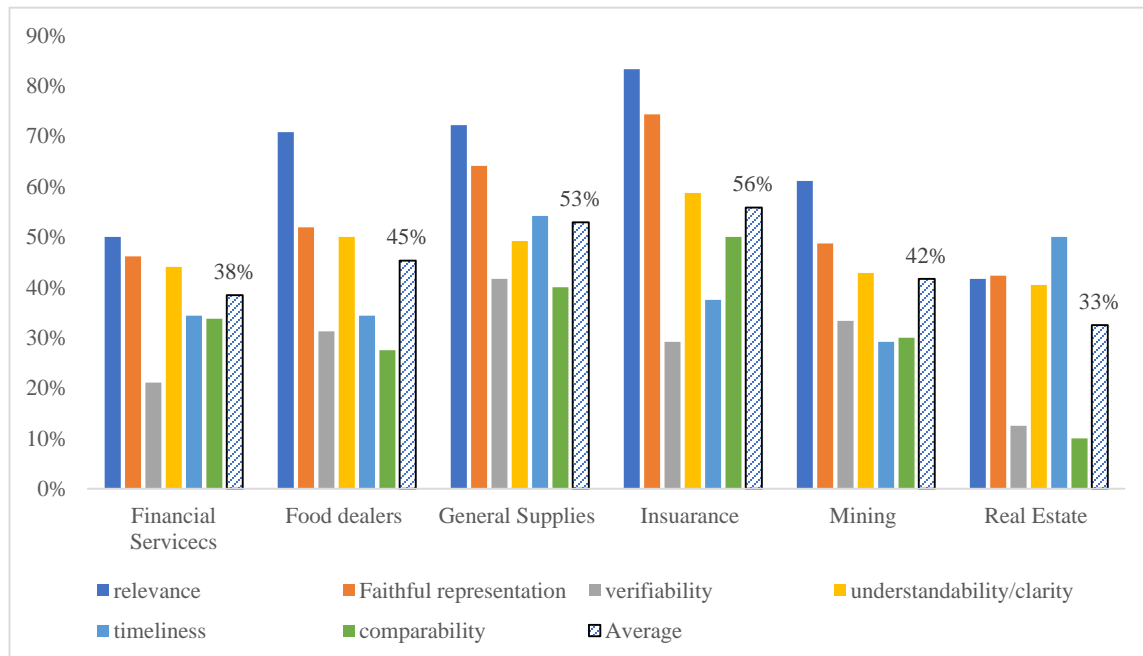


Figure 3. Decision usefulness of integrated reports produced in Namibia by sectors. Source: Authors' own illustration.

4.3. Overall Assessment of Decision Usefulness of Integrated Reports Prepared in Namibia

The presence of the themes in the reports were used as indicators for usefulness in decision making. Each theme was assessed separately, and the summarized results are illustrated in Figure 4 below:

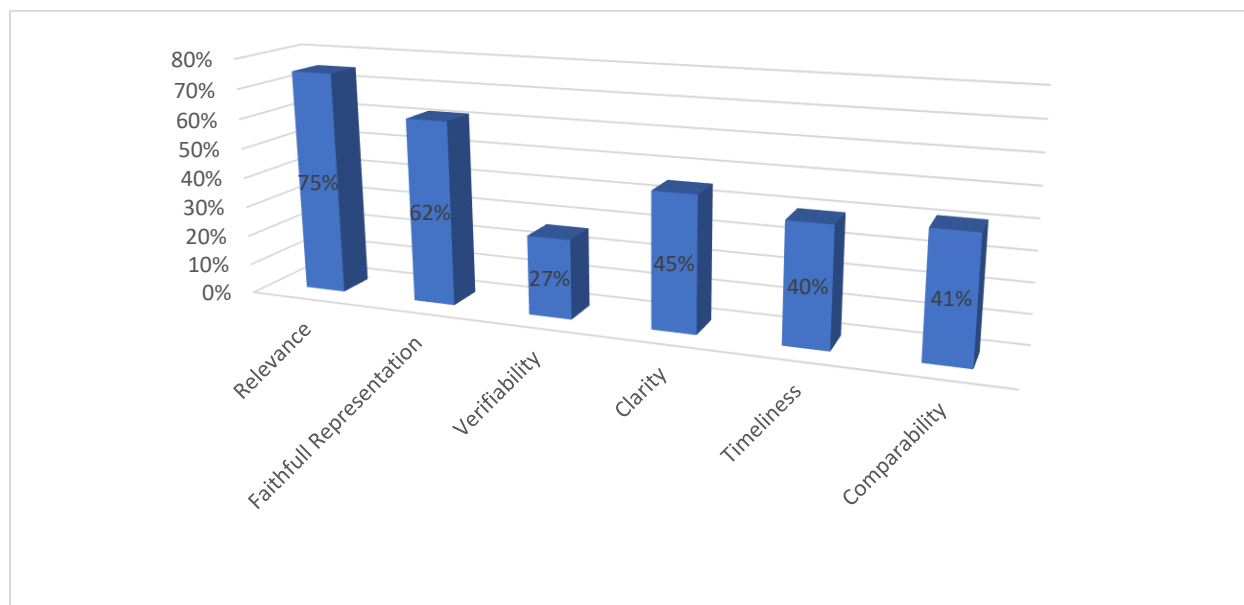


Figure 4. Overall assessment of decision usefulness of integrated reports produced in Namibia. Source: Authors own illustration.

In considering all of the indicators of each theme, in all the reports that were assessed as per Figure 4, the relevance theme was rated at 75% of the report content. This was followed by the theme of faithful representation, clarity (understandability), comparability, timeliness, and lastly, verifiability which was only at a level of 27%. However, the figure below, Figure 5, shows that most of the disclosures and citations for usefulness were only in narrative form (66%), with none of the reports produced in Namibia providing any futuristic and specific information.

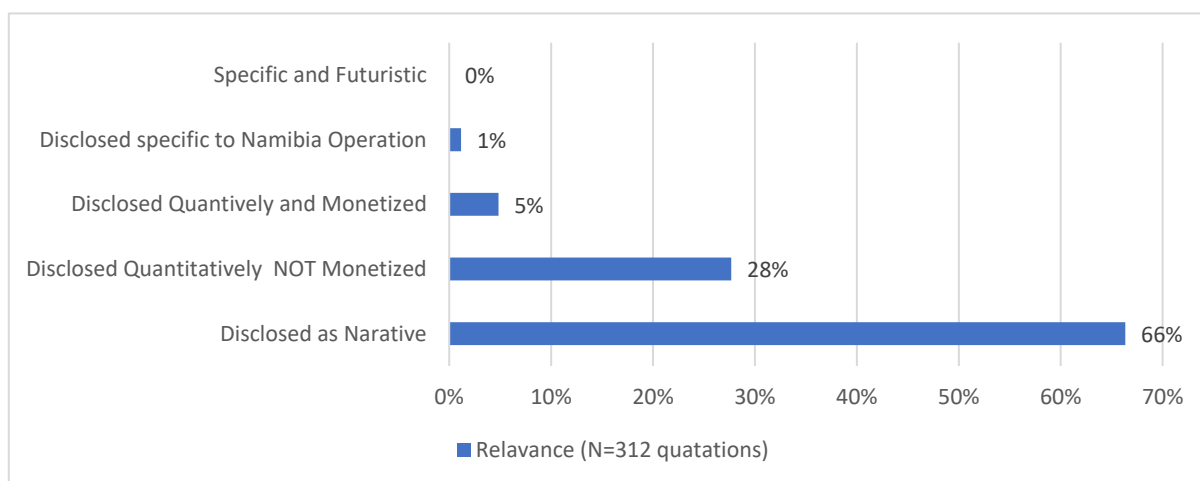


Figure 5. Nature of disclosure of decision usefulness characteristics. Source: Authors' own illustration. (Please note that $n = 312$ represents the number of observations (i.e., 312 in the case of relevance) for the specific qualitative characteristic).

5. Conclusions of Reports Decision Usefulness

According to the conceptual framework for financial reporting, the information is decision useful if it meets the two fundamental qualitative characteristics. These are relevance and faithful representation. The accounting information not meeting these themes, therefore, cannot be useful for decision making. There are other themes representing the enhancing characteristics of verification, timeliness, understandability, and comparability. Accordingly, these do not make information useful for decision making, but do enhance the usefulness of the information.

The findings indicate that the relevance and faithful representation of the integrated reports were assessed as above 50%. The relevance was at 75% and faithful representation was at 62%. From the obtained results, on the objective of the study that relates to the decision usefulness of the information from the Namibian listed companies, it can be concluded that, generally, the integrated reports produced in Namibia are useful for decision making. This finding is consistent with other studies which observed that various pieces of accounting information were useful for decision making (Stainbank and Peebles 2006; Slack and Tsilavoutas 2018; Alzarouni et al. 2011).

However, the extent to which a piece of narrative information can assist in decision making remains limited. Consistent with the findings of Goicoechea et al. (2019), the integrated reports are useful, but the preparers must continue to improve the non-financial section of the reports by overcoming the current challenges of integrated reporting.

The study, however, has several limitations. Firstly, the indicators of firm reporting quality were assessed using the six qualitative characteristics, which were not supported by a consistent matrix or key performance indicator. Further, an average of the score of each of the qualitative characteristics was used as the overall measure of decision usefulness. This type of assessment can be subjective and the use of the GRI standards or other generally agreed standards could also have been used to derive a better assessment of quality. Secondly, the sample size was limited to only listed companies selected to represent

the sectors listed on the NSX. The inclusion of the non-listed companies (who voluntarily prepare annual integrated reports) in the sample would yield a better evaluation of the level of decision usefulness of Namibian-produced integrated reports. Finally, this study was limited to the integrated disclosures within the annual reports of the listed companies. However, some Namibian companies still prepare other corporate reports separate from the annual integrated reports e.g., sustainability, CSR, and others. Future research may consider these weaknesses and plan their studies to better reflect the quality of disclosures in all of the Namibian companies' reports.

The findings indicate that the relevance and faithful representation of the integrated reports were assessed at 75% and 62%, respectively. From the obtained results, on the objective of the study that relates to the decision usefulness of the information from Namibian listed companies, it can be concluded that, generally, the integrated reports produced in Namibia are useful for decision making. This finding is consistent with those from other studies which observed that various accounting information was useful for decision making purposes (Stainbank and Peebles 2006; Slack and Tsalavoutas 2018; Alzarouni et al. 2011).

Furthermore, the study found evidence that the integrated reports generated by selected companies in Namibia are skewed towards the fundamental qualitative characteristics. Consequently, the fundamental characteristics are given more weight than the enhancing characteristics. This is because the accountants are motivated by the philosophical basis for financial reporting, which is founded on the decision usefulness theory, and which emphasizes the greater value for the fundamental qualitative characteristics.

Although the integrated reports prepared in Namibia are assessed as decision useful overall, the extent to which their highly narrative disclosures can assist in decision making remains limited. Consistent with the findings of Goicoechea et al. (2019), the integrated reports are useful but the preparers must continue to improve the non-financial sections of the reports by overcoming the current challenges of integrated reporting.

The study's findings have important policy implications, such as the need to prepare integrated reports for decision-making rather than just for satisfying the stakeholders. The findings provide detailed insights into the decision usefulness and quality disclosure practices of the Namibian listed companies' integrated reports and can serve as feedback for companies, especially the report preparers. This study also suggests that businesses make additional efforts to produce decision-useful annual integrated reports, if they want their transparency disclosures to be viewed as "informative" by their significant stakeholders—thus improving the decision usefulness of their corporate reports.

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