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The mission of God in the digital age: Challenges and opportunities within African Pentecostalism

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Background: This study examines the intersection of digital technology and spirituality within African Pentecostalism. It highlights how the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has accelerated the adoption of digital platforms for spiritual connection, prompting churches to adapt their traditional modes of operation to meet the needs of their congregations during social distancing.

Objectives: The study aims to investigate how African Pentecostal communities are responding to the demands of the digital age, considering digital engagement as a transformative avenue for outreach, theological discourse and community building. The study examines effective strategies for utilising digital tools to enhance faith practices, drawing on the thriving ministry of Forward in Faith International Ministries (FIFM).

Methods: A comprehensive review of secondary sources, including published literature and unpublished documentary sources, was utilised to gather data for this study.

Results: The advancement of media and technology has significantly enhanced the dissemination of the gospel providing an influential platform for its outreach.

Conclusion: The study concludes that, eventually, by seeing technology as a bridge rather than a barrier, faith communities can harness their potential to strengthen faith, foster connections and enhance community engagement.

Contribution: By analysing case studies of successful digital ministries, such as FIFM, the study reveals that online faith communities can nurture spiritual growth and connection among believers, potentially transforming the concept of community in a digital context.

Keywords: mission of God; digital age; challenges; opportunities; African Pentecostalism; FIFM.

Introduction

In the rapidly evolving 21st-century landscape, the intersection of technology and spirituality presents significant challenges and unique opportunities for religious practices worldwide. This is more evident than within African Pentecostalism, a dynamic movement characterised by vibrant worship and community engagement. The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has catalysed a shift towards digital platforms for spiritual connection, compelling churches to adapt their traditional modes of operation to meet the needs of their congregants during social distancing and uncertainty.

This study explores the impact of digital technology on the mission of God within African Pentecostalism, examining how these communities are responding to the demands of the digital age. It is essential to understand that digital engagement is not merely a response to current circumstances but a transformative avenue for outreach, theological discourse and community building (Bogdan 2024:105). By combining missiological theology and digital theory, this research uncovers the effective strategies of influential ministries, such as Forward in Faith International Ministries (FIFM). Through case studies and analysis, the research will identify best practices that utilise digital platforms to enhance faith practices and foster meaningful connections among believers.

As African Pentecostal communities navigate this evolving landscape, this study underscores the importance of developing a robust theological framework that reconciles traditional teachings with the advancements in digital communication. The goal is to empower these communities to use technology to deepen their faith and strengthen community ties, ensuring that the mission of God is not compromised but rather enriched in this interconnected world.

Research methods and design

This study employed participant observation in conjunction with a thorough review of secondary sources, encompassing both published literature and unpublished documentary materials, to gather comprehensive data. The fact that the researcher is a member of a Pentecostal church with origins in Southern Africa facilitated participant observation within the congregations she belonged to and in other Pentecostal churches she frequently visited. This dual role allowed the researcher to engage as a subjective participant while concurrently functioning as an objective observer throughout the research process.

The primary objective of participant observation is to gain an in-depth understanding of the values, beliefs, and lifestyles of a specific demographic (Pine 2009:208). In this context, the researcher became a subjective participant by drawing on knowledge gained from personal experiences with the subjects of study. Such engagement fostered enhanced interaction and increased access to the group, providing insights that are often unattainable through traditional survey methodologies. Moreover, participant observation enabled the researchers to serve as objective observers, meticulously documenting the observations while striving to keep personal emotions and biases from influencing data collection and interpretation.

As a participant observer, I exercised critical self-reflexivity, acknowledging the potential impact of my presence on the research process and the data obtained. This study sought to maintain objectivity while examining the challenges and opportunities of digital technology on mission within African Pentecostalism, drawing upon the researcher's dual perspective as both a researcher and a member of the Pentecostal community.

Mission of God

The term 'missions' refers to the critical endeavour of making disciples across all nations, as articulated by Moreau et al. (2004). This undertaking represents the church's collective activity on a global scale. Woodward (2013:5) posits that if the objective of missions is to enable individuals to reach their most whole humanity, it necessitates a commitment to a life of service, actively seeking to address human needs wherever they are identified. Moreover, if the mission's purpose is to foster unity between God and humanity, and among individuals in Him, then we must actualise reconciliation on an international level; we are called to embody a community characterised by reconciliation rather than alienation (Woodward 2013:6). The mission of God, frequently referred to as the *Missio-Dei*, encapsulates God's overarching intention to redeem and restore creation, culminating in the realisation of His Kingdom. Mission encompasses liberating individuals from sin and bringing all of creation under the governance of God's love and righteousness (Crawford 2008). The mission of God is fundamentally concerned with the salvation of humanity from sin and the restoration of His creation, which has been tainted by sin. This study defines mission as a passionate commitment to God's desire to save humanity, transcending boundaries of race, class, gender and national frontiers. This noble pursuit is increasingly facilitated through digital tools such as television, Facebook, YouTube and WhatsApp, which serve as platforms for outreach and engagement.

African Pentecostalism

Wariboko (2017) and Kalu (2008) defined African Pentecostalism as a dynamic and diverse form of Christianity in Africa, characterised by a strong emphasis on personal experience of the Holy Spirit, vibrant worship, and a belief in the active presence and power of the Spirit in daily life. African Pentecostalism does not refer to a specific church, but rather a diverse collection of denominations, churches and movements, including new religious movements that emphasise prosperity, interdenominational fellowships, renewal movements and African Apostolic Indigenous Churches (AAICs) (Asamoah-Gyadu 2017). This definition of African Pentecostalism is crucial to this study, for it streamlines the research context. In this study, African Pentecostalism will refer to all churches that are Holy Spirit-oriented and believe that individuals can receive gifts such as speaking in tongues, prophecy and healing through the power of the Holy Spirit.

African Pentecostal Churches (APCs) encompass a diverse range of churches and movements, spanning from large, urban-based congregations to smaller, community-focused groups. Mwangi & Mugambi (2024) postulate that, despite their denominational diversity, African Pentecostals quickly acknowledge their connection with others, both locally and worldwide, who share their spirituality. These scholars have identified that APCs easily connect with others who share their spirituality globally, but do not explain how they do so. This research aims to explore how various churches collaborate globally for missions using digital tools. As highlighted in the introduction, they have their origins in Africa with an African as their founder. This study uses FIFM as its case study. The FIFM originated from Ezekiel Handinawangu Guti, an African from Zimbabwe. After establishing his church, it spread worldwide using media and technology. Currently, FIFM is present in more than 180 countries worldwide, utilising both physical evangelism and digital tools such as Facebook Live, YouTube and television delivery services (Tsara & Mwapfaa 2025).

African Pentecostalism emphasises a personal rather than a ritual or doctrinal approach. African Pentecostal Churches worship services are often characterised by energetic music, dancing and an expressive display of faith (Pype 2015:347). Many African Pentecostal traditions believe in the existence of spiritual forces, including both benevolent and malevolent spirits, and often engage in practices to combat or ward off negative spiritual influences (Nel 2019). While not universal, APCs emphasise that faith can lead to material blessings and success. African Pentecostal Churches have experienced

significant growth across the continent, with some countries having a large percentage of their population identifying as Pentecostal or charismatic. African Pentecostal churches are primarily involved in missionary work in Africa and internationally. Sande and Chitando (2024) describe African Pentecostalism as a unique form of classical Pentecostalism shaped by Africa's spiritual and cultural contexts. They further highlight that the label and/or the notion of 'Africanness' within African Pentecostalism stimulates both scholarly and theological discourses (Sande & Chitando 2024:1). At the same time, it is historically focused on personal spiritual experiences. African Pentecostalism is increasingly engaging with social, economic and political issues. In summary, African Pentecostalism is a vibrant and evolving form of Christianity that reflects the unique cultural and spiritual landscape of the African continent.

Digital age

The concept of the digital age denotes the contemporary period marked by the pervasive utilisation and impact of digital technologies, including computers, the internet and mobile devices (Tredinnick 2008:12). This era signifies a fundamental transition from traditional modes of communication, methodologies of information access and conventional work practices to a more digitised and interconnected framework of existence (Vial 2019:118). Commonly referred to as the Fourth Industrial Revolution or the Computer Age, a hallmark of this era is the conversion of information into digital formats (Tredinnick 2008:12), facilitating enhanced storage, transmission and manipulation of data.

Digital technology has become intricately woven into the fabric of daily life, rendering computers, smartphones and internet access indispensable tools for myriad individuals. The digital age has substantially transformed various societal dimensions, encompassing communication, commerce, education and entertainment (Schallmo & Tidd 2021). This transformation has given rise to social media platforms, e-commerce, online education and a continuous influx of information readily available at users' fingertips.

Moreover, the realms of religion and missionary work have also been significantly affected by this digital transition. The dissemination of the gospel has been notably facilitated by digitalisation, enabling its reach across global boundaries without necessitating the physical presence of a preacher. Technologies such as Facebook, live-streaming services, YouTube and Twitter have become instrumental. As highlighted in the introduction, the FIFM originated in Zimbabwe and has successfully leveraged digital tools to expand its reach worldwide. While initial missionary efforts sometimes involved sending physical missionaries to establish churches in diverse countries, the subsequent engagement has evolved to allow individuals to connect and delve deeper into the church's doctrine through various online platforms.

Brief history of Forward in Faith International Ministries

Forward in Faith International Ministries was established in 1960 by Ezekiel Handinawangu Guti in Bindura, Zimbabwe. He received his divine calling from God under a gum tree. Guti was highly educated, holding multiple degrees from Northgate Graduate School and Zoe College in the United States, including a doctorate and a degree in Christian education. After its establishment, the church experienced rapid growth and expanded to over 180 countries worldwide (Gwaze 2019). In pursuit of its mission to bring salvation to all humanity, the ministry established worship centres in various nations, including Australia, New Zealand, Southern Africa, Europe and the Americas. Depending on the region, the church is known by different names. For instance, it is recognised as Assemblia De Deus Africana (ADA) in Mozambique and other Portuguese-speaking countries, as Forward in Faith Church International Incorporated (FIFIM) in the United Kingdom and South Africa, and as Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA) in Zimbabwe (Moyo & Tarugarira 2020:26).

Guti established seven Bible colleges, including the Africa Multi-National for Christ College, as part of his missionary work. He also founded several ministries, including the Children's Ministry, the Forward in Faith Children's Home, the Africa Christian Business Fellowship, the Gracious Women's Fellowship and the Husband's Agape International Fellowship. According to Moyo & Tarugarira 2020:26, 'by 1999, FIFM had an estimated 600 000 affiliated members in Zimbabwe, making it the third largest church after the Marange Apostles and the Roman Catholics'. According to Maxwell (2006:74), in 2010, FIFM claimed to be the largest church, with more than 2 million members. Having quickly expanded beyond Zimbabwe's borders, FIFM has remained 'one of the fastest-growing transnational Pentecostal churches' (Chitando et al. 2017). The use of media and technology in FIFM has facilitated the spread of the gospel to all corners of the world.

Theology of missions

The theology of missions constitutes an essential theoretical framework for examining the challenges and opportunities of the digital age, particularly in relation to African Pentecostalism. At its core, mission theology examines the scriptural foundation for the dissemination of the Gospel, emphasising the divine imperative to share God's message across diverse cultures and contexts (ed. Ashford 2011:4). This framework is particularly relevant to African Pentecostalism in the contemporary digital landscape, as it offers a theological rationale for the innovative utilisation of new platforms to fulfil the Great Commission.

Moreover, mission theology advocates for adapting religious practices and communications to align with the cultural contexts of various communities. In this digital era, a nuanced understanding of online cultures, including the normative

behaviours, linguistic conventions and interaction styles prevalent on social media, can significantly enhance the efficacy of outreach initiatives (Vohidova 2024:202). Future research may elaborate on this concept by exploring how African Pentecostal communities can effectively contextualise their message for digital audiences while maintaining doctrinal integrity. This investigation aims to enrich the discourse surrounding digital evangelism and promote a holistic mission approach that resonates with the lived realities of contemporary believers.

The theology of missions underscores the significance of community in the faith journey. Digital platforms offer unique opportunities for community building, allowing believers to connect across geographical boundaries. By adopting this theological lens, the study can examine how APCs can cultivate a sense of belonging and discipleship through virtual means, enhancing spiritual growth in the digital realm. The digital age offers an opportunity to engage a broader audience, including individuals who may not typically attend traditional church services. The theology of mission advocates for outreach to diverse groups, making it essential to explore how African Pentecostalism can leverage digital tools to connect with various demographics, such as youth, migrants and those seeking spiritual fulfilment online.

Through the lens of mission theology, this study examines the innovative strategies that successful ministries employ to spread the Gospel in the digital realm. By analysing case studies from ministries such as FIFM, we can identify best practices that align with mission theological principles, ultimately guiding other faith communities in their outreach efforts. The theology of missions emphasises the importance of maintaining theological integrity in outreach initiatives. This framework allows for addressing concerns that digital platforms might dilute theological messages. By advocating for technology that enhances rather than undermines core theological teachings.

Digital theory

Digital theory serves as a framework for examining the intersection of technology and human experience, particularly in the context of how digital environments influence communication, community and identity (Berry 2014:4). This study focused on the mission of God within African Pentecostalism, and digital theory allows for a nuanced understanding of how digital platforms and social media shape religious practices and outreach efforts. Digital theory highlights how online spaces serve as new arenas for interaction and discourse (Maiorani 2021:19). This is particularly significant for faith communities, where digital platforms enable worship, community building and theological discussions in ways that traditional settings often cannot accommodate. This theoretical framework facilitates the analysis of communication dynamics within a digital context, such as FIFM, by examining how messages are framed, disseminated and received online. Understanding these processes is crucial for effectively sharing spiritual messages with diverse audiences. In the context of African Pentecostalism, it offers insights into how believers connect, share resources and support one another within a digital environment, fostering a sense of belonging despite geographical barriers. For instance, FIFM congregants can connect through live-streamed services on television, Facebook and YouTube, bridging distances and creating a cohesive community. As individuals engage with their faith in online spaces, digital theory provides insights into how identities are constructed and expressed in these digital environments. This is particularly relevant for understanding how African Pentecostal believers navigate their faith within an interconnected world while remaining true to their cultural and theological roots. By applying digital theory, this study can critically evaluate the challenges of technology, such as distraction, misinformation and isolation, alongside its opportunities for outreach, innovative worship and engagement with broader theological discussions. Furthermore, digital theory can complement the theology of missions by illuminating how digital tools can enhance missional efforts. This includes examining how successful digital ministries utilise technology to convey essential theological messages and foster spiritual growth.

Framing this study through the lens of digital theory helps to develop a comprehensive understanding of how APCs navigate the digital landscape, identifying strategies that harness technology for faith-building and community enrichment, ultimately enriching the mission of God in the digital age.

The intersection between the theology of missions and digital theory

The intersection explores how faith can be effectively communicated and practised in the modern digital age. The theology of missions underscores the significance of sharing the Gospel message across diverse cultures and contexts. Digital theory demonstrates that technology, particularly social media and online platforms, can serve as powerful tools for disseminating religious messages to a broader audience (Zhang 2025:25). By leveraging digital technologies, churches can fulfil their missional mandate by reaching individuals who may not engage with traditional services. Mission theology advocates adapting religious practices aligning with the cultural norms and values of specific communities. Digital theory complements this notion by recognising the distinctive culture of online environments, including influence, and shaping user interaction (Arora 2012:599). This enables churches to tailor their messaging for digital spaces, thereby enhancing their relevance and accessibility to diverse audiences.

The theology of missions often emphasises the creation and nurturing of Christian communities. In parallel, digital theory investigates how virtual communities form and operate. The intersection of these two areas reveals the potential of online platforms to facilitate community building among believers, allowing them to connect, share experiences

and support one another in their faith journeys, transcending geographical barriers. Digital theory examines how technology can enhance engagement through interactive, participatory communication. Within the framework of mission theology, this presents new opportunities for discipleship and spiritual growth. Churches can create online resources, host webinars and establish discussion forums that promote deeper engagement with Scripture and theological education, making learning more accessible to a broader audience.

As the digital landscape continues to evolve, it presents both challenges and opportunities for sharing the gospel. By integrating insights from the theology of missions and digital theory, faith communities can develop innovative outreach strategies that harness the strengths of digital tools while remaining grounded in their theological principles. This can encompass virtual events, live-streamed services and online prayer platforms, all designed to foster connection and community.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

Results

Opportunities for missions in the digital age

The advancement of media and technology has significantly enhanced the dissemination of the gospel, providing an influential platform for its outreach. Historically, God's word was communicated through oral traditions, scrolls and personal encounters. In contrast, the contemporary digital age offers an array of communication channels, including radio, television, social media, podcasts and other technological tools, enabling the gospel to reach billions of people instantaneously (Tsara & Mwapfaa 2025). The proliferation of the internet and digital communication technologies has afforded the church unprecedented opportunities to fulfil the Great Commission. This is exemplified by the application of live-streamed services, Christian blogs, YouTube sermons and evangelistic applications, which collectively facilitate the transformation of lives and draw souls to Christ. Furthermore, the biblical imperative for believers to disseminate the gospel to all nations is articulated in Matthew 24:14 and underscores the importance of leveraging technological advancements for spiritual outreach.

It also highlights opportunities such as increased access to communication, the potential of global networks and the formation of digital communities that support spiritual and social transformation (Langi et al. 2025). The digital age presents great opportunities for contextual mission through digital platforms, including online churches and social media. The digital era will continue to evolve in tandem with human thought and creativity, just as the message of the Gospel will. With these platforms, the gospel message can be delivered to a wider congregation or community without being hindered by geographical boundaries. For example, online churches enable those who cannot attend in person to participate in the worship service and connect spiritually. Social media such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube have also become an essential tool for building communities of faith. Religious organisations can tailor their messages to specific demographics and cultures by creating engaging content, such as short videos, podcasts and interactive discussions. This approach allows for a more flexible contextualisation process in the digital space.

Langi et al. (2025:20) postulate that: The digital age has brought significant changes across various aspects of life, including culture and how people interact. Digital technology presents new opportunities for churches to reach a wider audience through social media, online broadcasts and other digital platforms. However, this era also presents challenges, such as the spread of harmful information and a decline in face-to-face interactions, which can impact congregational relationships. Therefore, churches must adapt to these developments, using technology wisely to support their mission and ministry.

However, this is also true of FIFM, which was used as a case study, as there has been a significant increase in congregants worldwide who have joined the church through digitalisation. The FIFM has its own television (TV) channel, where congregants are prayed for by their church leaders online, and many people believe and are healed through this online prayer.

Digital platforms present vibrant opportunities for spiritual growth and development. They allow for richer engagement among believers and provide avenues for sharing theological insights and resources. Digital platform utilisation in FIFM, such as online churches and social media, has revolutionised traditional approaches to mission. Online churches enable worship without geographical boundaries, reaching people in remote areas that were previously difficult to access. On social media, algorithms play a significant role in disseminating missional content. Bible quotes or inspirational videos often reach a wider congregation or public beyond the traditional church community. However, using digital tools sometimes simplifies deep theological messages into something easier to consume. Additionally, there is a need to create digital communities that offer spiritual depth, rather than merely superficial interactions. For example, large churches can facilitate virtual discussion groups as a space to build more personalised relationships.

Embracing digital platforms by Forward in Faith International Ministries

The study reveals that African Pentecostal communities are increasingly utilising digital platforms and social media to expand their outreach and enhance community engagement. These tools serve as crucial means of communicating spiritual messages and connecting with a broader audience. The FIFM

recognised new media opportunities to expand its outreach and engage a wider audience. Forward in Faith International Ministries offers online access to services and events through live streaming on platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and their dedicated TV channel (Ezzekiel TV). Through this channel, people worldwide watch live streams of the Big Sunday, the Deeper Life conference and many other essential gatherings held in the church.

Forward in Faith International Ministries' innovative ministry practices

Successful examples from case studies, such as the FIFM, demonstrate how digital ministries have effectively adapted their communication strategies. This ministry has developed creative ways to engage congregants and promote theological discourse online. A significant characteristic of the burgeoning Pentecostal movements in contemporary Africa is their proficient use of technology (Hackett 1998). These movements harness various media technologies to expand their ministries and engage audiences that transcend national borders. This strategic integration of modern media has played a pivotal role in enhancing FIFM's visibility and popularity. Forward in Faith International Ministries operates a dedicated Ezekiel TV channel to disseminate information about important events within the church. To ensure that devotionals, Bible study materials, sermons and other resources are easily accessible. Forward in Faith International Ministries has developed online platforms and mobile applications. These tools offer members straightforward access to spiritual content, thereby strengthening their faith and deepening their understanding of the Bible.

Regardless of where church members live, the above programmes and apps have enabled congregants to participate in ongoing discipleship journeys and engage actively with their faith. Due to time zone differences (since both churches accommodate a global audience) and personal obligations, live-streaming video enables members to join services from anywhere more conveniently. Live streaming enhances the entire worship experience by incorporating audiovisual elements that contribute to powerful visuals and a captivating musical performance.

Another significant obstacle encountered in this digital environment is the low digital literacy among APC members and the potential misuse of platforms for non-spiritual purposes. Additionally, data security and privacy protection must be considered when implementing digital missions. Sustainable strategies, such as digital literacy training, the development of user-friendly applications and a focus on building genuine relationships in online interactions, are needed to overcome these challenges. With this approach, the digital age can serve as a key driver of cultural transformation through contextualised missions. However, the utilisation of digital technology for mission also faces challenges such as privacy concerns and the risk of inappropriate information dissemination, which need to be addressed to ensure the use of these platforms remains effective and responsible.

While technology presents numerous opportunities, the study also highlights specific challenges, including potential distractions and the risk of diluting core theological teachings. Faith communities must recognise these pitfalls as they incorporate technology into their practices. Social media platforms, such as Instagram, Facebook and TikTok, have been utilised to convey spiritual messages through engaging formats, including short videos and infographics. This strategy appeals to younger generations, though its effectiveness in fostering a profound understanding of faith is often debated. While using these social media platforms, internet disruptions are prevalent, especially in rural areas, and a lack of funds to purchase internet bundles prevents many people from accessing online services.

Although online churches have transformed the way congregants engage in worship. For instance, many churches now offer interactive services via Zoom, YouTube and Facebook, enabling congregants to interact directly with their pastors. While this approach enhances accessibility, some congregants find the spiritual experience less authentic than traditional in- person worship. Therefore, there is a pressing need for technology training among missionaries, as many studies advocate for African Pentecostalism to thoughtfully embrace the digital age, positioning technology as a tool for enhancing faith rather than a hindrance. By leveraging these tools effectively, religious organisations can further their mission and foster deeper connections among their members.

Discussion

The implication of the study

The implications of this study are significant for both the practice of faith and the development of theological discourse within African Pentecostalism in the digital age. This study highlights the necessity for African Pentecostal communities to integrate digital tools into their mission strategies. By leveraging technology, congregations can reach a broader audience and tailor their outreach efforts to meet the needs of a digitally savvy generation. The norms of online spaces allow faith communities to communicate more effectively with diverse demographics, ensuring that their messages resonate with different audiences. Analysing successful case studies offers practical insights into innovative ministry models that can help fulfil the Great Commission more effectively. The findings highlight the significance of cultural contextualisation in religious practices. Understanding and adapting to the situation can enhance community building and spiritual engagement. These models can serve as templates for other faith communities aiming to navigate the digital landscape. The research highlights the importance of empowering believers to engage meaningfully with their faith through digital platforms. Churches can foster a more active and informed membership by equipping individuals with the tools and theological understanding they need.

The study contributes to the broader discourse on theology in the digital age by analysing the intersection of technology and faith. It encourages religious scholars and leaders to consider how emerging platforms can influence theological discussions and perspectives. The findings may inspire further research into the impact of digital transformation on other aspects of religious life, such as worship practices, community outreach and personal spirituality, fostering a deeper understanding of how faith adapts in a rapidly changing world. In summary, this study suggests that embracing digital technology is not merely an option but a necessity for African Pentecostalism. It calls for a proactive approach to integrating faith with the digital realm, thus ensuring that the mission of God remains relevant and impactful in contemporary society.

Contribution to new knowledge

The research outlines practical strategies for integrating digital tools into ministry practices and illustrates how technology can enhance outreach and community engagement. By analysing case studies of successful digital ministries, such as FIFM, the study reveals that online faith communities can nurture spiritual growth and connection among believers, potentially transforming the concept of community into a digital context. It proposes a comprehensive theological framework, such as mission-digital theory, that blends traditional teachings with contemporary digital practices. It guides APCs as they navigate the complexities of faith in the digital age, while staying rooted in their heritage.

The study emphasises the necessity of cultural contextualisation in digital evangelism, detailing how messages can be customised to resonate with diverse online audiences while preserving theological integrity. The findings demonstrate how digital platforms enable engagement with a broader, more diverse demographic, creating opportunities to reach individuals who may not participate in traditional church settings. Furthermore, the research emphasises the importance of striking a balance between technological innovation and core theological beliefs, ensuring that digital outreach does not compromise the foundational aspects of faith. It identifies specific challenges African Pentecostal communities face in embracing digital technology, including issues of digital literacy and the risk of superficial engagement, prompting a discussion of strategies to overcome these obstacles.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study concerning the impact of digital technology on the mission of God within the context of African Pentecostalism, several recommendations are proposed to enhance the effective integration of digital tools in spiritual outreach and community building. The APCs should develop a comprehensive theological framework that reconciles traditional teachings with contemporary digital practices. This framework must adequately address the challenges and opportunities of digital engagement, ensuring that technology is used to deepen faith without undermining core beliefs. Furthermore, churches must invest in training programmes to enhance digital literacy among pastors and church leaders. These programmes should encompass understanding various digital platforms and their application for ministerial purposes, fostering technical proficiency and theological acumen. Additionally, the exploration of digital theology within church communities should be encouraged. This exploration entails engaging in theological discussions that critically assess the implications of digital culture for spiritual practices and community interactions, thereby promoting a nuanced examination of faith as experienced in a digital context. African Pentecostal ministries are also encouraged to use diverse digital platforms for outreach, including social media, streaming services, podcasts and mobile applications. Tailoring content to suit different platforms can significantly enhance accessibility and engagement among varied audiences. Moreover, churches need to focus on creating virtual communities that facilitate interaction and support among congregants. This objective can be realised by establishing online prayer groups, Bible study sessions and virtual fellowship events that foster meaningful connections. Continuous research and evaluation of digital initiatives within African Pentecostalism are necessary to assess their effectiveness and identify best practices. Such efforts can inform strategy refinement and ensure that digital engagement aligns with God's mission.

Furthermore, establishing collaborative networks among churches is recommended to facilitate sharing resources, experiences and strategies related to digital ministry. This collective approach can enhance learning, expand outreach efforts and strengthen community ties across congregations. Lastly, it is crucial to recognise and address the digital divide in various African contexts. Targeted efforts should ensure that all congregants, regardless of socioeconomic status, have access to the digital tools and resources necessary for meaningful spiritual engagement.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the intersection of faith and technology presents significant challenges and remarkable opportunities for African Pentecostalism in the digital age. This study highlights the importance of religious communities engaging thoughtfully and strategically with digital platforms to fulfil their mission in God's name. Successful case studies such as FIFM illustrate how innovative digital ministries can effectively convey spiritual messages while adapting to contemporary cultural contexts. As African Pentecostal communities navigate these evolving landscapes, adopting a robust theological framework that integrates digital tools with core traditional teachings is essential. This approach enriches the spiritual lives of believers and enhances the integrity of theological discourse, facilitating a deeper engagement with diverse demographics. Eventually, by seeing technology as a bridge rather than a barrier, faith communities can harness their potential to strengthen faith, foster connections and enhance community engagement.

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CRediT authorship contribution

Lindah Tsara: Conceptualisation, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. The author confirms that this work is entirely their own, has reviewed the article, approved the final version for submission and publication and takes full responsibility for the integrity of its findings.

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