

INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN YOUTH WORSHIP AMONG THE CHURCHES IN OYO WEST LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Ruth Temitope Jesuleye Ph.D
Baptist College of Theology, Oyo
rtjesuleye@gmail.com.08031544298

Abstract

Social Media cannot be severed from Christian worship among the contemporary youth. The knowledge of social media is on the increase today and it cannot be ruled out when considering Christian worship programmes most especially among young people. It is so significant that it enhances and exposes contemporary youth to useful ideas, information on career and research. The social media is making easy the acquisition of knowledge to deal with almost every issue. It is, therefore, quite obvious that social media adds values to the operations of youths with regards to their worship experiences. Drawing from over ten years of experience in childhood and adolescent education and ministering to the youth ; this writer has not experienced the magnitude of interest displayed by young people in worship services like they do in this contemporary time because of social media inclusion in worship experience.

Introduction

In a highly developed technological world with an ever increasing population, there comes a need to have a platform or stream of products via which boundary less and borderless communication and interaction can be effectively done without the need to travel from one location to another. The social media meets such a need in this generation. With the whole world going after this new social craze, the Church should not be left out but to fully harness the many benefits which the social media readily offers. This paper aims at addressing the values and benefits of the social media over worship experience, most especially among the youth.. The invention of the social media is so significant that the contemporary Christian youth cannot do without it in every facet of their lives (worship included). One thing that is certain is the fact that online services enable the Christian youth participate more via involvement with the recording and uploading of services on the cloud, getting wider audience from different locations, etc.

In this information technology age, this is one of the most important opportunities for ministry- touching the lives of people (especially the younger generation) through the internet. Through the use of the internet for worship, one will have the joy of helping the contemporary generation to begin growing toward maturity and fruitfulness in the knowledge of God their creator. With the power of internet technology, Christian youth can share the Gospel and God's plan for salvation with people around the world without leaving their home.

Dissemination of information in the contemporary world has become so easy as a result of the social media. A number of people have engaged themselves in the use of social media, as asserted by Solo-Anaeto and Jacobs (2015), young people constitute a large percentage. Solo-Anaeto and Jacobs agreed that social media like Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, MySpace, blogs, and so on, have made communication process faster, interactive, user friendly, and enabling user generated contents to be more accessible. According to them all these make the influence of

Social Media for reaching with good sides and bad sides to it (37). The Social Media is a 21st century computer-based technology that facilitates and enhances the sharing of ideas, digital products and information through the building of virtual networks and communities on the internet. By design, social media is internet-based and gives users quick electronic communication of content.

Social media has been seen as a product of advancement in technology, and that social media cannot be without technology. According to Oghogho (2008), the technologies of Mass Media are products progressive development and diffusion starting from the spread of printing as a form of communication to the birth of the oral (radio) and Visual (Cinema) communication and then to television, one of the most powerful mediums of communication. Contemporary technologies are a consequence of endless improvement to the foregoing forms of communication media. Contemporary communication has transpired from traditional Media such as radio, television, newspaper magazines, films and books. The social media is used in different ways to disseminate information to a large heterogeneous group of people in the same or different environment, who are socially related or emotionally connected. Similarly, Anaeto and Jacobs have also noted that “Social Media has come to stay as a notable platform for information and communication in this 21st century.

Endosomawan, S, Prakasan, S. K., Koname, D, Watson, J, and Seymour (2011), in their opinion stated that “Social Media is a phenomenon that has transformed the interaction and communication of individuals throughout the entire world: impacting many aspects of human communication. Okorie (2014) asserts that “Much of Media Communication finds expression on different Social Media platforms in the contemporary time. Social Media have also become imbedded in the Day-to-Day activities that they largely fashion peoples’ perceptions, understandings, construction of meanings, and general view of reality of the world (93). Social Media accordingly to Dominics (2012), is majorly for making interactions and creating relationships especially among the younger generation. They are popular in the contemporary times because they are easily accessible on various devices such as laptops, desktop pc, tablet computers, and smart phones (94). Social Media has been described by Solo-Anaeto and Jacobs as “Online means of interaction among people, involving computer-mediated tools and internet based applications that allow people to create, process, share or exchange information ideas, videos and pictures” (38).

In other words, Social Media are internet-based applications that allow people to communicate with one another both at far and near places, Miller and Others (2016) opine that Social Media in this contemporary time is a place within which people socialize, and is not just a means of communication. Miller also suggests that social Media should not be seen primarily as the platforms upon which people post, but rather as the contents that are posted on these platforms. This implies that technologies have changed the entire world presenting potentials for communication and interaction that people did not previously possess. This means that social media is about conversations connecting with the audience and building relationships. It gives users the opportunity to hear what people say about them. Their preferences and choices also enable users to respond and make comments. Social Media users have the freedom to write, edit and post all sorts of materials that sometimes may be socially irresponsible and unethical to people connected to them all around the world.

The issues of Social Media have been clearly established above. Social Media users exercise their freedom to write. This makes it possible for a large number of users all around the world. According to Solo-Anaeto, users just need to be connected to the internet, registrar and

they are therefore open to use any social media channel for interaction and communication. (39) These Social Media include the following: Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Instagram, Flickr, You Tube and Video.

The Values of Social Media

The frequency of communication as a result of social media increases on daily basis. The invention of social media has brought a lot of intrinsic values on individual's daily life and behavior. For example, WhatsApp allows people to communicate together. So many interactions can be exchanged on the platforms of WhatsApp pages daily. Another example as illustrated by Boyd (2008) is the Facebook which allows one to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, to articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and to view their list of connections made by others within the system(211).

Similarly, social media has helped in the area of propagation of the gospel ministry. No one living on this planet today according to Okorie, (2020) can claim to have escaped the effects of social contraction that has gripped the entire globe at an increasing frenetic pace. Contemporary mission work has mapped, recognized and virtually located every previously unreached people with the consequences being that strategies, programs and resources have been, or are being mobilized to reach such remotely situated citizens of our world with the gospel witnesses(71). Okorie proceeds by submitting that information rules the planet in more than just an allegorical sense as life becomes much more problematic without continual access to devices such as computers, mobile phones, digital and satellite entertainment''(71)

Similarly, the social life of the contemporary church is increasing day after day. Contemporary Christian youth in Nigeria have the opportunity to worship with T.D. James, Joel Osteen, Pst. Tunde Bakare, Pastor Adeboye, Rev. Dr. Supo Ayokunle, Joyce Myers and Bro. Gbile Akanni right in the comfort of their homes. The redeemed Christian church of God, Latter Rain Assembly, Winners chapel and some selected Baptist churches offer worshippers tailor-made online services for any particular demographic region.

Consequently, the strike of corona virus(covid-19) which Adeniran(2020) refers to as ''Proverbial thief in the night''(63) which spread from Wuhan in China across the globe, caught the world unprepared. It has certainly brought by force the need for much integrated systems of online worships experience. Many Nigerian churches were forced to abandon face-to-face modes of ministry and worship and many pastors especially Baptist pastors, were engaged in online-learning and were taught on how to use one social media or the other. As a result, many Baptist pastors performed commendably well as online modes of reaching out to their members became the norm rather than the exception. This shift in paradigm was necessarily accompanied by some losses and gains in terms of effectiveness and achievement of learning outcomes. Critical to this is the important role that online worshippers, actually grow and achieve transformation through beneficial learning relationship (Okorie, 2020.76).

Rainer (2015) in his agreement, highlighted seven reasons why social media can be used by a church as thus: to communicate with members and to encourage others in their churches, to point others to interesting articles related to Christianity and church life, to share the gospel, to share prayer requests, to share activities and ministries in the church, for growing membership and fund raising. Lewis (2016) supported this by asserting that some church leaders are noticing the opportunity social media creates to change their relationship with members(25). Many churches according to Lewis (especially the youths), now use Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp and

other Social Media platforms to disseminate information to their members and beyond. In McKinney's opinion (2014), Social Media allows churches to market themselves at little or no cost (5).

Although this paper is set out to explore the positive contributions of social media on the contemporary youth. Nonetheless, the presenter is also aware that there are adverse effects of social media on the social interaction among the contemporary youths. According to Natasha, (2014), addiction to social media facilities has already taken into liberties with the truth and to misbehave without consequences. This indicates that social media also makes it possible for one not to trust the identity of people because lies, deception and cybercrime abound in today's world.

Anonymity on social media has caused serious problems. Cyber-mobbing or bullying is one of these anonymities among today's youth, according to Natascha 2014), cyber-bullying is any kind of behavior performed through electronic or digital media by individuals or groups that repeatedly communicates hostile or aggressive messages intended to inflict harm or discomfort on others (278). For example, Ayo-obiremi presented an illustration of a boy of eight year who committed suicide as a result of instruction given by an older Facebook friend.

Also, the social relationships and wellbeing as well as time available for sleeping, studying and other activities have been negatively affected by the use of social media among most youth. The invention of social media was associated with a range of negative social indicators like sleeping less both at night and day, having more friends whom parents and caregivers perceive as bad influence etc. The level of face-to-face communication was also strongly negatively associated with social media.

An average believer's concept of worship is all about the coming together of a body of believers, the playing of music and how a church's worship services are planned. Worship is not all about church services, that is, coming together to pray, listening to sermon etc, in a given place. Worship definitely includes all of these but it is far more than all these. Worship according to Ajibade, is "life"(237). The life of the person(s) concerned is significant in worship. Youth need to worship God with their whole life, with their entire being actively involved. For worship to be meaningful to youth, any treatise on worship must begin and end with God. The sum total of all efforts of worship must be for relating to him. Gorman(1978) used some phrases to describe worship that centers on God Worship is to God! Worship is for God! Worship satisfies God!(247). Worship implies involvement in relationships with God and others. Youth are enjoined by Solomon to remember their creator "Don't let the excitement of youth cause you to forget your creator. Honour him in youth before you grow old and say,..."(Ecc 12:1-6).

Considering worship from youth perspective requires an exploration on Davidson's definition of worship. To Davidson, (2002) worship is "a dramatic, dynamic, dialogical encounter between the Triune God of the Bible and his people, in which God speaks and/or acts to reveal himself and his will and his people respond to him in appropriate biblical ways.(2).

Understanding the biblical concept of Christian worship from youth perspective

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Jesus highlighted two factors in worship :”God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth”(John4:24). Declaring God’s worth must involve youth’s heart, not just a cold, dispassionate rehearsal of his magnitude. True worship is for lovers of God whose hearts are passionate towards because of his spirit within them fanning the flames of that relationship. The spirit is the enabler when it comes to expressing the worthiness of God. “No one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the holy spirit”(1cor 12:3). The spirit’s encouragement and influence energies our spirits to declare him worthy (phili 3:3). He promotes our right attitude toward God and cultivates our enthusiasm and appetite for God so that “in spirit” we rise up to call him blessed. (Ortlund,1995:41).

Research Methodology

Research Questions

1. What are the Values of Social Media to Christian Worship Experiences among the youth of Oyo West Local Government?
2. What is the rate of the use of social media for Christian worship among the youth of selected churches in Oyo West Local Government?

Research Design

The design adopted for this study is a descriptive survey. It is concerned with the collection of detailed information required from the values that social media place on the worship experience of the Christian youth of Oyo West Local Government.

Population and Sampling

The population of the study comprises all the Christian youth of Oyo West Local Government whose ages range from 13-24 years. Both male and female were encapsulated in the population. The whole population was not used but sampled. Since the size of targeted population for this work is too large for the study, the researcher therefore, employed a stratified random sampling technique to ensure an equal representation of all the youth within the above mentioned ages in the local government. Five denominations were randomly selected and 65 copies of questionnaire were distributed among the five denominations and 64 were retrieve.

Research Instrument

The instrument used for this study was a self-designed questionnaire by the researcher. The questionnaire was made up of two sections namely A and B. Sections. A contains general information about the youth while section B dealt with the two research questions.

Administration of Instrument

The questionnaire was administered personally by the researcher along with the help of research assistants; the copies of questionnaire were distributed among the youth and were retrieved immediately after filling.

Data Analysis

Data analysis of the findings in this study was done with reference to the research questions on the information collected from the respondents. These were analyzed using simple percentage (%) count.

Table 1

General Information on Distribution of the Status of Respondents

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	37	57.81
	Female	27	42.18
	Total	64	100.00
Age	13-15 years	6	9.38
	16-20 years	22	34.38
	17-24 years	36	56.25
	Total	64	100.00
Educational Qualification	Primary	0	0
	Secondary School	15	23.44
	NCE/OND	14	21.88
	Degree	33	51.56
	Others	2	03.13
	Total	64	100.00

Table II

Distribution of Questionnaire Administered, Retrieved and the Response Rate

S/N	Denomination	Copies of Questionnaire Administered	Copies of Questionnaire Retrieved and Valid for	Response Rate
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			Analysis	
1	Methodist	13	13	100
2	Anglican	10	10	100
3	Baptist	20	20	100
4	Redeemed	12	11	99.67
5	Zion International Gospel Centre	10	10	100
	Total	65	64	98.46

Data Analysis and Discussion

Research Question 1: What are the Values of Social Media to Christian Worship Experiences among the youth of Oyo West Local Government?

Table 3: Values of Social Media on the Christian Youth Worship Experience

S/N	ITEMS	VO	O	S	R
i	Social Media Such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook e.t.c can influence the Worship Experiences of youth positively	17 (26.56%)	24 (37.50%)	20 (31.25%)	3 (4.69%)
ii	Viewing Christian worship services on social media such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook e.t.c have impacted Christian youth positively	10 (15.63%)	22 (34.38%)	17 (26.56%)	15 (23.44%)
iii	Invention of social media has tremendously increased the rate at which Christian youth contributed towards helping the spirituality of the contemporary youth in Oyo town.	23 (35.94%)	17 (26.56%)	13 (20.31%)	11 (17.19%)
iv	Social media such as YouTube, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, e.t.c have expose Christian youth to different forms of Christian music which has influence their worship experience	31 (48.44%)	25 (39.06%)	4 (6.25%)	4 (6.25%)
v	Periodic Seminars on career and marital through social media in churches have contributed to the values of Christian youth	19 (29.69%)	33 (51.56%)	8 (12.50%)	4 (6.26%)

Table 3 shows the distribution of the respondents in view of values of social media on the Christian youth worship experience. Majorly, that is 24(37.50%) respondents indicated that social media such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook e.t.c can influence the Worship Experiences of youth positively is on the frequency of often 17(26.56%) respondents indicated their views on the frequency of very often, while 20(31.25%) and 3(4.69%) respondents indicated their views on the frequency of sometimes and rarely respectively. 22(34.38%) respondents indicated that the viewing Christian worship services on social media such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook e.t.c have impacted Christian youth positively is on frequency of often and 10(15.63%) respondents indicated their views on the frequency of very often; while 17(26.56%) and 15(23.44%) respondents indicate their views on the frequency of sometimes and rarely respectively. 23(35.94%) respondents indicated that invention of social media has tremendously increased the rate at which Christian youth contributed towards helping the spirituality of the contemporary youth in Oyo town. on the frequency very often and 17(26.56%) respondents indicated their views on the frequency of often while 13(20.31%) and 11(17.19%) respondents indicated their views on the frequency of sometimes and rarely respectively.

Furthermore, 31(48.44%) respondents indicated that their social media such as YouTube, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, e.t.c have expose Christian youth to different forms of Christian music which has influence their worship experience is on very often. 25(39.06%) respondents affirmed this statement with the frequency of often, while 4(6.25%) and 4(6.25%) respondents indicated their views on frequency of sometimes and rarely respectively. In the same vein, 33(51.56%) respondents affirmed that periodic seminars on career and marital through social media in churches have contributed to the values of Christian youth on the frequency of often and 19(29.69%) respondents agreed with the statement on the frequency of very often, while 8(12.50%) and 4(6.25%) respondents agreed with the statement with the frequency of sometimes and rarely.

Therefore, in examining the values of social media on the Christian youth worship experience, it was discovered that social media has add positive values to worship experiences among the youth in Oyo west local government in terms of music, spirituality and worship experience. It can be concluded that Christian youth in Oyo west local government are influenced positive in their worship experience through the use of twitter, Instagram, Facebook and others.

Research Question 2: What is the rate of the use of social media for Christian worship among the youth of selected churches in Oyo West Local Government.

Table 4: The Rate of the use of Social Media among the Youth

S/N	ITEMS	VO	O	S	R
i	Appropriate use of Social Media among Christian youth can cling their heart to Biblical teachings	26 (40.63%)	26 (40.63%)	11 (17.19%)	1 (1.56%)
ii	Christian youth who use social media appropriately rarely engage themselves in Violent behaviour	14 (21.86%)	16 (25.00%)	10 (15.63%)	24 (37.50%)
iii	Appropriate use of Social media among Christian youth prevent them form immoral activities.	25 (39.06%)	19 (29.69%)	11 (17.19%)	9 (14.06%)

iv	Youth who use social media carelessly are involved in series of maladaptive behaviours.	22 (34.38%)	25 (39.06%)	11 (17.19%)	6 (9.38%)
v	Youth who engage themselves in the appropriate use of social media are well cultured than those who use it carelessly.	16 (25%)	18 (28.13%)	23 (35.94%)	7 (10.94%)
vi	Christian youth who use social media appropriately are highly spiritually sensitive than those who use it carelessly.	25 (39.06%)	21 (37.81%)	9 (14.06%)	9 (14.06%)

Table 4 shows the distribution of the respondents in view of the rate of the use of social media among the youth. Both very often and often frequencies have both majority and equal number 26(40.63%) and 26(40.63%) respectively while 11(17.19%) and (1.56%) respondents indicated their views on the frequency of sometimes and rarely respectively on appropriate use of Social Media among Christian youth can cling their heart to Biblical teachings. The majority, that is 24(37.50%) respondents indicated that Christian youth who use social media appropriately rarely engage themselves in violent behaviours on the frequency of rarely. 16(25.00%) respondents indicated their views on the frequency of often. While 14(21.86%) and 10(15.63%) respondents indicated their views on the frequency very often and sometimes respectively. Reports show that 25(39.06%/) respondents indicated that appropriate use of Social media among Christian youth prevent them from immoral activities. and 19(29.69%) respondents indicated their views on the frequency of often. While 11(17.19%) and 9(14.06%) respondents indicated their views on the frequency of sometimes and rarely respectively.

Also, 25(39.06%) respondents indicated their views on youth who use social media carelessly are involved in series of maladaptive behaviours on the frequency of often and 22(34.38%) respondents indicated their views on the frequency of very often while 11(17.19%) and 6(9.38%) respondents indicated their views on the frequency of sometimes and rarely respectively. 23(35.94%) respondents indicated their views on youth who engage themselves in the appropriate use of social media are well cultured than those who use it carelessly frequency of sometimes and 18(28.13%) respondents indicated their view on often while 16(25.00%) and 7(10.94%) respondents indicated their views on the frequency of very often and rarely respectively. 25(39.06%) respondents indicated their views on youth Christian youth who use social media appropriately are highly spiritually sensitive than those who use it carelessly is on the frequency of very often and 21(32.81%) respondents agreed with the same statement on the frequency of often. While 9(14.06%) and 9(14.06%) respondents indicated their views on the frequency of sometimes and rarely respectively. With regards to the findings on appropriate use of social media,. It was discovered that appropriate use is highly important. Similarly, it was found out that those who use social media carelessly are involved in maladaptive behaviours. Therefore, appropriateness you guide the rate the youth use social media.

Conclusively, it is quite glaring from the study that the use of social media is unavoidable as it encourages contemporary youth to relate with God and others in other to share beneficial information around the world. Social media has placed different values on their worship experiences in such a way that they can reach out to people even without leaving their homes. Yet, these young people must be given guided freedom on how to use social media especially in

the churches and not to be addicted to its usage. This implies that parents, pastors, mentors and other care givers need to be effectively involved in their worship and other spiritual activities. Hence, this paper should be of interest to all that have a direct or indirect relationship with the contemporary youth.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is inarguable that the Social Media's means of ensuring excellent and seamless communication between people from different parts of the world is here to stay, and if not utilized properly, might leave the Church way behind in fulfilling the Mandate of the Great Commission in a way. With the advent of Social Media, the Gospel can now be preached in locations very distant from the venue of a worship service, and since the youth make up a major part of Internet users, it is to be seen as a tool for capturing their minds and keeping them glued to God's word, instead of exposing themselves to the negativities and destructive content that the kingdom of darkness has made easily accessible on the internet, thus making us more obedient to the mandate of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The above paper is an empirical research that employed descriptive survey. The population used for the study was five (5) selected churches among five (5) selected denominations in Oyo West Local Government in Oyo Town. Sixty (65) respondents were sampled using random sampling for each of the churches selected.

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