

Digital Evangelism and the Mediatization of Nigerian Pentecostalism: New Media and the Transformation of Religious Communication in the Twenty-First Century

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Abstract

The rapid proliferation of digital communication technologies has significantly reshaped the structure and practice of religion worldwide. Nigerian Pentecostal churches have emerged as particularly innovative adopters of new media platforms for evangelism, religious instruction, and global networking. This article examines how digital media—including social networking platforms, livestreaming technologies, and digital broadcasting systems—have reshaped religious authority, worship practices, and transnational expansion within Nigerian Pentecostalism. Drawing on mediatization theory, globalisation theory, and religious economy theory, the study analyses the digital communication strategies of major Nigerian Pentecostal ministries. The article argues that digital evangelism has enabled Nigerian Pentecostal churches to transcend geographical boundaries and build global religious communities, while also generating new challenges, including commercialisation, exploitation, doctrinal fragmentation, and the virtualisation of worship, which leads to the fragmentation of African community life. The study contributes to the growing scholarship on digital religion and the globalisation of African Christianity.

Keywords: Digital religion, Nigerian Pentecostalism, new media, globalisation, digital evangelism

Introduction

The relationship between religion and communication technologies has historically been dynamic. From the use of the printing press during the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century to the emergence of radio and television evangelism in the twentieth century, religious movements have consistently adopted new technologies to disseminate their teachings and expand their influence (Eisenstein, 1979; Hoover, 2006). Eisenstein argues that the printing press was central to the Protestant Reformation because it facilitated the mass circulation of biblical texts, theological arguments and reformist ideas. Hoover introduces the idea of mediated religion, in which religious identities, communities and authority are negotiated through media forms.

In the twenty-first century, the introduction of digital communication technologies has further transformed religious life. The rise of the internet, social media platforms, livestreaming services, and mobile applications has created new spaces for religious interaction and participation. These developments have led scholars to speak of the digitalisation or mediatisation of religion (Campbell 2013; Hjarvard 2011). According to Hjarvard, who developed the concept of mediatisation of religion, media are not just channels for transmitting religious messages but have become cultural environments that influence religious authority, identities and experiences.

Within Africa, Nigerian Pentecostalism has become one of the most visible examples of religion's engagement with digital technologies. Since the late twentieth century, Nigerian Pentecostal churches have expanded rapidly both within Nigeria and across the global diaspora. Ojo (2006) examines the emergence and growth of charismatic and Pentecostal movements in Nigeria, arguing that these movements represent a major transformation in Nigerian Christianity. Their growth has increasingly relied on mass media and digital communication platforms.

In Nigeria, Pentecostal churches have emerged as leading adopters of these technologies. Through online worship services, digital crusades, and social media engagement, Nigerian Pentecostal leaders now reach global audiences without physically leaving their local environment. These audiences become active participants in producing and sharing meanings (Jenkins, 2011). As a result, digital evangelism has become a defining feature of contemporary Nigerian Christianity.

Scholars such as Afe Adogame, Ogbu Kalu, J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, and Ruth Marshall have highlighted the dynamic relationship between Pentecostalism, globalisation, and modern communication technologies. Building on these insights, this article explores the ways new media have transformed Nigerian Pentecostal evangelism and religious authority.

Prominent Nigerian Pentecostal ministries such as the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Living Faith Church Worldwide, Mountain of Fire Ministry, and Christ Embassy have developed sophisticated media infrastructure that includes satellite television networks, online streaming services, and social media outreach.

This article explores how new media technologies have reshaped the practice of Pentecostal evangelism in Nigeria and contributed to the globalisation of African Christianity, including the gradual erasure of the concept of Ubuntu (African communal life), which is considered one of the challenges of using digital media. John Mbiti, one of the most influential scholars of African religious thought, identified the Ubuntu ('I am because we are') concept as an African worldview that is fundamentally communal rather than individualistic. He argued that human existence is inseparable from community, ancestors and social relationships (Mbiti, 1969). This concept emphasises humanity, interconnectedness, communal identity, compassion, reciprocity and moral responsibility. Scholars examining Ubuntu and African Christianity argue that the concept provides an important bridge between African indigenous values and Christian theology, but with the era of globalisation, particularly the use of digital media, the concept is gradually fading away.

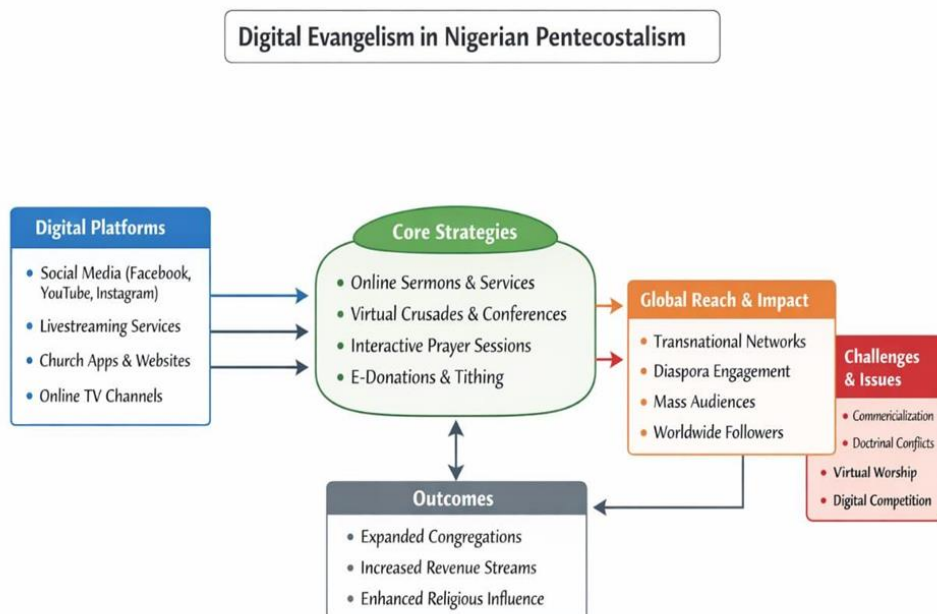


Figure 1: Digital Evangelism diagram

Literature Review: Media, Religion, and African Pentecostalism

A literature review on media, religion, and African Pentecostalism examines scholarly discussions of how communication technologies – radio, television, and digital media – shape Pentecostal religious practices, identities, and expansion in Africa. Omenyo (2012) examines African Christianity through the lens of transformation in identity, spirituality, worldview, and social belonging, which are made possible by the availability of religious goods and services (Stark & Finke, 2000).

The relationship between media and religion has become a major focus of scholarly inquiry in the sociology of religion and media studies. With the rapid growth of African Pentecostalism, scholars increasingly examine how Pentecostal Churches use media technologies to disseminate religious messages, expand congregations, and shape public discourse. The intersection of media and religion has produced what scholars describe as ‘mediatised religion’ or ‘digital religion’, in which religious practices and identities are mediated through communication technologies (Horsfield, 2015). Horsfield argued that media are not neutral channels but active forces that shape the development of Christianity.

African Pentecostalism has been particularly responsive to media innovations, using broadcasting, print media, and digital platforms to expand its influence locally and globally. Scholars therefore explore how media shape Pentecostal theology, worship practices, evangelism, and religious authority in African contexts. According to Hackett (1998), Pentecostalism has successfully used the media to spread its ideologies.

The relationship between media and religion has attracted growing scholarly attention in recent decades. Scholars argue that modern communication technologies reshape religious authority, ritual practices, and institutional organisation (Hoover, 2006; Meyer, 2015).

Research on digital religion highlights how online environments create hybrid spaces where religious experiences unfold both online and offline (Campbell, 2016). Digital platforms enable new forms of participation, allowing believers to interact with religious leaders and with one another in networked communities.

In African Christianity studies, scholars such as Ogbu Kalu and Afe Adogame emphasise that Pentecostal movements are particularly compatible with media technologies because of their emphasis on charismatic preaching, testimonies, and miracles, among other dramatic religious experiences. Other scholars, such as Paul Gifford and Birgit Meyer, have highlighted the central role of media in the growth of Pentecostal Christianity across Africa.

Similarly, J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu argues that Pentecostalism’s performative worship style lends itself naturally to visual media formats such as television and online streaming.

Studies of Nigerian Pentecostalism also highlight the role of religious media in extending Pentecostal influence beyond Africa. According to Ruth Marshall, in her work 'Political Spiritualities: The Pentecostal revolution in Nigeria', Pentecostal media networks function as powerful instruments for disseminating religious ideology and constructing global religious identities (Marshall, 2009).

Theoretical Framework

This study draws on three key sociological frameworks: mediatization theory, globalisation theory, and religious economy theory.

Mediatization Theory

Mediatization theory examines how media technologies influence the structures and practices of social institutions. According to Stig Hjarvard (2011), religious institutions increasingly adapt their practices to the logic of media communication, and media have become an independent social institution that shapes how religion is communicated and experienced within a specific cultural setting.

In Africa, religious groups increasingly adapt their messages to suit their media formats, such as television sermons, religious advertising and online worship services. Media thus become spaces where religion is performed and negotiated.

Studies of African Christianity show that media logic shapes how religious experiences are packaged and presented to audiences. Religious activities and products, such as healing, deliverance and prophecy, are frequently broadcast to attract viewers and to create religious legitimacy. These religious products have also contributed significantly to the expansion of Nigerian Pentecostalism (Gaiya, 2002). Media platforms therefore function as arenas for evangelism, image-building, and religious competition.

In the context of Nigerian Pentecostalism, sermons, healing services, and testimonies are often tailored to digital broadcasting formats that emphasise visual spectacle and emotional engagement, designed to attract more followers.

Globalization Theory

Globalisation theory refers to the process by which economic, political, cultural and social interactions increasingly operate on a global scale. Scholars such as Anthony Giddens, Roland Robertson, Arjun Appadurai and Manuel Castells have contributed significantly to this theoretical framework. Anthony Giddens describes globalisation as the intensification of worldwide social relations, in which local events are shaped by global interactions (Giddens, 1990). In the context of religion, this means that religious

movements are no longer confined to local communities but participate in global networks, enabling cross-cultural religious development.

Roland Robertson introduces the concept of ‘globalisation’, which explains how global ideas are adapted to local cultural contexts. Pentecostal churches often adopt global media strategies while tailoring their messages to local audiences (Robertson, 1992).

Globalisation theory highlights the increasing interconnectedness of societies through technological networks. Manuel Castells (1996) describes contemporary society as one in which information flows across global communication systems, thereby capturing the idea of the world as a global village. This theory provides a useful framework for understanding how religious movements expand and interact across borders through modern communication technologies. In the contemporary era, digital media has become a powerful instrument of global religious circulation, enabling religious ideas, practices and identities to transcend geographical limitations. It has also helped shape religious authority, community, and spiritual rituals (Cheong, 2017).

Scholars argue that Pentecostalism is inherently transnational and adaptable, making it particularly well suited to global communication networks. Through platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, livestreaming services, podcasts, and online meetings, Pentecostal ministries can reach global audiences, build transnational communities, and reinforce charismatic authority.

Digital technologies enable Nigerian Pentecostal churches to sustain transnational religious networks linking congregations across Africa, Europe, and North America.

This theoretical perspective helps explain how Pentecostal churches have used digital media to build transnational religious networks.

Religious Economy Theory

Rodney Stark and Roger Finke are the most influential advocates of the Religious Economy Model. They argue that religious behaviour can be understood through the lens of rational choice principles - people seek rewards such as meaning, salvation, hope and community by aligning their faith with religious organisations (Stark & Finke, 2000). The duo describe these benefits as religious commodities.

The religious economy theory has become an important framework in the sociology of religion for explaining the growth, competition and vitality of religious movements in modern societies. The theory conceptualises religion as operating within a market-like environment where religious organisations compete for adherents, resources and influence. This is done by offering spiritual goods and services for sale (healing, miracles, deliverance,

prosperity, etc.). Within this framework, media, particularly digital media, function as strategic tools that religious groups use to expand their visibility, attract followers and strengthen their institutional presence. Pentecostal movements, especially in Nigeria, have effectively utilised media technologies such as television, radio and social media to enhance their competitiveness within the religious marketplace.

Religious economy theory views religious organisations as actors competing within a marketplace of beliefs and ritual practices. Media technologies provide platforms through which churches compete for congregants, influence, and resources.

Digital evangelism therefore functions as a strategic tool for attracting and retaining adherents, both in person and online. Here, the churches have become producers of spiritual goods, while followers are the consumers operating within the laws of demand and supply.

Methodological Scope

This study employs qualitative content analysis to examine the digital communication strategies of Nigerian Pentecostal churches. According to Bernard Berelson, content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic and qualitative description of the manifest content of communication (Berelson, 1952). Krippendorff (2018) also argues that content analysis enables researchers to draw systematic and valid conclusions about meanings embedded in communication.

Data sources for this content analysis include: livestreamed worship services, social media posts and digital devotionals, online crusades and prayer campaigns, and official church websites and media platforms

The study focuses on selected Pentecostal ministries with strong digital presence, including:

Redeemed Christian Church of God, Living Faith Church Worldwide, Christ Embassy and Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries.

These organisations were selected because of their extensive use of digital technologies and global reach.

A qualitative analysis of digital religious data—such as live-streamed worship services, social media posts, online crusades, prayer campaigns, and official church websites—from major Nigerian Pentecostal churches is carried out using thematic analysis, discourse analysis, and digital ethnography.

There is no publicly available consolidated dataset reporting the exact number of sermons, livestreamed services, Facebook posts, YouTube broadcasts, and online crusades produced by these churches during the last six months of 2025 (July–December 2025). Each church uses multiple official and regional platforms, and none publishes a single annual content inventory. Therefore, based on their official schedules and archived online content, the

following estimates were reasonably gathered through manual counting, as recorded in figures 8 and 9, which include a manually created tally sheet on page twelve. This approach produces verifiable data suitable for proper content analysis. These estimates include all items posted between 1st of July and 31st of December 2025 on each church's: official YouTube channel, official Facebook page, official livestream archive, and official website/media library.

Operational Definition

For this paper, the operational definition of digital media is the deliberate production, dissemination, livestreaming, repurposing, and interactive use of digitally mediated religious content by selected Nigerian Pentecostal churches through their official websites, social media platforms, online television, evangelism, prayer, and transnational religious engagement. According to Figures 8 and 9 below, uploads on each platform are coded separately, reflecting the frequency of religious content on that platform.

Overview of the Data Sources

The qualitative data were drawn from the official digital media platforms of four leading Nigerian Pentecostal churches: Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Living Faith Church Worldwide (LFC/Winners' Chapel), Christ Embassy and Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries (MFM).

These churches, influential actors in African Pentecostalism and digital evangelism, maintain strong online presences across websites, streaming platforms, and social media.

According to the figures below, the types of data collected are as follows: live-streamed worship services, online crusades and revival meetings, digital prayer campaigns, social media posts (Facebook, Livestreamed services, online sermons, YouTube), official church websites and online devotional materials, digital flyers, announcements, and promotional media.

Method of Qualitative Analysis

Thematic Content Analysis: The primary analytical method is thematic content analysis, which identifies recurring patterns and themes in textual, visual, and audio-visual content. Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that thematic analysis enables researchers to organise and interpret meanings across datasets systematically.

The qualitative analysis followed four major stages:

(a). Data Familiarisation

The researcher repeatedly viewed recorded livestreams, reviewed social media posts, and examined online materials published by the churches.

This stage enabled the identification of recurring themes and communication patterns. Themes of prosperity messages and healing resonated across the four selected Pentecostal churches. This trend may be linked to the lack of a social support system in the country. The vacuum created by the government is being filled by these churches. There were various testimonies of healing, freedom from barrenness, ill-luck, promotion and prosperity, among others.

(b). Initial Coding

Coding is the process of assigning labels to sections of qualitative data (livestreams, sermons, videos, media posts, etc.) to identify patterns, meanings and themes. Based on the collected data, segments of digital content were coded according to their thematic significance. Codes were generated inductively (emerging from the data) and guided by existing scholarship on media, religion and Pentecostal communication.

(c). Theme Categorisation

Codes were then grouped into broader analytical categories reflecting patterns in digital religious communication, i.e., livestreamed services, sermon videos, Facebook posts, YouTube broadcasts, and online crusades/special events.

(d). Interpretation

The themes were interpreted in relation to the research questions and to theories of globalisation, mediatisation of religion, and religious economy, which explain how religious organisations utilise media technologies to expand their influence and attract followers.

Coding Table for Qualitative Content Analysis

The coding process yielded several thematic categories that captured the dominant patterns in the digital communication strategies of Nigerian Pentecostal churches.

Code Category: description, indicators in data, examples from Churches, digital Evangelism, use of digital media for missionary outreach and preaching, livestream sermons, evangelistic messages, and online crusades.

Data were collected deductively from RCCG: Holy Ghost Services livestream, online Prayer Mobilisation, organisation of collective prayer through digital platforms, prayer campaigns, fasting announcements, and deliverance sessions.

MFM: online prayer meetings, spiritual warfare narrative, emphasis on deliverance, warfare prayers and spiritual battles, prayer directives against enemies, curses, or demons, MFM prayer broadcasts, prosperity and breakthrough discourse, teachings linking faith to financial success and personal breakthroughs, sermons on prosperity, and testimonies of financial miracles were all observed in the collected data.

LFC: sermons, global Outreach Messaging, emphasis on international audiences and global mission, “Join from anywhere in the world,” and global prayer networks formed a major part of the data collected.

CE: global broadcasts, virtual Community Formation, online religious participation and interaction, live chat participation, testimony sharing and online giving, among others, were featured prominently in the data collection.

Church Identification Code

Redeem Christian Church of God	RCCG
Living Faith Church Worldwide	LFC
Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministry	MFM
Christ Embassy	CE

Core Coding Scheme

Figure 2: Codes category

Variable	Code	Operational Definition
Church	RCCG, LFC, MFM, CE	Church responsible for publishing the content.
Platform	YT, FB, WEB, OTHER	Digital platforms on which the contents appear.
Content format	SER, LIVE, POST, POD, CRU	Form in which the content is digitally presented.
Religious function	WOR, EVA, TEA, PRA,	Primary religious or organisational purpose.
Language	ENG, YOR	Main language of the content

Digital Religious Function

Figure 3: various functions of the codes

Code	Function
WOR	Worship
EVA	Evangelism
TEA	Teaching
PRA	Prayer
DEL	Deliverance/spiritual warfare
HEA	Healing
TES	Testimony
GLO	Global parish
YTH	Youth engagement
HG	Holy Ghost service
SH	Shiloh-related content
DEL	Deliverance
POW	Power must change hands
RHA	Rhapsody

Thematic Coding of the Four Churches

RCCG

Figure 4: The RCCG coding themes

Code	Theme
RCCG-EVA	Evangelism and mission
RCCG-HG	Holy Ghost Service /Congress
RCCG-TEA	Biblical teaching
RCCG-PRA	Prayer
RCCG-GLO	Global parish and transnational communication
RCCG-YTH	Youth and digital engagement

LFC

Figure 5: The LFC coding themes

Code	Theme
LFC-FAT	Faith teaching
LFC-PRO	Prosperity and empowerment
LFC-HEA	Healing and testimonies
LFC-SHI	Shiloh-related content
LFC-WOR	Worship services
LFC-EVA	Evangelism

MFM

Figure 6: The MFM coding themes

Code	Theme
MFM-PRA	Intensive prayer
MFM-DEL	Deliverance
MFM-WAR	Spiritual warfare
MFM-POW	Power must change hands
MFM-TEA	Biblical teaching
MFM-TES	Testimony

CE

Figure 7: The CE coding themes

Code	Theme
CE-EVA	Digital evangelism
CE-HEA	Healing ministry
CE-RHA	Rhapsody-related content
CE-GLO	Global mission
CE-TEA	Teaching
CE-PRA	Prayer

Counting Unit

Each of the counting unit of the programme is represented by figure 1.

- One livestreamed service = 1
- Sermon video = 1
- One Facebook post = 1

- One You Tube broadcast = 1
- One online crusade = 1

Figure 8: The manual breakdown by content type (July – December 2025)

Church	Livestreamed services	Sermon videos	Facebook posts	YouTube broadcasts	Online crusades/special events	Total
RCCG	195	142	210	28	10	585
LFC	178	136	195	26	10	545
MFM	205	151	233	28	12	629
CE	250	165	300	34	20	769

The manual counting of the monthly Digital Media Output of Major Nigerian Pentecostal Churches (July – December 2025).

Figure 9: Monthly manual tally sheet

Month (2025)	RCCG	LFC	MFM	CE
July	92	85	98	121
August	95	87	101	124
September	90	83	97	118
October	94	88	103	126
November	96	90	106	129
December	118	112	124	151
Total	585	545	629	769

Figure 9 above therefore presents the monthly analysis of the programmes of the selected churches. The total represents the combined number of digital outputs (sermons uploaded, livestreamed services, Facebook posts, YouTube broadcasts, online Crusades and other official ministry events).

In the figure 8 above, there is a church-by-church breakdown of the contents that spanned 6 months (July to December).

These findings reflect regular weekly services (typically 2–4 per week), midweek services, monthly communion or prayer meetings, special conventions (e.g., Holy Ghost Services, Shiloh, Power Must Change Hands, Healing Streams), and additional online broadcasts that remained accessible via official social media channels.

Calculation of Frequencies and Percentages of the Datasets

Percentage = (Frequency of category ÷ Total number of items) x 100.

Figure 10: The use of digital media by the RCCG

RCCG	PERCENTAGE
Livestreamed Services	33.3%
Sermon videos	24.3%
Facebook posts	35.9%
YouTube broadcasts	4.8%
Online crusades	1.7%

Figure 11: The use of digital media by the LFC

LFC	PERCENTAGE
Livestreamed Services	32.6%
Sermon videos	25%
Facebook posts	35.8%
YouTube broadcasts	4.8%
Online crusades	1.8%

Figure 12: The use of digital media by the MFM

MFM	PERCENTAGE
Livestreamed Services	32.6%
Sermon videos	24%
Facebook posts	37%
You Tube broadcasts	4.5%
Online crusades	1.9%

Figure 13: The use of digital media by the CE

CE	PERCENTAGE
Livestreamed Services	32.5%
Sermon videos	21.5%
Facebook posts	39%
You Tube broadcasts	4.4%
Online crusades	2.6%

In the analysis of the use of digital media, the following questions were addressed using Figures 10-13.

- Which church produced the highest volume of digital content?
- Which platform was used most frequently?
- Which church livestreamed most often?
- How did media activity change from July to December?

Based on the datasets in the figures above, CE has the highest volume of digital content, with seven hundred and sixty-nine (769) items, followed by MFM with six hundred and twenty-nine (629) items; with five hundred and eighty-five items, RCCG came third, and LFC (545 items) has the lowest volume of digital content.

Facebook was the platform most frequently used. It cut across the four churches, with high percentages. CE had the highest presence on Facebook at 39%, followed by MFM at 37%; RCCG had 35.9% and LFC had 38.5%.

Among the churches that had livestreamed services more often during the period, LFC led with 35.8%, followed by RCCG with 33% and MFM with 32.6%, while CE came last with just 32.5%.

Figure 9 above shows how media activity changed in December. There was a substantial increase in digital presence across the four churches, with

CE having the highest content (151). MFM had 124, followed closely by RCCG with 118, and LFC with 112.

Overall, the data in Figure 8 indicate that CE maintained the highest digital media presence during the 6-month period, followed by MFM, RCCG and LFC, respectively. The data also show a substantial increase in activity in December, with special Christmas programmes, crossover services and end-of-year conventions. This aligns with the churches' established practices of livestreaming major annual events and maintaining active online ministry platforms. It can therefore be deduced that the use of digital media has, in no small measure, helped the Pentecostal churches reach a wider audience of worshippers across the globe. These sources also provide insight into how Pentecostal churches utilise digital media as a tool for evangelism, community formation, and spiritual engagement.

Discourse Analysis

This method is used to analyse the language and theological themes in online sermons, Facebook posts, YouTube broadcasts and digital evangelism, focusing on themes such as prosperity, healing, deliverance, faith and spiritual warfare (Fairclough, 1992). In line with this method, the four Pentecostal churches dwelt richly on the theology of prosperity. Quoting numerous Bible passages to support their positions, the churches attached prosperity, major breakthroughs, and sufficient provision to divine favour, thereby casting aside the necessity of the theology of salvation as a prerequisite.

They addressed spirituality in every issue of life. Therefore, healing and deliverance could be sought through prayer. There were various testimonies supporting this notion: healing from terminal diseases such as diabetes and high blood pressure; deliverance from the spirit of barrenness, spiritual husbands, and so on formed major parts of the online testimonies.

Ethnographical Analysis

This is a qualitative research method that adapts traditional ethnographic methods to online environments (Kozinets, 2020). Kozinets argues that netnography enables researchers to understand cultural practices and meanings within online communities. According to the available data observed over a period of six months (July – December), the frequency and volume of livestream services, online prayer practices and virtual worship experiences formed a major part of their programmes.

Results: Major Themes Emerging From the Data

Digital Evangelism and Global Mission:

A major theme observed across all four churches is the intentional use of digital media as a missionary tool capable of improving followers' physical and financial status. Livestreams and online crusades often encourage viewers worldwide to participate in worship and share broadcasts. For instance, RCCG broadcasts its Holy Ghost Services globally via YouTube and church media platforms; Living Faith Church streams services from Faith Tabernacle to international audiences; and Christ Embassy utilises highly sophisticated digital media production for global outreach. Digital media thus functions as a virtual mission field, allowing churches to transcend geographical and cultural boundaries.

Online Prayer Campaigns and Spiritual Warfare

Another recurring theme is the prominence of digital prayer mobilisation, particularly on MFM and RCCG platforms. Prayer campaigns often include scheduled online prayer sessions, social prayer chains, and deliverance and warfare prayer broadcasts. The primary focus of this prayer aligns with the African cultural context of spirituality. MFM, for example, organises online deliverance programmes in which participants are instructed to follow prayer directives during livestreams. These practices illustrate how traditional Pentecostal spiritual warfare has adapted to digital spaces.

Construction of Virtual Religious Community

The analysis shows that digital platforms are used to foster a sense of online fellowship and belonging. Indicators include the following: comment sections where viewers share testimonies and prayer requests, interactive worship experiences through livestream chats, and online giving and membership platforms. Through these mechanisms, digital worshippers participate in a virtual congregation, blurring the distinction between physical and digital church communities and thereby erasing the communal lifestyle of African people. This is regarded as 'suspension of Ubuntu' in South African local parlance, as discussed earlier on page 3 of this article.

Branding and Media Professionalization

The churches studied demonstrated a high level of media sophistication and branding. Key features include professionally produced broadcasts, branded graphics and digital flyers, dedicated media departments, and multi-platform broadcasting strategies. Christ Embassy, in particular, exemplified media-driven evangelism by operating a global media network and extensive digital platforms. This professionalisation reflects the growing institutionalisation of digital religion within African Pentecostalism.

Prosperity, Healing, and Testimony Narratives

The analysis also highlights recurring theological themes identified by Paul Gifford as catalysts for the rise of African Pentecostalism: divine prosperity, wealth, success, miraculous healing, personal testimonies, and breakthrough narratives (Gifford, 2004). These were frequently shared through social media videos, livestream segments, and website publications. As earlier explained, Stark and Finke describe these as religious products. According to Stark and Finke, people patronise religious places because of the rewards associated with them (Stark & Finke, 2000). Rather than viewing religion as declining with modernisation, Stark and Finke argue that the promotion of religious products creates competition among religious organisations, which stimulates innovation, commitment, and growth. These narratives reinforce faith claims and attract online audiences.

Comparative Observations

Although the four churches utilise digital media extensively, their emphases differ slightly, as observed in Figure 14 below:

Churches and their dominant Digital Emphases:

Figure 14: Dominant emphasis

Churches	RCCG	LFC	CE	MFM
Peculiarities	Global services and prayer programmes	Prosperity teaching and faith-based empowerment	Highly professionalised global media evangelism	Deliverance ministry and spiritual warfare prayers

Despite these differences, the four churches share a strategic commitment to digital evangelism. As noted earlier, one of the most prominent themes across the digital platforms of the churches was the use of media technologies for evangelistic outreach. Livestreamed services often encourage viewers from across the world to participate in worship and share broadcasts with others. For instance, RCCG's Holy Ghost Service broadcasts are streamed worldwide across multiple digital platforms, allowing many viewers to participate simultaneously. Such practices illustrate how digital media serve as a missionary extension of Pentecostal ministry, enabling churches to transcend geographic and cultural boundaries. Scholars have noted that Pentecostal movements have long embraced modern communication technologies to spread their messages. Digital platforms now mark the latest phase of this technological adaptation.

Implications for Digital Religion Studies

The findings suggest that Nigerian Pentecostal churches are not merely adapting to digital technology but are actively shaping a new form of mediated

Christianity, as explained by Peter Horsfield. As previously stated, digital platforms now function as missionary tools, worship spaces, community networks and theological communication channels, and as a formidable source of revenue generation (collection of tithes, offerings and various pledges) for the churches. The revenue comes from both local and foreign worshippers. This transformation reflects the broader mediatization of religion, in which religious practices increasingly operate through media technologies.

The Rise of Media-Driven Nigerian Pentecostalism

Pentecostal Christianity has experienced extraordinary growth in Nigeria since the 1970s. Urbanisation, economic instability, and social change created conditions in which Pentecostal messages of divine intervention and prosperity resonated strongly with many Nigerians (Kalu, 2008).

From the beginning, Nigerian Pentecostal leaders such as Benson Idahosa recognised the importance of media for evangelism. Early Pentecostal ministries relied heavily on radio and television broadcasts, so Idahosa used these media to spread the gospel message. With the advent of digital technologies, these ministries quickly expanded their media strategies.

Many Nigerian Pentecostal churches now operate satellite television networks, online streaming platforms, social media ministries, and mobile applications for devotional content, among others.

These media infrastructures enable churches to reach audiences across the globe without necessarily visiting the place of worship.

Digital Evangelism and Online Worship

The rise of digital technology has transformed the relationship between Pentecostalism and media. Contemporary Pentecostal churches increasingly rely on social media, live streaming and online sermons to connect with global audiences. Recent studies indicate that digital media enable Pentecostal leaders to foster participation and community beyond geographical boundaries. Online platforms provide opportunities for theological teaching, evangelism and religious networking across continents.

Digital evangelism is the use of digital communication technologies to spread religious teachings and attract converts. Nigerian Pentecostal churches frequently livestream worship services, healing sessions, virtual deliverance sessions, digital testimonies and revival meetings.

For example, the Redeemed Christian Church of God broadcasts major religious events, such as the Holy Ghost Congress, to many viewers worldwide directly from the place of worship in Lagos, Nigeria.

Similarly, global healing programmes organised by Chris Oyakhilome attract participants from numerous countries via online streaming platforms.

Through such practices, worship has increasingly become a transnational digital experience.

Social Media and Networked Religion

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp are central to contemporary Pentecostal evangelism.

Prominent Nigerian Pentecostal leaders, including Enoch Adeboye, David Oyedepo, Chris Oyakhilome, and Dr D. K. Olukoya, regularly communicate with followers through social media messages, digital devotionals, and online prayer sessions.

These platforms enable believers to share testimonies, request prayers, and participate in online religious discussions, among other activities. Heidi Campbell describes this phenomenon as networked religion, in which religious authority becomes distributed across digital communities (Campbell, 2016).

Digital Media and the Globalization of Nigerian Pentecostalism

Digital technologies have significantly contributed to the globalisation of Nigerian Pentecostal churches. Diaspora congregations maintain strong ties with Nigerian headquarters through livestreamed services and digital communication.

According to Adogame (2013), African diaspora churches use digital platforms to sustain transnational religious identities that connect migrant communities with their spiritual roots in Africa.

Consequently, Nigerian Pentecostal leaders now wield significant influence within global Christianity.

The Digital Religious Economy

Digital evangelism has also generated new forms of financial engagement within Pentecostal ministries because online platforms have contributed greatly to the sudden increase in revenue generation of the churches through the following ways:

Electronic tithing and offerings: followers do not need to be at the venue of the programme before their tithes or offerings can be paid. This new pattern is aided by the Nigerian government's cashless policy.

Online donations: various forms of donation are made possible as a result of the digitalisation of the service. People donate towards the construction of the new place of worship, the acquisition of new musical instruments or landed property, and the church welfare programme, etc.

Other sources of revenue that boost the church's financial muscle include digital sales of religious books and media, as well as registration for conferences and seminars.

These developments illustrate the emergence of a digital religious economy in which religious organisations operate within technologically mediated financial networks.

However, critics argue that such practices risk transforming religion into a commercial enterprise.

Challenges of Digital Pentecostalism

Despite its advantages, digital evangelism presents several challenges.

Commercialisation: The increasing monetisation of religious content raises concerns about the commodification of faith and the exploitation of followers. There are often allegations of extortion of the poor by churches.

Doctrinal Fragmentation: Open digital platforms allow diverse interpretations of religious teachings to circulate widely without institutional regulation. Recently, Pastor Enoch Adeboye issued an apology for his earlier position on tithing. He had to address his followers and others directly, retracting the claim that paying tithes is never a condition for entering heaven. This message spread like wildfire through digital media. Digital media enabled condemnation of Pastor Adeboye across the globe when he stated in one of his livestreamed services that whoever defaults on tithing will not make heaven on the last day. Taking this as heresy, the body of Christ and all and sundry lampooned the clergy for preaching outside the sacred writings of Christianity. They accused him of not being mindful of the sources of such tithes. After much hue and cry, Pastor Adeboye, through digital media, retracted the message, stressing that the salvation of souls is more important than the payment of tithes.

Virtualization of Worship: Online participation may weaken traditional congregational relationships and communal worship practices. As noted earlier, the African concept of Ubuntu ('I am because we are') is gradually eroding.

Digital Competition: Churches increasingly compete for followers, attention, and influence within digital media environments. This trend creates space for healthy competition among religious groups.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that Nigerian Pentecostal churches have successfully integrated digital technologies into their evangelistic strategies. This became particularly pronounced during the COVID-19 pandemic, when movement was strictly restricted across the globe. Digital media have enabled these churches to: expand globally, maintain diaspora connections, and reach younger audiences and worldwide followers.

However, the mediatization of religion has also reshaped religious authority and institutional organisation.

As Pentecostal leaders become global digital influencers, the boundaries between religious leadership, media celebrity, and entrepreneurship become increasingly blurred.

Conclusion

The rise of digital communication technologies has profoundly transformed Nigerian Pentecostal evangelism and religious communication. Through digital evangelism, Nigerian Pentecostal churches have expanded their global influence and created transnational religious communities that accommodate diasporic experiences and sustain hybrid identities.

Nevertheless, the integration of new media into religious practice also raises significant questions about commercialisation, exploitation, doctrinal authority and conflict, and the future of congregational worship. This conclusion is captured and better explained by the diagram in Figure 1 above. Future research should explore how digital religion and virtual worship have affected the concept of Ubuntu in African traditional society.

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