

SOCIAL MEDIA AND PASTORAL ADMINISTRATION IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NIGERIA, ABAKALIKI PRESBYTERY

ORJI, IZUCHUKWU IBIAM

Department of Mass Communication,
Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki
Izuchukwuorji101@gmail.com
08060170026

Abstract

This study investigated social media and pastoral administration in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Abakaliki Presbytery. The objectives of the study were to: investigate extent to which social media aid pastoral administration among the clergy and laity of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria within Abakaliki Presbytery; identify the social media platform(s) that are mostly used for pastoral administration in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Abakaliki Presbytery. The study was anchored on the technological determinism theory. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was 3,646. The sample size of this study was 348, which was determined using Australian calculator. The study employed purposive sampling technique. The instrument of data collection was structured questionnaire. Findings showed that to a large extent social media facilitate pastoral administration. Also, the finding showed that the benefits of using social media for pastoral administration were; online evangelism, counseling, publicity of church programmes and events, fundraising and effective information dissemination. The researcher among other things recommendations that clergy and members of the Presbyterian church of Nigeria, Abakaliki Presbytery should endeavour to acquaint themselves with other social media platforms such as Twitter, YouTube and Google meet in order to carryout pastoral administration without much difficulty. Also, Churches and clergy should realize that times are fast changing and that most people have changed their means of accessing information and majority now use the new media of communication. Efforts, therefore, should be made by Churches and ministries to create their own websites and blogs and even virtual communities where they can connect their members and send them gospel messages.

Keyword: Social Media, Pastoral Administration, Presbyterian Church and Abakaliki Presbytery.

Introduction

According to Nwafor (2019, p.387) “Social media refer to those internet based tools and services that allow users to engage with each other, generate content and services, distribute and search for information online”. Barclay (2011) opine that social media make it easier and faster for clergies

and members to communicate with each other, reach out to the general public, foster religious belief, win souls for Christ and get more members. Adebayo (2020) argued that with the advent of social media, it became a strong tool for preaching the gospel, giving care to members, mentorship, evangelism, announcement, fund raising, counselling and other aspects of pastoral communication. The 21st century has witnessed a rapid growth in communication technology which has revolutionized the way and manner individuals and organizations interact with one another. Social media tools are fast becoming effective means of communication among churches and organizations in Nigeria (Adebayo, 2020).

Kalu (2012) observe that no church will succeed without effective pastoral administration. Pastoral administration is the systematic management function geared towards coordinating and overseeing of all church activities and resources to enhance the goals and vision of the church. Lois (2012) corroborates that pastoral administration is the strategic process of organizing, planning and implementation of the programmes and mandate of the church in order to enhance the overall growth and advancement of the church. It involves the act of managing both the human and material resources of the church for the progress of the church.

According to McHavaran (2015) “the primary goal of the church is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to all nations of the world and disciples (the people that have already been converted). This is line with this biblical injunction, “... go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:19-20. KJV). However, the challenge has been how to carry the message of Jesus Christ to people wherever they are. Carlo (2012) states that “this has made many churches to adopt the use of social media to reach out to both members and none members.

Social media serve as avenue through which pastoral communication activities are realized. Most churches including, Presbyterian Church of Nigeria has Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and YouTube accounts through which they communicate to both their members and the general public. Communication is an effective instrument for successful functioning of an organization because no organization can succeed without communication. Church as an organization that exists in the society needs communication in order to achieve its goals, mission and objective (Denis, 2015).

Omotayo (2016) states that in this modern time, the internet is singlehandedly the fastest way to gain people's attention and at a wide reach, and one of the ways churches can connect with their members and general public. Communication using new media; internet, blogging and social networks is integral to pastoral mission and church growth which is the product of pastoral communication. Paul, Nicholas and Mary (2019) asserts that digital communication and social networking dominates the life of youths and most of the members of the church today, making it imperative for clergies to be tech-savvy and use multimedia for effective nature of social media for effective evangelism, counseling, mentorship, caring for members and information dissemination. According to Mike(2017, p. 22)“Any church that wants to remain relevant in our contemporary society, must adopt the digital means of pastoral communication so as to make more effective and greater impact”.

According to Aye (2015) Presbyterian Church came into Nigeria in April 1846, at the invitation of the two kings of Calabar. A team of missionaries from the Church of Scotland Mission, led by Rev. Hope Masterton Waddell, arrived Calabar where they set up the first congregation of what is now known as The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria. From Calabar, the Church began to grow. From its humble beginning in Calabar in 1846, the Church has been firmly established in Nigeria with congregations spread

across the country. The Church has nine Regional Synods, over fifty Presbyteries and more than two thousand parishes, congregations, outreaches and mission fields spread across the entire country. It also has a Mission Presbytery covering the Republics of Benin and Togo. The Regional Synods are those of Akwa (covering Akwa Ibom State, with office in Uyo); Calabar (parts of Cross River State, with office in Calabar); East (parts of Abia State, with office in Ohafia); East Central (Enugu and Anambra States as well as parts of Ebonyi State, with office in Abakaliki); Mid East (parts of Ebonyi State with office in Afikpo); North (covering the Northern States of Nigeria, with office in Abuja); South Central (Rivers, Bayelsa and Imo States as well as parts of Abia State, with office in Aba); Upper Cross River (covering parts of Cross River State, with office in Ugep) and West (covering Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Ekiti, Osun, Edo and Delta States as well as the Mission Presbytery of Cotonou/Lome, with office in Yaba, Lagos (Aye, 2015).

The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Abakaliki Presbytery comprised Abakaliki Urban Parish, Izhia Blessed Parish, Trinity Parish, Mary Slessor Parish, Umuogbara Parish, Goshen Parish, Azuiyiokwu Model Parish, Emmanuel Parish, CKC Parish, First Izzi Parish, Ebonyi Parish, Nkwuegu Parish and Onuebonyi Parish.

Given this background, this study, explored the extent which social media is being used for pastoral administration among the clergy and members of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Abakaliki Presbytery.

Statement of the Problem

Many clergy and laity of the Presbyterian church of Nigeria in Abakaliki Presbytery currently leverage on the opportunities provided by the social media to engage in various forms pastoral communication such as; counseling, evangelism, fund raising, meetings, Bible Study, preaching and announcement, which do not only portray the resourcefulness and critical role of social media in church growth, but also, the fact that gone are the days

when pastoral communication was limited to the four walls of the church. The advent of social media have made it possible that even at the comfort of your home you can connect your pastor for prayers, counseling, Bible study, and even meeting. Social media have provided a good platform for pastoral administration among laities and the clergy of the Presbyterian church of Nigeria, South East Synods.

Despite the importance of social media in pastoral communication, not many studies have been done in this area, the few available ones by these scholars concentrated on radio, television, newspaper, not many of them were focused on how social media have fast-tracked pastoral communication in the South East synods of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria. Therefore, this study empirically evaluated the extent or level that social media platforms were utilized to aid pastoral administration by the Clergy and the laity of the Presbyterian church of Nigeria in Abakaliki Presbytery.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study was to evaluate social media use for pastoral administration among clergy and laity of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Abakaliki Presbytery. Specifically the study is meant to:

1. Investigate extent to which social media aid pastoral administration among the clergy and laity of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria within Abakaliki Presbytery.
2. Identify the social media platform(s) that is mostly used for pastoral administration in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Abakaliki Presbytery.
3. Identify benefits of using social media for pastoral administration in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Abakaliki Presbytery.

Research Questions

This study therefore raises the following questions:

1. To what extent do social media aid pastoral administration among

the clergy and laity of the Presbyterian church of Nigeria in Abakaliki Presbytery?

- 2 What is the social media platform mostly used for pastoral administration in the Presbyterian church of Nigeria, Abakaliki Presbytery?
- 3 What are the benefits of using social media for pastoral administration in the Presbyterian church of Nigeria, Abakaliki Presbytery?

Review of Related Literature

Social Media and Pastoral Administration

The church in Nigeria just like everywhere in the world is an integral part of the society in which it exists and operates. According to Kalu (2012, p.23) "The church must remain relevant in the sociopolitical, religious and cultural environment it finds itself in order to fulfill its divine mandate of mediating salvation". White, Tella and Ampofo (2016) opines that the church as an instrument of human salvation is the starting point of God's mission for the freedom of humanity. This is based on the mission agenda of Jesus Christ which is to bring good news, proclaim release to captives, recover sight to the blind and free the oppressed. Social media platforms has become effective instruments for effective communication and coordinating the activities of the church. Social media helps in informing the people on the divine mandate of the church. Through this approach the gospel of Jesus Christ will be preached, souls will be won and lives will be transformed.

Avery (2014) states that the task of reaching the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ cannot be achieved by focusing on face to face gathering. There is need to combine traditional mode of preaching with digital mode of preaching through the use of social media so as to produce more effective result"(p.20). The church must combine face to face communication with the digital means of communication in order to make a greater impact in the society and to be relevant in our time.

Harold (2015) states that the integration of social media into the pastoral administration will help the clergy in directing and mobilizing the members towards the accomplishments of the goals of the church". .Social media have changed the face of communication all over the world, making human being sources, processors and end users of all information. This is true because social media have powerful networks and their transmission is very fast and effective on many people (Bolu, 2012).

Kemi and Dare (2019) opine that with the advent of social media, clergies and members of various denominations in Nigeria use various social media sites as tools for sharing information about their faith. Many of the churches in Nigeria now have social media handles through which devotionals are sent, and through which people can watch live broadcast of messages to reach the members and the wider public. As at 2014, Brand Power ranked the General Overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Pastor Enoch Adeboye as the Nigerian religious leader with the highest number of followers on social media with about two million followers on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Google+. The study also ranked Senior Pastor of Day Stars Christian Center, Reverend Sam Adeyemi, and Bishop David Oyadepo of the Living Faith Church, as second and third respectively.

Edward (2016) observe that social media have moved religion from the confine of place of worship to the web, which is the world largest space. Social media connect people and make diverse forms of communication with little or no restriction on individual. Social media have removed communication barriers and created an avenue for individuals to actively participate in the discussion that will benefit them. Kunle(2015) states that the use of social media has taken worship life beyond the physical limit of the weekly assembly, which affords Christians the opportunity to watch live broadcast of religious programmes from the comfort of their homes. Social media also give Christians opportunity to receive daily devotionals and messages via phones and download Bible applications to phones and

computers. Wood(2004) enthuses that social media is a strong and effective tool to promote business ideas as well as publicize future events in order to inform and educate church members.

Wagner(2011) states that "the use of social media has enhanced the relationship among clergies, members of the church and the society ". Social media allow Christians to use the Internet to find religious and personal information that can enhance their social status and increase their knowledge of the scripture. Church is essentially a relationship between the supernatural realm and the natural realms, and between a divine entity and human entity. The human entity is a man while the divine entity is the Supreme Being.

The Church exerts a powerful influence on individuals and the society. According to Kalu(2012)"The Church has been proven to be a certain force for social progress and has helped to shape the attitudes and values of individuals in the society". The church is a predominant factor in determining human behaviour as it performs functions particularly supportive and prophetic. The church provides encouragement and consolation to a man in face of adversity. It gives believers impression of comfort and guarantees hope for the hopeless and powerless.

Social Media and Church Communication

According to Lois (2012, p.23) "Church communication means a form of catechesis, instructing people in the truths of the faith. It can be theological instruction or a religious communication ritual, liturgical experience with the rich connotations of solemn movement, singing, the chanting of the celebrant, incense, the poetry of ancient evocative prayers, the meditative presentation of the holy word of God, and the participation in transcendent mystery of sacrifice and communion"

Christian pastoral communication can also be a kind of communitarian experience which invokes the presence of God because two or three are gathered in His name. Quite meditative entering into the depths

of one's soul, perhaps under the guidance of a holy director, seems for many the most authentic form of pastoral communication (Anyanwu, 2015).

It is important to understand that all forms of pastoral communication are directly or indirectly communication with God or leading toward communication with God. If communication means a mutual sharing of meaning, then pastoral communication simply means communion with God. All other forms of pastoral communication take their basic meaning from this premise. It is, therefore, helpful to describe pastoral communication in terms of four different levels as proposed Harold (2011) levels are as follows:

Level 1: Direct communication with God

This form of communication encapsulates the form of communication which one does with God directly in the form of prayer in most cases. The most fundamental and encompassing experience of communicating with God is the sharing of the life, the thought and the desire of the Father, the Son and Spirit. We become one with God. Even though we exist in culture and know all in terms of finite concepts and symbols, there is always a core experience of direct experience of the transcendent which is ineffable. This is deeply personal and experienced in the depths of personal consciousness. To some it is experienced in a profound and mystical way.

St, Paul, in his letters to the different Christian communicates, continually explained the essence of communication with God through God's Spirit. For example, in his letter to Romans, Chapter, 8, vs 14-16, Paul says, everyone moved by the Spirit is a son of God. The spirit you received is not the spirit of slaves bringing fear into your lives again, it is the spirit of sons, and it makes us cry out Abba, Father! 'The spirit himself and our spirit bear united witness that we are children Of God. And in v 26, it was noted that the spirit too comes to help us in our weakness.

For when we cannot choose words in order to pray properly, the Sprit himself expresses our plea in a way that could never be put into words (Holy Bible). God speaks to humanity through the creative presence in human

consciousness by moving human desires, thoughts and actions. One can be aware that something greater than his existence is moving him, but the gospel reveals that God is love and that all actions which express love, compassion and peace building are the communicative actions of God: While the feelings that destroy the people and the creation around mankind are not the presence of God. Humans answer back to God by their yes to the moving, transforming and presence of God in them. God's action is continually present in human consciousness, but this presence is often like the presence of a person in the back of the room. People are attending most directly to the task they engage in and are only indirectly conscious of God's action. The moments of prayer allow people to let God's presence come into the forefront of their consciousness. People can also contemplate the goodness and beauty of God's action in the loving actions of people around them, in the gifts of God's creation in nature (Bernice, 2014)

The sign of God action is the kind of movement that people experience in their consciousness. There is a co-natural religious sense in virtually all people so that people are gradually instructed in prayer and they become aware of God's presence like the child is aware of his or her mother. Almost instinctively the child turns to his or her mother to communicate and the mother responds instinctively.

Thus, all people rather instinctively respond with a yes to the motions of love that lead them to build the creation around them. People gradually build up a very personal language of communication with God that seems to be prior to any formal religious language that tells them how to detect the action of God's Spirit. St. Paul can ask the audience of his letters to recognize the action of God's Spirit because they have already experienced it. Paul is adding to the personal language, the language of the Christian community that has its origin in Jesus, who most of all has taught his followers to recognize the signs of the Father's presence and how they are to say yes in faith and love (White, 2012)

Level 2: The prophetic Interpretation of the Meaning of God's Action to the Community

At this level of communication, the kind of communication whereby God instructs his prophets to speak to his people is what this level is all about. Although humanity have some connatural, personal understanding of God's action that is the basis for a very personal dialogues with God, many are not greatly gifted as was Paul and the rest to understand God's ways to issues. So the few with insight (the prophets) are asked by God to communicate what they have seen to the remaining children of God (Joseph and Carl, 2015)

The gift of the prophetic insight often come as the experience of being sent by God to the people to carry a message to them. The calling of Jeremiah is illustrative. Go now to those to whom I send you and say whatever I command you (Jeremiah 1Vs 7). Jeremiah's mission was largely to interpret the meaning of the history of the invasion and destruction of Israel by explaining that the threat of the Assyrians from the north was not simply the misfortune of a politically weak people but was an action of God to purify his beloved people and bring them to conversion.

The experience and the language of the prophet are different in that it is a communication to and with a religious community. The language used are metaphors that all can understand. Indeed the language may well come out of the traditional language and culture of the people-something they already understand-and then be worked into a new discourse that gives this old language a somewhat different meaning. For example, Jesus took much of the Old Testament suffering servant language to refer to himself, but in so doing he gave this old language a quite different meaning. The prophet gives old symbols new meaning and creates some entirely new symbols for the community.

Usually whatever religious symbols the prophet proposes will be highly discussed and debated by the regions community. The prophet may

suggest the meaning, but the community has to make this meaning and these symbols their own. The community is the author of the symbols along with the prophet. What makes this experience quite unique is that the whole community has experienced deeply the emotional events that can be summed up and remembered in terms of certain symbols. Later generations of the community who are more remote from that experience will have to reinterpret the meaning of those symbols as these were understood by the community before them as best they can. Often, later generations simply cannot grasp the same meaning of the symbol that it had for the prophet and the community at the original time. Later generations may give the symbol a somewhat new meaning (Edward and Fraser, 2013). The prophet has the most direct experience of God in this symbol and through the prophet the community will have communication with God. The members of the community .experiencing the prophet and the interpretation of that historical context in terms of the symbols will understand their own experience and the experience of the symbols. Later generations will be more remote from that experience and will have an ever more remote understanding of the meaning of the symbols. The scripture studies attempt to go back and catch the meaning at the time so that original meaning can be brought out.

Jesus, too, through his experience of the Spirit in this baptism became fully aware of his mission and he interpreted himself in terms of the prophetic tradition of Isaiah. Virtually all of the great saints have had profound insight into their historical situation and saw the historical signs of the times as the eventuation of God's message to us regarding how we are to respond to God's action in this moment of history.

What appears to us to be merely a cultural action revealed to be a sign of God's action, a symbol revealing something of the interior intention of God. Their knowledge and insight is the result of personal dialogue with God, but their message them becomes public, a language that all of us can understand once the prophet explains the meaning to us .

Level 3: The handing on of religious symbols in catechesis.

This level of pastoral communication looked at how the church use symbolic interaction and representation to convey the essence of God's love and message to the younger generation. In this situation, parents, church leaders try to use symbols to position and direct the minds of the children towards God. All founding communities treasure their initial experience of the action of God in their community and see the powerful good that this has brought out.

Naturally they want to carry on this tradition in the young of their communities. This requires that each generation teach the following generation what the central symbols and the central text of the community originally meant. Of course, as was noted above, no one can recapture exactly what these symbols meant originally, and Christian community in the persecutions of Rome could grasp something of the meaning of the cross for the original community in Jerusalem and this helped the Christians of Rome to give this a new meaning in their own heroic martyrdom (Denis, 2015).

Every religious symbol such as the cross will not only have a different meaning for every succeeding generation but it will also have a somewhat different meaning for every single individual. The cross certainly has a greater meaning for those who are undergoing martyrdom than for those who lead a peaceful life. This was one of the reasons why many Christians, after the Constantinian peace with Christianity, sought a white martyrdom by going to the desert to live a life of monastic suffering. They felt that they could not be Christians unless they shared in the cross of Christ in some dramatic and physical way.

Thus, every generation will try to communicate the meaning of the cross and the other central symbols of Christianity to the following generation. This catechesis will also try to help each generation relive ritually and very symbolically the original meaning of the symbols. The

periods of penance in the Church and the experience of pilgrimage had powerful catechetical importance. But all good catechists know that what they are teaching to children may have little or no meaning to them at the time.(Wilson, 2016).

They can only hope to put before the young the external metaphor and explain what it might have meant to the original members of the community. This remains passive knowledge for many people. But at a later time in people's lives there may well come a time of crisis of great suffering and great confusion. Then they may remember this passive knowledge or they may have the situation explained by a prophetic, holy spiritual leaders in their midst. Then something of the original meaning and a great deal of the fuller meaning of symbols will come home to people.

What level three of religious communication means is that something of the original experience of religious symbols and the possible contemporary religious meaning will be recreated in the adherents. Thus the ritual experience of the dialogue with God in the symbols will be recreated. This is not just knowledge about symbols, but a direct experience of God in the symbols. The recreating of the experience in the personal religious experience will be given meaning by the natural metaphoric content of the symbol but also by the memory of what the catechical tradition told about the meaning of the symbol (Emeka, 2016).

Level 4: The theological explanation of the Faith:

This is the last level of pastoral communication where a lot is required on the part of the church and Christians alike. It has to do with the interpretation of the gospel of God for the understanding of many. The symbolic interpretation earlier discuss is required at this point to convey the true or ascribed meaning of a symbolic act to the community of Christians. The onus of this interpretation lies with the Church and Christians alike.

Invariably, anyone can be a pastoral communicator. In Christendom, the interpreter must have a good understanding of the faith to be able to

communicate it to another. For instance, the cross in its literal meaning is simply a sign of a painful and humiliating death commonly inflicted in the time of Christ. To say that this represents an action of sacrificial love which saves all humankind requires an enormous amount of explanation, which draws on a complex theological discourse in the Judeo-Christian tradition. To speak of a discourse mean that one is referring to a system of meanings which has a central explanatory code. A code is the key to explanation such as an alphabet. If one does not know that the signs of the alphabet refer to certain vocal signs in the spoken language, then the signs have no meaning. To explain the code of the cross one must know the whole system of sacrificial expiation for sin and redemption that was part of the Judeo-Christian tradition (Bosch, 2012).

The catechetical presentation of religious symbols implies establishing a relation of the symbol to the present or future religious experience that the symbol is pointing to the catechetical explanation may place greater emphasis on the experiential life interpretation potential of this symbol and on the way that this symbol opens up the path to the first level of religious communication, direct dialogues with God. But it is essential to have some degree of theological explanation of the system of symbols that this symbol is part of. One of the most common and revealing definitions of theology continues to be that of St. Anselm, Faith seeking an explanation. One begins with the direct experience of God anchored in religious symbolism, and then tries to deepen and expand the meaning of that symbol by other knowledge of the experience of God.

Theology is the explanation of all this experience from the God perspective. Thus, theology takes as its data, a revelation, an insight into the complete, systematic God perspective, as well as we can understand the way God thinks. Gradually, as occasion and questions demand, we expand the explanation of the world of experience from the God perspective. St. Paul's letters to the communities were essentially a theology, explaining more systematically the Christian religious experience that all were experiencing in some way.

Empirical Review

Bolu (2012) explored the church in the contemporary world: information and communication technology in selected churches in Nigeria. Using survey method, they studied the opinions of 323 church leaders in Western Nigeria. The study used two instruments for data collection, which were questionnaire and interview. The study revealed that 100% of the respondents perceived that social media are necessary avenue for pastoral communication, indicating the social media have wide and effective reach for the conversion of sinners. The study showed that 68.9% of members of the Church used the social media.

Another study which illuminates the importance of social media in pastoral communication is the work of Kemi and Dare (2019) entitled "Qualitative study of the Use of Social Media by Church Personal for Religious Activities in Ibadan, Nigeria". The researchers were able to study 20 respondents via one to one interview. She The respondents include Pastors and Church administrators. The researchers were able to discover that social media are good avenue to reduce physical meeting and gathering in churches, as meeting and prayers could be held through the various social media platforms. This study is related to my work because it is about social media and church activities. The gap here is that it centered only on church leaders without looking into how it affects members. This current work covered both for clergy and laity.

Paul, Nicholas and Mary (2019) in their study entitled, "Effect of Utilization of WhatsApp Social Media platforms on Spiritual Growth of Church Members, a Case of New Life Church Kenya". They maintained that their finding reveals that utilization of WhatsApp social media contributes significantly to the spiritual development to the church members. It is a veritable instrument for enriching the social, spiritual, mental and overall wellbeing of the members of the church. Any pastor that wants to succeed in the 21st century should be well acquainted with the use of social media for

pastoral purposes. The social media has become effective channel to connect, build and strengthen the lives of the members.

Theoretical Framework.

This study is anchored on the Technological Determinism theory.

This theory was propounded by Marshal McLuhan in 1962. According to McQuail (2010) "Technological Determinism theory presumes that a society's technology drives the development of its social structure and cultural values"(p.24). The theory aims to highlight that the principal element in deciding the course of social change is technology. In media as well, the technological advancement of a society defines its media production and consumption and in the process. The theory helped to explain how innovation in modern technology helps to engineer some forms of change in society or in the ordering of things.

Technological determinism is the theory that a society's technology determines its cultural values, social structure, and history. According to Wimmer and Dominick(2011) the theory states that “ social progress follows an inevitable course that is driven by technological innovation. Technological determinism has two central concepts: One is that technological development itself follows a predictable, traceable path that is beyond any cultural or political influence. The other that the technology in turn organizes society in a way to further develop itself. . Technological determinism emphasizes that technology is the principal initiator of the society's transformation.

Strict adherents to technological determinism do not believe the influence of technology differs based on how much a technology is or can be used. Technological determinism sees technology as the basis for all human activity instead of considering technology as part of a larger spectrum of human activity. Technological determinism refers the belief in technology as a key governing force in society . Technological development determines social change. It changes the way people think and how they interact with others.

This theory states that we learn and feel and think the way we do because of the messages we receive through current technology. The social media enable individuals and organizations to interact with one another, share information and distribute content online. This is the modern form of communication which is being orchestrated by technological advancement. Social media are product of new media technology. This technological innovation has transformed pastoral communication, unlike before when members and clergy depended on face to face communication which can be delayed due to distance, cost of transportation and busy schedules, now right in the comfort of a user's home he or she can send messages, host meetings, minister to people, carryout counseling and even evangelism through the social media.

Thus, in applying this theory to this study, it is reasoned that social media plays vital roles in Pastoral communication between the clergy and members of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, East Central Synods. This theory is relevant to this study because it provides alternative approach for pastoral communicators to use modern technology (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram and Zoom) to reach their target audience. This simply means that they would not have to use the traditional mass media only but adapt to new form of communication using the modern day technology, which in this case is the social media. The issue of podcasting and streaming of sermons, Church services and religious oriented programmes are new areas of social media use for pastoral communication. The Presbyterian Clergy can transmit their special programmes to members instantaneously, using social media. Video transmission (streaming) enables the people (Clergy and Church members) to follow the development of the service or worship from anywhere they are. Members who were not able to attend Church services as a result of other engagements can connect to the Church service through the use of social media.

Methodology

This study adopted the survey research design. Survey design is most applicable to a research work that has to do with a real life situation, where the facts are to be tested for reliability and validity. Since, this study is based on a real life situation, survey research design is the suitable research design for this work. The population of the study is 3,646. The population of this study was drawn from the 2023 statistics of the Abakaliki Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria. The sample size of this study is 348, this was determined using Australian calculator with a confidence level of 95% and precision level of 0.5(5%). The study employed purposive sampling technique. The instrument of data collection was structured questionnaire. The area of the study is Abakaliki Presbytery in Ebonyi State which comprised Abakaliki Urban Parish, Izhia Blessed Parish, Trinity Parish, Mary Slessor Parish, Umuoghara Parish, Goshen Parish, Azuiyiokwu Model Parish, Emmanuel Parish, CKC Parish, First Izzi Parish, Ebonyi Parish, Nkwuegu Parish and Onuebonyi Parish. Data was presented in frequency tables and analysed using simple percentage.

Data Presentation and Analysis

In this chapter, results generated from field investigation are presented and analyzed. A total of 348 copies of questionnaire were distributed out of which 341 were filled correctly and returned. This therefore formed the bases for the analysis.

Extent to which social media aid pastoral administration

Table 1: Awareness of social media

Items	Response	Percentage
1.Yes	336	99%
2.No	5	1%
Total	341	100

Source: Field survey: Orji, Izuchukwu Ibiam, 2023

The table shows that majority of the respondents (99%) are aware of social media. This implies that social media is not strange to them.

Table 2: Perception about the use of social media for pastoral administration

Items	Response	Percentage
1.Yes	310	91%
2.No	22	6%
3.Undecided	9	3%
Total	341	100

Source: Field survey: Orji, Izuchukwu Ibiam, 2023

Table 2 suggests that 310 (91%) of the total respondents use social media for pastoral administration. This implies that majority of the respondents have acquired the expertise and skills for social media utilization in pastoral administration.

Table 3: Extent of usage of social media for pastoral administration

Items	Response	Percentage
1.Large extent	323	95%
2.Little extent	18	5%
3.Can't say	0	0%
Total	341	100

Source: Field survey: Orji, Izuchukwu Ibiam, 2023

Table 3 shows that 323(95%) of the respondents stated that to large extent they use social media for pastoral administration. While 18(5%) of the respondents stated that to little extent they use social media.

Social media platform mostly used for pastoral communication

Table 4: Respondents preference of social media for pastoral administration

Items	Response	Percentage
1.WhatsApp	112	33%
2.Zoom	43	13%
3.YouTube	-	-
4.Facebook	186	55%
5.Instagram	-	-
6.Twitter	-	-
Total	341	100

Source: Field survey: Orji, Izuchukwu Ibiam, 2023

The table shows that Facebook, Whatsapp and Zoom are social media platforms mostly used for pastoral administration.

Table 5: Frequency of social media use for pastoral administration

Items	Response	Percentage
1. Very frequently	330	97%
2. Less frequently	11	3%
3. Not at all	-	-
Total	341	100

Source: Field survey: Orji, Izuchukwu Ibiam, 2023

The table shows that 330(97%) of the respondents use social media very frequently for pastoral administration.

Benefits of using social media for pastoral administration

Table 6: Social media provide the following benefits for pastoral administration

Items	Response	Percentage
1. Counseling of members	80	23%
2. Preaching of the gospel	98	29%
3. Fund raising for Church Project	69	20%
4. Information dissemination on church activities and Programs	88	26%
5. None of the above	6	2%
Total	341	100

Source: Field Survey, Orji, Izuchukwu Ibiam, 2023

Table 6 shows that the benefits of using social media in pastoral administration are counseling of members, preaching of the gospel, fund raising for church projects and information dissemination on church activities and programmes.

Table 7: Contributions of social media to pastoral administration.

Items	Response	Percentage
1 Spiritual growth	85	25%
2 Increase in Evangelism	96	28%
3 Church Growth	77	23%
4 Rapid communication response between the clergy and members	70	21%
5 None of the above	13	3%
Total	341	100

Source: Field Survey, Orji, Izuchukwu Ibiam, 2023

Table 7 shows that the contributions of social media to pastoral administration are; spiritual growth, increase in evangelism, church growth and rapid communication response between the clergy and members.

Discussion of Findings

From the analysis of data gathered through the use of questionnaire.

Research question number one: The extent to which social media aid pastoral administration among the clergy and laity of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Abakaliki Presbytery? The study shows that to a large extent social media aid pastoral administration. Which means that greater number of clergy and members of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, south East Synods use social media for pastoral administration. This view was supported by 323(95%) of the respondents who stated that to a large extent social media aid pastoral administration. This indicates that social media is an integral component of pastoral administration in the Presbyterian church of Nigeria, Abakaliki Presbytery. This finding align with Paul, Nicholas and Mary (2019) who reported that social media have transformed the ways pastoral administration by enhancing effective flow of information and interaction between the clergy and the laity. This implies that the church has recognized that social media can perform tremendous roles in the church as vital instrument for pastoral administration.

From the result and finding of the study in respect to research question two: Which social media platforms are mostly used for pastoral communication by Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Abakaliki Presbytery. The study shows that majority of clergy and members of the Presbyterian church of Nigeria, Abakaliki Presbytery use Facebook, WhatsApp and Zoom for pastoral administration. The study shows that 112(33%) of the respondents use Facebook for pastoral administration, 43 (13%) use zoom and 186(55%) of the respondents use Whatapp for pastoral administration. This indicates that Facebook, Zoom and Whatsapp are the social media

platforms mostly used for pastoral administration in Abakaliki Presbytery. The findings align with Omotayo (2016) who reported that Facebook and Whatsapp are the leading and most popular social media platforms used by church leaders and Christians in their church activities and programmes. Utilisation of Facebook and WhatsApp for Christian religious activities have contributed significantly to spiritual growth, wellbeing of the members and advancement of the work of God.

Furthermore, the result and finding of research question four: What are the benefits of using social media for pastoral administration in Abakaliki Presbytery? The study shows that the benefits of using social media for pastoral administration are; counseling of members, preaching of the gospel, fundraising for church projects and information dissemination on church activities and programs.

The finding of this study aligns with Kunle (2015) who reported that social media plays strong role in the church growth, evangelism and counseling. It can be used to create a strong relationship between the church, members, clergy and its publics. Any clergy that wants to succeed in the 21st century should be well acquainted with the use of social media for pastoral purposes. Adebayo (2020) stated that social media has become effective channel to connect, build and strengthen the lives of members. Kemi and Dare (2019) corroborate that social media have enhanced, improved and transformed pastoral communication. It is a good avenue to reduce physical meetings and gatherings in churches, as meeting and prayer could be held through various social media platforms.

Conclusion

Based on the result of the findings, it could be concluded that social media platforms constitute a veritable tool in the course of evangelism, counseling, pastoral care, effective publicity and fund raising which are aspects of pastoral communication. Social media have enhanced church

administration in Abakaliki Presbytery. This is because the findings from this work have justified it to be so. It would, therefore, be nice if social media can be employed by church in dispensing all her activities. This, no doubt would make the activities of the church easier, successful and everybody will be carried along. As the popularity of social media continue to grow, people would definitely start seeing social media as the gateway for evangelism and church activities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made;

1. That clergy and members of the Presbyterian church of Nigeria, Abakaliki Presbytery should endeavour to acquaint themselves with other social media platforms such as Twitter, YouTube and Google meet in order to carryout pastoral administration without much difficulty
2. Churches and clergy should realize that times are fast changing and that most people have changed their means of accessing information and majority now use the new media of communication. Efforts, therefore, should be made by Churches and ministries to create their own websites and blogs and even virtual communities where they can connect their members and send them gospel messages.
3. It is recommended that the clergy and laity should harness the opportunities social media have provided for pastoral communication and maximize them to the fullest.

References

- Adebayo, O.(2020). Towards the possibility of Internet ministry as an alternative pastoral ministry in Nigeria during the COVID-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Information Technology and Language Studies*, 4(2), 12-26.

- Adebayo, O. (2020). WhatsApp messenger: Timelines, features, and usages in Christian ministries. Raleigh: Lulu Press, Inc.
- Adebayo, O. (2009). Ministering through the Internet: An essential guide. Ibadan: Charisa Books and Publishing.
- Adebayo, O. (2012). Uses of Facebook for pastoral communication. Raleigh: Lulu Press, Inc.
- Avery, D.(2014). The church and communication. San Francisco: Harper & Row.
- Aye, E.(2015). Presbyterian church in Nigeria. Rivers: Unity Press.
- Barclay, W.(2011). Communicating the gospel. Toronto: St. Andrews Press.
- Bernice, J. (2014). Pastoral communication and christian counseling. Calabar: Presby Press.
- Bolu, C. (2012). The church in the contemporary world: Information and communication technology in church communication for growth: A case study. *Journal of Communication and media studies*, 4 (4), 80-94. DOI: 10.5897/JMCS11.087 Retrieved from <http://www.academicjournals.org/JMCS>.
- Bosch, D.(2012). Transforming mission; Paradigm shift in pastoral communication. New York: Mary Knoll Orbis.
- Brandpower, (2014). Nigerian churches most active on social media. Retrieved from <https://www.brandpowerng.com/nigerianchurchesmost-active-on-social>.
- Carlo, M. (2012). Communicating Christ to the world. Kansas: Shed Ward.
- Cheong, P.&Ess, C. (2011). Religion 2.0? Relational and hybridizing pathways in religion, Social and culture. Retrieved from http://www.peterlang.com/download/extract/60410/extract_311474.pdf 10.

- Cheong, P.& Poon, J. (2009). Weaving webs of faith: Examining Internet use and religious communication among Chinese protestant transmigrants. *Journal of International and Intercultural communication*, 2(3), 189-207.
- Denis, L. (2015). Preach the word. Wooler Street; Evangelical Press.
- Edward, D. & Fraser, D.(2013). Planning strategies for Pastoral Communication and world evangelization. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Emeka, G.(2016). The church and cyber space; Making Impact through Digital Communication. Imo: Heartland Publishers.
- Graham, C. (2011). Mission today; An introduction to Pastoral Communication Studies. London: Lowe Press.
- Harold, T. (2015). Tend my sheep; A guide to pastoral communication and counseling. London: SPCK.
- Healey, K. (2011). The spirit of networks: New media and the changing role of religion in American public life. Retrieved From http://www.ideals.illinois.edu/bitstream/handle/2142/24142/Healey_Kevin.pdf?sequence=18.
- Joseph, B. & Carl, M.(2015). Communicating faith through the social media: Theological reflection and pastoral implications. Malta: Kullura Media.
- Kalu, E.(2012). The church in the society; Mediating reforms through social communication. Aba: Tidyhouse.
- Kemi, O., & Dare, R. (2019). Qualitative study of the use of social media by church personnel for religious activities in Ibadan, Nigeria. *African Journal for the Psychological Study of Social Issues* . 22(3)189-201.
- Kunle, B. (2015). Effect of social media on the church. A paper presented at the 2014 annual conference of theological friends and fellows. *A conference organized by the Redeemed Christian Bible College, Lagos*.

- Lamin, S. (2012). West African Christianity: The religious impact. New York: Orbis Press.
- Lois, Fuller (2012). Going to the Nations. Plateau: ACT Bookshops.
- McQuail, D. (2010). McQuail's mass communication theory. (6th Ed.). London: SAGE Publications.
- Mchavarane, Donald (2015). Understanding church growth. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Mike, B. (2017). Passion for Jesus. Maryland: Charisma House.
- Nwafor, K. (2019). Understanding the dynamics of history and development of the mass media in Nigeria. Abakaliki: L & D Chocho Ventures.
- Omotayo, F.O. (2016). Adoption and use of information and communication technologies by Pentecostal churches in Ibadan, Nigeria. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, 1-12.
- Paul, K., Nicholas, M., & Mary, N. (2019). Effect of utilization of WhatsApp social media on spiritual growth of church members: A case of new life church Kenya. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 3(1), 45-77.
- Wagner, P. (2011). Frontiers in pastoral communication for mission strategy. Chicago: Moody Press.
- White, P., Tella, F., & Ampofo, M. (2016). A Missional study on the use of social media (Facebook) by Some Ghanaian Pentecostal pastors. *KOER Bulletin for Christian Scholarship*, 81(2), 1-8 Available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.19108/koers.81.2.225>.
- White, R. (2012). Introduction to pastoral communication. Enugu: Bigard Memorial Seminary.
- Wigand, R. (2011). Taming the social network jungle: from web2.0 to social media. in: *Proceedings of the Americas conference on information systems*, pp. 416.

- Williams, T. C.(2008). A changing worship experience: The emergence of media technology and contemporary worship in an evangelical church. Florida: Florida State University.
- Wilson, S. (2016). The future of pastoral communication; Reaching the unreached people. Jos : Noble Publishers.
- Wimmer, R. & Dominick, J. (2011). Mass Media Research: An introduction(9th ed.) Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.
- Wood, A. & Smith, J. (2004). Online communication: Linking technology, identity and culture. New York: Routledg