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USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY LEADERS OF CHARISMATIC CHURCHES IN GHANA

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the use of social media platforms by leaders of the Charismatic Churches in Ghana. This study is germane in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic where churches are embracing social media platforms to supplement the conventional face-to-face church meetings. The study was conducted within the framework of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). A questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data from a sample size of 152 respondents. Also, 2 head pastors and their deputies, as well as 2 IT personnel, were interviewed. The study found a high level of awareness of social media platforms adopted by the churches for running their day-to-day activities through their departmental heads and church leaders. Also, the study found that the two churches had documented policies for guiding the use of the adopted social media performs for running the activities of the church. Also, the study arrived at a positive perception towards the adopted social media platforms, and as such, the church leaders found the social media platforms very useful. This finding confirms the preposition of the TAM where perceived usefully increases the extent of use of a platform. Also, the absence of a functional dedicated help desk to support and facilitate the use of the platforms appeared to be the most critical challenge. The study recommended that orientation on social media use should be intensified in the churches, training of users and strengthening of policies on the use of social media in the two churches, should be given priority attention.

Keywords: Social Media, Platforms, System, COVID-19, Churches, Pastors, Charismatic, Online

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Over the years, technology has been used as a medium for spreading the gospel from as far back as New Testament times (Obi-Ani, Anikwenze & Isiani, 2020). According to Wise (2014), the ink and scroll used by the Apostle Paul and others to propagate the gospel were considered cutting-edge technologies of their time. During the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther, using the cutting-edge technology of his day, the printing press, produced and distributed the 'Luther Bible' (Wise, 2014). In a world full of technology, social media platforms have been used as tools for the preaching of the gospel by Pastors, Evangelists, and Teachers of the gospel and Missionaries (White & Niemandt, 2015).

Social media is defined as a form of self-directed mass communication that allows people to communicate with each other without going through the channels set up by institutions of society for socialized communication (Niemandt, 2013). It encompasses a broad range of activities, platforms, and technologies all of which point to one direction - the ability to rapidly publish on the Web and to communicate with one's audience (Adebowale, 2020). Social media is a term used to describe a variety of web-based platforms, applications, and technologies that enable people to socially interact with one another online. Some examples of Social Media Websites (SMW) and applications include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Del.icio.us, Google+, Digg, Blogs, 2go, WhatsApp, and other sites that have a content based on User participation and User-Generated Content (UGC) (Adelaku, 2020; White & Niemandt, 2015).

According to Kasule (2013), social media plays a very important role in the life of the church and the enculturation of the gospel. The natural advantage of the use of social media is that they are fast, furious, and infectious. It is an all-inclusive, non-restrictive, non-hierarchical and non-pretentious way of spreading the gospel (Adebowale, 2020).

A church is simply a particular Christian denomination or group of Christian believers (Badmos, 2014). Charismatic Christianity (also known as Spirit-filled Christianity) is a form of Christianity that emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit, spiritual gifts and modern-day miracles as an everyday part of a believer's life. Practitioners are often called Charismatic Christians or Renewalists. Although there is some considerable overlap, Charismatic Christianity is often categorized into three separate groups: Pentecostalism, the Charismatic Movement, and the Neo-charismatic movement. According to the Pew Research Center, Pentecostals and Charismatic Christians numbered over 584 million or a quarter of the world's 2 billion Christians in 2011 (Constantinides & Fountain, 2007).

Most charismatic churches view the spiritual gift of speaking in tongues as either always or normally associated with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The gift of tongues is generally regarded by charismatics as a supernatural ability to speak in a non-human "angelic language." This "language" appears to be an ecstatic repetition of basic syllables. It is often referred to as a "prayer language," and it is said that Satan cannot understand it. Many, though not all, charismatics believe that this sort of "speaking in tongues" is normative to the Christian experience and that all Spirit-filled believers should have and exercise this gift (Alcorn, 2010).

The widespread adoption of internet-based modes of social communication in the church began only in the early 2000s. The social and economic implications for the church are not yet fully understood. Some believe that the Internet is making people more isolated, while others hope it will increase interactive participation among church members (Socialbakers, 2015). It is believed that social media is providing ways of fostering participation among church members and enhancing relationships. Christian social media websites such as MyChurch.org are free for all to join. The site allows members to get information about over 16,000 churches. Some churches have their social platforms (Baruah, 2012). For instance, the United Methodist Church (UMC) has its community website. Users can post profiles and photos, as well as share their thoughts and opinions with other users. Registered users who have been designated as "friends" can post comments on each other's pages (Badmos, 2014).

Social media platforms have been vastly used by Ghana churches especially the Charismatic churches undertake their church activities (White, Tella & Ampofo, 2016). For instance, as of 2015, Dr. Mensa Otabil, the general overseer of the Central Gospel Church Facebook page was the fastest-growing page in Ghana, with about 149 followers every day, 8,516 weeklies, and 28,607 in a month. He appeared to have a total number of 902,209 followers in July 2015. (Socialbakers, 2015). Also, statistics showed that, during the same period, Bishop Dag Heward-Mills, the founder of Lighthouse Group churches formally known as Lighthouse Chapel International had 742,739 followers while Archbishop Nicolas Duncan-Williams of Action Chapel had 673, 807 followers (Socialbakers, 2015). The numerous uses of social media platforms by churches as evident in Ghana has brought about the so called 'church without walls' (Tella & Ampofo, 2016). This move has made churches easily propagate the gospel without geographical boundaries.

There is no doubt that there is a perceived effect of social media on the church. Several authors have debated the pros and cons of the use of social media in the Church. While the debate continues, there is the need to examine the issue from an empirical point of view. This study focuses on the use of social media by leaders of charismatic churches in Ghana, using the Charismatic Evangelistic Ministry (CEM) in North Legon and The Maker's House Chapel International (MHI) at Kwabenya, as cases of study. For the past few years, the common denominator of these two churches has been that they both use social media to execute their leadership functions. They heavily depend on social media mainly Facebook, Instagram, Youtube, WhatsApp, and others for their church activities such as crusades, harvest, annual gatherings to mention but a few. It is through these platforms that the churches have gone global and harnessed their publicity.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Today, social media is one of the most dominant forces in our culture. It is therefore not surprising that churches are using it to manage their activities. Several churches all over the world have started to embrace the use of social media technology to reach and expand their church community into the virtual world, especially amidst COVID-19 where physical meetings are not encouraged (Adelaku, 2020; WHO, 2020; Pillay, 2020). The impact of social media on church life is generally seen as positive. Church leaders who desire to actively practise their religious faith, have the opportunity to interact with people they may otherwise never have the opportunity to meet physically.

Despite the phenomenal benefits of social media to churches, a study by Badmos (2014) revealed that a high percentage of heads and leaders of churches were reluctant to use social media to perform their functions and activities in their churches. In a similar research, Acheampong (2014) found out that there was largely an underutilization of social media by churches to directly communicate with existing and prospective church members.

In Ghana, several researches have been conducted in the area of the use of social media (Ahenkorah-Marfo, 2014; Ayivor, 2015; Ahenkora & Akussah, 2017). Most of these researches, however, focused on the use of social media in libraries, marketing and politics. Nevertheless, some researches focusing on the use of social media in churches have also been conducted. (Asare-Kusi, 2007; Bonsu & Belk, 2010; Acheampong, 2014). These researchers, however, concentrated on the adoption and impact of social media in churches in general. The researchers have not come across any in-depth research work on the use of social media in charismatic churches in Ghana.

This research seeks to examine the use of social media to manage church activities by the leaders of the Charismatic Evangelistic Ministry, North Legon, and The Marker’s House Chapel International Church.

1.3 The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the use of social media by leaders of the Charismatic Evangelistic Ministry, North Legon and The Maker’s House Chapel International, Kwabenya in Ghana.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

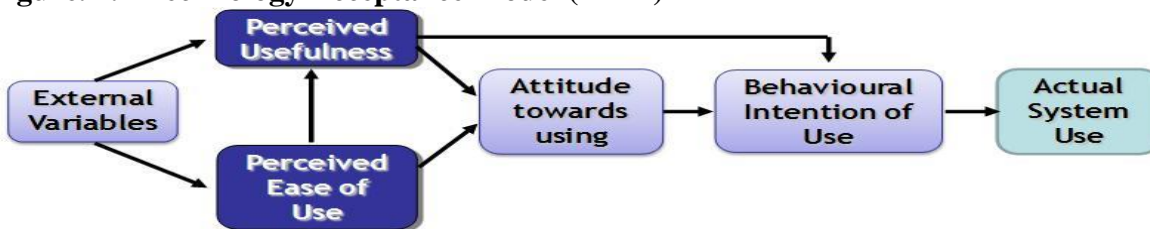
The objectives of the study were;

- 1 To examine the level of awareness and use of social media platforms by the Church leaders of Charismatic Evangelistic Ministry and The Marker’s House Chapel.
- 2 To examine the policies on the use of social media by the two churches.
- 3 To determine challenges faced by leaders of the two churches in the line of use of social media.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The study adopted the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to underpin the study. The model states that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use determine an individual’s intention to use a system, intending to use serving as a mediator of actual system use. Perceived usefulness is also seen as being directly impacted by perceived ease of use (Fig.1).

Figure. 1. Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)



Source: Davis (1993)

Concerning perceived usefulness, it is presupposed that, if the leaders at Charismatic Evangelistic Church, Legon, and The Makers House Chapel International perceive that the use of social media platform is beneficial, then they will continue to use it; otherwise, they will shun the social media platform. Perceived ease of use explains that if the leaders of Charismatic Evangelistic Ministry, Legon, and The Makers House Chapel International perceive that the use of social media platform is easy then they will continue to use it, otherwise, they will stay away from the platform.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is significant in numerous ways:

The study would bring to the fore the challenges which impede the exponential use of social media platforms among church members for management to adopt the right strategies to mitigate such issues.

It would also help stakeholders of the churches, policy-makers, and social media leaders to make informed decisions regarding the adoption and use of social media platforms for church activities.

This study would also contribute to the growing body of knowledge on the topic by bringing out the various critical importance of social media platforms that churches can use in growing their membership.

Moreover, the study would also make a significant contribution to the literature on social media allowing more research to be conducted in the subject area. In other words, the study will serve as a platform for future research.

2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.2 Concept of social media

There is no doubt that social media has gained wide acceptability and usability and it is also becoming probably the most important communication tools used by people (Badmos, 2014).

The term social media refers to “the wide range Internet-based and mobile services that allow users to participate in online exchanges, contribute user-created content, or join online communities” (Vajo, 2017, p.11). The phrase ‘social media’ refers to the developing range of web-based and mobile telephone technologies and Internet-based applications that allow for the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Gupta, Gautam, and Khare (2014) succinctly indicated that social media may be understood as a means of connecting members of various internet communities enabled by widely available and accessible mobile electronic devices. Social media has substantially changed the way organizations, communities, and individuals communicate.

According to Niemandt (as cited in White, Tella, and Ampofo, 2016), social media plays a very important role in the life of the church and the enculturation of the gospel.

The kinds of Internet services commonly associated with social media (sometimes referred to as Web 2.0) include blogs, wikis, social bookmarking, social network sites, status update services, virtual world content among others. These categories overlap to some degree. Twitter, for example,

is a social network site as well as a status - update service. Likewise, “users of the social network site Facebook can share photographs and media. Sharing site Pinterest can follow other people (Akakandelwa, 2015, p.1).

There are over 105 leading social media platforms in the world. Among these known platforms, six of them are mostly used by churches and other social organizations. They are as follows; Facebook. WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Snapchat (Mehra, 2019).

Facebook

With more than 2 billion monthly users, Facebook hosts over a quarter of the world’s population, providing advertisers with an unparalleled opportunity to reach virtually anyone and everyone (Jolly, 2019). This assertion is in tandem with the findings of Lua (2019) who indicated that Facebook is the biggest social media site around, with more than two billion people using it every month. Facebook prioritizes content that sparks conversations and meaningful interactions between people, especially those from family and friends. It is one of the social media platforms that a large number of churches use in running their day-to-day activities (Jolly, 2019).

WhatsApp

WhatsApp is a messaging application used by people in over 180 countries. Initially, WhatsApp was only used by people to communicate with their family and friends. Gradually, people started communicating with businesses via WhatsApp (Lua, 2019). WhatsApp has been building out its platform to allow churches and other organizations to have a proper profile, support members’ participation, and share updates with users about their church activities.

Instagram

Instagram is a photo and video-sharing social media application. It allows users to share a wide range of content such as photos, videos, stories and live videos. While Facebook’s mind-boggling user numbers make it the undisputed king of social media, the company’s hottest acquisition is beginning to look like the king of social advertising. Instagram now boasts of more than 500 million monthly active users and commands one of the highest audience engagement rates on social media. This constitutes 58% higher than Facebook and 2000% higher than Twitter (Jolly, 2019).

Twitter

Twitter was founded on March 21, 2006, and has its headquarters in San Francisco, California (Maina, 2018). It was created by Jack Dorsey and launched that same year in July. Unlike Facebook where one can have friends to share different things, with Twitter one has to get connected to the latest information on what they find interesting (Odhiambo, 2012). Twitter has revolutionized breaking news and provided unparalleled access for users to connect with both niche and mainstream influences. With 328 million monthly active users, it remains one of the popular social media platforms. Businesses, as well as numerous churches, use Twitter to interact with prospective clients, church members, and executives. It is used to answer questions, release the latest news, and at the same time used for targeted adverts for specific audiences (Maina, 2018).

2.3 Social media in churches

The Church is simply the collection of individual Christians. The emphasis of New Testament teaching on the Church is that there is no distinction among Christ's group of people regarding race, gender, nationality, or social standing (Badmos, 2014). The church is simply a particular Christian denomination or group of Christian believers.

About 40% of the African population are Christians. Nigeria, for instance, is a leading religious nation with about 91% of the population attending offline religious services and 95% praying regularly followed by Ghana (BBC, 2004; Emenyonu, 2007; Chilwa, 2012). There is a perceived effect of social media in the church. Several authors have considered the pros and cons of the use of social media in the Church. In Church, there is no distinction among Christ's group of people regarding race, gender, nationality, or social standing (Shane 1995 as cited in Badmos, 2014). There are different aspects of Church life. These include spiritual, social, economic, administrative, evangelization among others.

Trends in global information communication have necessitated that most churches, whether charismatic or orthodox, resort to the employment of web 2.0 technologies such as Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, Wikis, RSS feeds, YouTube, etc. in their services. Indeed, the knowledge and use of such platforms have become critical for the survival of most churches globally (Fogena & Albert-Leigh, 2013). Tella and Ampofo (2016) postulated that social media as a new phenomenon has become a tool used by many televangelists and pastors. It can be an essential and valuable communications tool for those providing services for people in the Church.

Social media now allows churches to market themselves at no cost. Saunders (2009) argues that social media has supercharged the 'for free' revolution engendered by the web. He argues that marketers started by seeing the Internet as a sales response medium, but now, all marketing functions have migrated to the Internet. So, the real marketing investment is not in buying space and time but in the energy, culture, and imagination of the company (Saunders, 2009). This is great for non-profit organizations like churches. Fogena and Albert-Leigh (2013) agree with Saunders (2009) that social media has supercharged the "for free" revolution, but argue that churches should steer clear from the use of the word "marketing" in their efforts.

2.4 Awareness of social media platforms by churches

In this era of intense competition, especially amongst the churches, the yardstick for measuring success depends on awareness creation, persuasion and informing church members of the existence of offerings (Okyere, Agyapong, & Nyarku, 2011). This has resulted in several social media marketing communication tools being employed by churches to help them succeed in this kind of competition. Badmos (2014) asserts that to know the effect of social media on the church, it is necessary to ascertain the level of church awareness of social media websites.

A study conducted by the Education Service Center (2019) indicated that the majority of church members were aware of the social media platform. This finding is in agreement with the works of Chilwa (2013) in which it was found out that, a greater portion of church members were aware

of the adopted social media platforms for church activities. Most of them became aware of the social media platforms through announcements, departmental heads, and church training.

McKinney (2014) investigated the use of social media among churches. The researcher surveyed some churches to see how they were using social media within their organizations. Initially, the researcher revealed that the majority of church members were aware of the use of social media platforms for church activities. It was found that more than 30% of churches surveyed said they were aware of Facebook and update Facebook each day, while 15% said they have never used the site. Just under half of those surveyed said social media was the most effective method of communication, while about, 25% preferred knocking on doors, which is the more traditional method (Pitman, 2012). Similarly, Chilwa (2012) in his research posited that almost all the respondents indicated in affirmative that they were aware of the social media platform used by the church.

Further, in the works of Lacy (2021), the majority of the respondents were aware of the social media platforms and they got to know of them through friends and general announcements. The study agrees with the works of Chilwa (2013) who undertook a study on Community and Social Interaction in Digital Religious Discourse in Nigeria, Ghana, and Cameroon where he found out that on Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter, pastors saw their pages and profiles as another opportunity to reach out to the members in the form of teachings, prayers, and announcements. In the same study, the majority of the respondents were aware of the social media platforms being used by the church. In the same study, members merely responded in gratitude and shared “testimonies” of the impact of the pastors on their lives. The majority of the respondents were aware of the use of Facebook as a social media platform for church activities.

Besides, Musa, Azmi, and Ismail (2015) adopted mixed methodology in a study on awareness and usage of social media, using 150 respondents who were purposively selected. Findings from the work revealed that 98.5% of the respondents were aware of social media. Facebook (78.5%), Twitter (71.9%), and WhatsApp (73.3%) were the most used social networks among the respondents. The majority (91.9%), accessed social networks using their mobile phones, 32.6% used laptop computers while 4.4% went to a café. Similarly, 71.9% used social media for interaction, 54.8% for sharing information with members while 48.1% for educating members. This vast awareness of social media and exponential use of Facebook supports the finding of the supported Education Service Center (2019) where a greater percentage of the respondents were aware of the social media platforms, and Facebook emerged as the most familiar social media platform by church members.

2.5 Social media use among churches in Ghana

Ghana’s internet penetration stands at 19.6% of the Ghanaian population. There are over five million people connected to the internet in Ghana (Internet World Statistics, 2015). This internet audience is quite significant for targeting the Christian message in a country that has 71.2 per cent of its population identifying themselves as Christians (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012).

Social media use is a big priority for many churches in Ghana but also, many see marketing and communication as an out-growth of evangelism, one of the core purposes of the church (Acheampong, 2014). Many churches are beginning to learn from profit-making organizations that marketing practices can be an effective tool to fulfil their mission through the use of some popular social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram to mention but a few (Acheampong, 2014).

Previously, churches were initially hesitant to embrace such practices, especially advertisement (Dunlap, Gaynor, & Roundtree, 1983 as cited in Acheampong, 2014). The reasons were that marketing is too “worldly” (Acheampong, 2014) or simply that there has been lack of beneficial data for use by a religious organization (Cooper & McIlwain, 2000).

Today, the use of social media in church administration has received more attention in the world, including Ghana as a country. Several studies demonstrate that churches employ social media platforms to attract and retain members. Appiah et al. (2013) argue that just like other organizations that market products and services, churches in Ghana also offer products/services and market them to their congregation and prospective members through the use of social media platforms. These services include, live preaching, general meeting, crusade, communication with members, keep-fit programs, church games activities, health education, pictures on Sunday church services, and other programs (Appiah et al, 2013).

2.5.1 The use of social media for church activities.

Odhiambo (2012) postulated that social media had gained a lot of popularity over the past few years and as a result of this popularity, other traditional Media had experienced a decline in both business and popularity. Palmer and Lewis (2009) argued that the mainstream media channels had faced many challenges in recent times that had led to television facing a downturn in their profit levels, as the result of the vast use of social media platforms. Social media is a tool for overcoming some of the barriers faced by church members in forming and maintaining positive social relationships.

Helland (2005) revealed that in recent times, social media has served as platforms on which pastors from different churches broadcast “miracles” and “healing”. The popular ones include Living Word from International Central Gospel Church and Pentecost Hour from The Church of Pentecost. To advertise church programs, churches employ social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, and LinkedIn just like business organizations do. They mostly access the platforms through phones.

A study conducted by the Education Service Center (2019), revealed that “75% of male internet users were on Facebook as well as 83% of female internet users and virtually used the platform daily. Facebook continues to be the most widely used platform, with 79% of American internet users.” Further, 32% of teenagers consider Instagram to be the most important social network.

Furthermore, in the work of White, Tella, and Ampofo (2016), Facebook was again ranked first (90.99%) among Ghanaian desktop computer users. Twitter was ranked second with 4.39%,

followed by Pinterest 1.46%, Tumblr 1.11%, and the remaining social media platforms holding 2.05% (Desktop social network usage statistics in Ghana, 2015).

The Internet World Statistic Report (2015) indicated that as of November 30, 2015, Ghanaian subscribers on Facebook were about 2,900,000 people, representing 1.6% of the population. Among the mobile Internet users in 2015, Facebook was ranked the most used social media platform in Ghana with 94.89%, followed by Twitter (3.97%), Pinterest (0.62%), Google+ (0.18%) and other social media platforms collectively holding 0.34% (Ghana Social Media Usage Statistics Using Mobile, 2015). They were mostly used for live streaming, public awareness and education, and posting of pictures of daily activities.

Just under half of those surveyed said they used Facebook every day, but the majority said that they never use sites other than Facebook. 51% of churches said that at least one of their senior staff members regularly blogs or updates social media. Again, 56% of churches surveyed allowed and/or encouraged staff members to update their personal social media pages while at work, 74% of churches do not have a paid staff member that updates their church's pages (Education Service Center, 2019). Statistics show that just under half of all the churches surveyed considered Facebook as the most effective method of communication. This finding supports the works of the Education Service Center (2019) where Facebook was cited as the most widely used social media platform for church activities. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the rest of the churches considered Facebook an awful method of communication. They just don't consider it the best. The reason behind this data may be the lack of knowledge of the effectiveness of social media in the church. There is a clear divide in a generation that fully understands social media and one that speaks an entirely different digital language (Pittman, 2012). About from live streaming, social media platforms were used for evangelism, an announcement on meetings, and other programs.

Further, in the works of Lacy (2021), Twitter emerged as the most widely used social media platform in the dissemination of information in the church. It was daily used by church leaders for propagating messages of the head pastor and other activities. The author pointed out that, Twitter gave users the option to retweet information that others had already tweeted. In the same study, it was emphasized that, retweeting allowed churches the opportunity to engage personally with their readers. If a church member tweets a prayer request or a Bible verse, the person in charge of the church's page can retweet them, and the reader is notified of the action. This builds community and a sense of involvement between the church and the member.

Also, Burnett (2013) found that Instagram was a powerful tool that most churches used to market and create awareness of their church activities, especially, if pictures posting as a form of communication was the focus of the church. The majority of the churches used Instagram as compared to Facebook and Twitter which were recorded as the most widely used in the works of Pittman (2012); Lacy (2021); Heights Student Ministry (2013).

2.6 Policies guiding the use of social media in churches

A social media policy is a document of guidelines and policies that can either be suggested or enforced, depending on what is needed and acceptable within an organization (Pittman, 2012). It's simply a document of written guidelines suggesting how to act and interact with people on social

media, so that church is always seen in the best possible light. Emedi (2011) concurs that “because the church is the manifestation of the Reign of God, the norms that guide it exemplify the highest vision of human community”. It is these “norms” that demarcate the church from society while at the same time connect it to the same society. The purpose of social media policy guidelines is two-fold: First, the Church has an aim to protect its interests, including, but not limited to, the privacy of the employees and confidentiality regarding our plans, partners, users, and operations. Secondly, these guidelines will help make respectful and appropriate decisions as work-related interactions with people on the Internet (Dean, 2017).

Dean (2017) asserts that part of social media strategy should include the use of a social media policy. This can be a controversial move for many people, but it can be incredibly useful to not only protect the church but also to help align everyone with their mission. More importantly, it aligns the public’s perception of their vision and goals.

Church leaders must always assume that their work-related social media activities are visible to the Church as well as current and potential employees, clients, partners, and prospects. The Church reserves the right to direct its staff to avoid certain subjects and remove inappropriate comments and posts. Hence, internal policies should remain in effect in workplaces (Dean, 2017; McKinney, 2014).

It is also good for a church, or any employer, to set exceptions in writing to ensure that everyone is on the same page. They may not be able to control what individuals post, but they certainly can fire a person if what he or she posts is shining a bad light on the church or diverting people from the core message. Your social media policy can be simple or extensive, but it should align with your church’s style and culture as well as your biblical beliefs and overall mission. The idea isn’t to control your people and what they say but to provide them with a guide to representing the church and Jesus well. Most of it should be pretty common sense. (Dean (2017).

Okyere, Agyapong, and Nyarku (2011) stated that “At Our Church (the “Church”), we know that online social platforms, including blogs, wikis, message boards, video and photo sharing websites, and social networking services, are constantly transforming the way we interact. We also recognize the importance of the Internet in shaping the public view of our Church”. The Church is committed to supporting individual rights to interact responsibly and knowledgeably on the Internet through blogging and interaction in social media. Dean (2017) also added that It is imperative for church staff, volunteers, and church attendees to share and learn from others to build a valuable online community and should endeavour to monitor comments of those who post comments on the church platform to quickly stop and delete any information that does not conform to the standard of the church

Black (2010) asserts that there are two approaches to creating a social media policy. One can write one complete social media policy that addresses all currently available social mediums. Or one can write policies as is needed. For example, if a company does not have a social media presence on YouTube one may not need to address YouTube and video usage. But as a business expands one may need to add a YouTube policy later. The author further added that Social Media policies allow for clear expectations on how church employees should conduct themselves online.

McKinney (2014) investigated Social Media in the Church. The author found out that, the social media guide that was used to run the church's social platform was stated as follows;

“as an employee of New Heights Church, you are seen by our members and outside parties as a representative of the church. Therefore, as in all areas of daily life, a church staff member's personal website or blog is a reflection on the church, whether or not the church is specifically discussed or referenced. If you choose to identify yourself as a New Heights Church employee or to discuss matters related to the church on your website or blog, please bear in mind that, although you may view your site as a personal project, many readers will assume you are speaking on behalf of the church. Therefore, we ask that you observe the following guidelines to preserve the Christian witness and effectiveness of both yourself and the church.”

Also, AG Financial Insurance Solutions (2019) proposed a guideline for creating a social media policy for a church. In the proposal it indicates that; it is against the law to utilize articles, photos, music, or other materials without obtaining permission first. To legally post copyrighted material, whether it's a sermon from a visiting evangelist or a video of worship service containing copyrighted music, it must have the proper authorization. This can either be through a license the church holds or directly from the owner of the copyrighted material.

2.7 Challenges in the use of social media platforms

The use of social media platforms have a tremendous positive impact on the running of church activities. However, it is loaded with some challenges.

2.7.1 Unstable availability of internet

Chukwudi, Ogu, and Monday (2016) undertook a study on the use of ICT and social networking websites as a tool for evangelism, the findings indicated that one problem that hindered churches use of social media was the unstable of the internet. The study emphasized that infrastructure gadgets such as a set of computers or tablets were always available but the availability of the internet made it very difficult to reach out to the masses through the use of social media. Similar findings were evident in the study by Andrews (2011); Appiah, Dwomoh, & Kyire (2013); and Akakandelwa (2015).

2.7.2 Inadequate training on the use of social media platform

In the area of an information system, training is a critical factor that helps in the effective and efficient use of technology. Okyere, Agyapong, & Nyarku (2011) revealed that inadequate training is a core factor that has led to the inappropriate management of social media platforms by church

leaders. Similar findings were found in several studies such as Aduloju et al. (2009); Asamoah-Gyadu, (2007); White, Tella, and Ampofo (2016).

2.7.3 Inappropriate use of social media platform.

Most users of the church platforms do not use the church social media platform as expected. Weisgerber (2013) found that most church members use the church social media platform to promote themselves. In the same study, the author brought to mind that, sometimes people managing social media sites are at a loss as to what to post, and they post things at random that does not relate to the audience.

2.7.4 Breach of privacy

Andrews (2011) undertook a study on Social networks and the death of privacy. The study revealed that users may be getting more choices and controls over their data, but this did not always help. The author further stated that ‘sharing’ information on social media sites was dangerous because privacy was breached. Churches needed to be cautious of what they posted to the Internet, but that did not necessarily mean that social media sites as a whole were dangerous, and could cause trouble for the organization. This is an issue when we look at churches that have multiple ministries and who serve completely different audiences.

2.7.6 Exposure to profane content on social media platforms.

Unless church leaders are diligent to filter the Internet content to which members are exposed, they could be exposed to pornography or other inappropriate content. A classic example is that; users of Facebook cannot control who sends them a friend request. It becomes problematic when the user receiving the request does not take the trouble to screen or filter the profile to check the credibility of the sender (Crispin et al., 2004, p.111). Some Facebook users end up receiving friends who tag them with pornographic materials. Some receive spiritualistic and those who deal with blood money as friends. These ultimately destroy the faith of users.

2.7.8 Loss of time

Social media inadvertently consumes the time of users. Buch (2019) stated that while it is true that some of that time is likely spent in making and maintaining important business, social or professional connections, it is also true that it is easy to become distracted and end up spending valuable time on games, chats or other non-related activities.

2.7.9 Social media addiction.

Buch (2019) asserts that teens and young adults are considered particularly at risk to negative effects. They are a generation raised on the internet, social media, and digital technology so these things are integral and indispensable parts of their lives. Young people also are impressionable, eager for acceptance, and relatively inexperienced. This can cloud their judgment. Most adults

today remember what life was like before the internet, social media, and mobile devices so it's easier to step away from them. But it has still proved problematic, especially for adults who are prone to addictive behaviour or have pre-existing mental health issues. Similar findings were found in studies by Akakandelwa (2015); White, Tella, and Ampofo (2016), and Newberry (2019).

2.7.10 Unstable power supply

Power is a necessity especially when an electronic system is used to deliver services. Adomi (2007) found that power outages are problems militating against internet provision and use in African countries. For instance, power fluctuation disturbs the social media platform used by organizations or institutions such as schools, churches, and companies who use social media platforms to reach out to their customers. Similar findings were identified found in the study conducted (Akonu, 2005).

3.1 METHODOLOGY

The study employed a mixed-method approach. Qualitative and quantitative techniques were combined in collecting and analyzing the data for the study. The two churches selected for the study were the Charismatic Evangelistic Ministry, North Legon, and The Makers House Chapel International. The justification for selecting these churches is the fact that they are both charismatic churches and they both use social to a large extent. Indeed, they are among the few churches which have adopted social media platforms to run their day-to-day activities.

The population of this study comprised the heads of departments, deputy heads of departments, and departmental coordinators of both the Charismatic Evangelistic Ministry and the Makers House Chapel International, totalling 162. Also, the head pastors and their deputies of the two churches as well as the IT heads were part of the population. Therefore, the total population for the study was 168.

The researchers used the entire population for the study. Therefore, there was no sampling. This is because the population was not too large and for that matter manageable.

Data gathered using questionnaires were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), results were presented in descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages whiles the principles of thematic analysis was used to analysed qualitative data.

4.1 DATA ANALYSIS AND MAJOR FINDINGS

4.1.1 Awareness of and use of social media platforms by churches

This section captures leaders' awareness and the use of social media platforms by the two churches. Awareness plays a critical role in use. This means that users need to be aware of the social media platforms before they can use them. Awareness plays a cardinal role in the extent of the use of any information system. It is obvious that if potential users are not aware of a platform, there is no way

they can get the opportunity to use it. In this direction, respondents were asked to indicate whether they are aware of the available social media platforms or not.

All the 152 respondents responded in the affirmative that they were aware of the social media platforms adopted by the church. It can be deduced that the majority of church leaders were aware of the available social media platforms that the churches use to run their daily activities.

4.1.2 Channel of awareness of the social media platform

In the context of this study, the channel of awareness refers to how respondents became aware of available social media platforms. Respondents were asked to indicate the channel through which they got to know the available social media platforms. Their responses are represented in Table 4.1

Table 4.1: Respondents channel of awareness of social media platform

Channels of Awareness	Yes		No	
	Freq.	100%	Freq.	100%
Church Protocol Members	55	37	96	63
Friends	71	47	81	53
Family Members	44	29	108	71
Pastors	73	48	79	52
Department Heads	39	26	113	74

As shown in Table 4.1, out of the total respondents, 73 (48%) of them indicated that they became aware of the social media platforms subscribed to by the church through their pastors, 71 (47%) indicated that they became aware through friends, and 55 (37%) got to know through their church protocol members. Besides, 44 (29%) and 39 (26%) became aware through family members and department heads respectively. It can be seen from the above table that the majority of the respondents became aware of the adopted social media platforms through their pastors. It can, therefore, be inferred that their pastors may have mentioned the subscribed database during sermons or on different occasions.

From the findings, the massive awareness of the adopted social media platforms by the two churches can be attributed to the fact that, normally, new projects, innovations, and occasions are announced during Sunday and weekday services, and also, departmental heads continue to emphasize the announcements at meetings. These findings are consistent with the works of Chilwa (2013), in which it was found that almost all the members of the church were aware of the church's adopted social media platforms and it was mostly through church announcements and departmental heads as well as training. The findings of the study were also in agreement with the study of the Education Service Center (2019) in which it was found that a large number of church members were aware of all adopted social media platforms. Also, the finding is in tandem with the findings of McKinney (2014); Pitman (2012), Musa, Azmi, and Ismail (2015) who revealed that large portions of church members who participated in their studies were aware of their church's social media platforms for the running of the day-to-day activities of the church.

4.2 Types of social media platforms being used by the churches

There are several social media platforms that churches and other organizations use to reach out to their congregations digitally. With this in mind, the researchers asked respondents to indicate the types of social media platforms being used by their churches. The results are represented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Types of social media platforms being used by the churches

Items	Yes		No	
	Freq.	100%	Freq.	100%
WhatsApp	150	99	2	27
Facebook	131	86	21	14
Twitter	70	46	82	54
LinkedIn	4	3	148	97
Instagram	92	60	60	40
Snapchat	14	9	138	91

As indicated in Table 4.2, out of the 152 respondents, 150 (99%) representing the majority indicated that WhatsApp was being used by the church to run its daily activities. Another, 131 (86%) mentioned Facebook, 92 (60%) were aware of Instagram, whilst 70 (46%) indicated Twitter. Also, 14 (9%) and 4 (3%) indicated Snapchat and LinkedIn respectively. It can be inferred from this finding that WhatsApp was the most popular social media platform and, the most widely used by the two churches to reach their members. LinkedIn, with the lowest frequency, was not a popular social media platform used by churches to run their activities. It is apparent that since social media has different features, the churches adopted them per the features they can benefit from to increase the frontier of their church.

This finding can be explained by the fact that WhatsApp, is now the most popularly known social media platform which people install first when they buy new phones because it has become the commonest and perhaps the cheapest form of communication. Further, church members are usually encouraged to join WhatsApp platforms in other for them to be abreast with the activities of the church. Likewise, Facebook is one of the social media platforms which churches use most for exchanging contents such as videos, pictures and related links as far as the focus of the churches is concerned. These findings support the works of Chiluiwa (2013) who investigated Community and Social Interaction in the Digital Religious Discourse in Nigeria, Ghana, and Cameroon. He found out that church members were mostly aware of Facebook and used it for sharing testimonies. Other members also use the Facebook platform to follow the live streaming of church programs. The findings also support the study by Helland (2005) in which it was revealed that church members of the International Central Gospel Church and Pentecost Hour from the Church of Pentecost were aware of Facebook and WhatsApp as media of communication by which churches advertise their programs. The findings also support the works of the Education Service Center (2019); White, Tella, and Ampofo (2016), and the Internet World Statistic Report (2015). However, the findings contradict the works of Lacy (2021) and Burnet (2013) who founded Twitter and Instagram respectively as the most use social media platforms as far as church activities were

concerned. It can be concluded from the findings that, churches in Africa consider Facebook and WhatsApp as the easiest and an effective way of communication.

4.2.1 Use of social media for church activities

When users become aware of an information system platform, the next important factor is to find out the extent of its use since that will determine its productivity or how fruitful the service would be. Several questions were asked and responses were obtained. Access to a social media platform is one of the critical factors that determine the extent of its uses. In light of this, respondents were asked to indicate the devices they used to access the available social media platforms. The responses are captured in Table 4.3

Table 4.3: Means of accessing Social Media by leaders

Social media platform	Yes		No	
	Freq.	100%	Freq.	100%
Smart phone	140	92	12	8
Desktop computers	67	44	85	56
Tablet	50	33	102	67

Source: Field Data, 2019

From Table 4.3, it can be seen that a large portion of respondents totalling 140 (92%), accessed the available social media platforms used by the church through smartphones. Another 67 (44%) respondents used desktop computers, whilst 50 (33%) accessed platforms through tablets. This result is an indication that smartphones which are now considered a necessary device are used widely by churches to access social media platforms.

4.2.2 Interaction with church workers or members on social media

Respondents were asked to confirm if they had ever interacted with their church workers or members on social media platforms. The resulting responses are represented in Figure 4.1

Figure 4.1: Respondents' interaction with church members or workers on the social media platforms

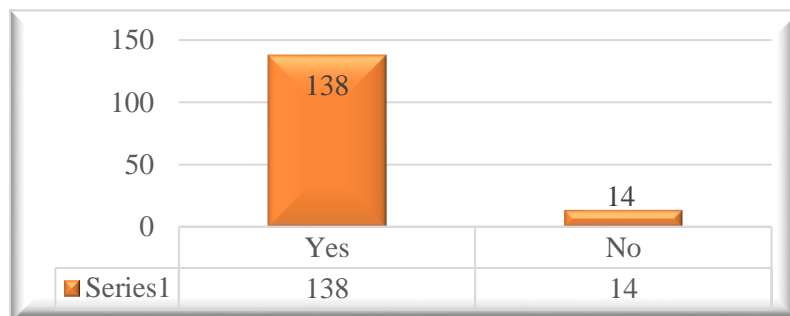


Figure 4.1 points to a majority of 138 (91%) of respondents confirming that had have ever interacted with church members or workers on social media platforms whilst a low number of 14 (9%) responded otherwise.

4.2.3 The extent of use of social media platforms by the churches

The more users of an information system platform use it, the more it is perceived to be useful and easy to use as postulated in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by Davis (1993).

In this direction, respondents were asked to indicate the extent of use of the available social media platforms by the churches. Table 4.4 captures the responses obtained.

Table 4.4: Respondents extent of use of social media platform.

Items	Frequency	Percent (100%)
Daily	80	53
Once a week	31	20
1- 2 times a week	21	14
3 -4 times a week	14	8
5 - 7 times a week	5	3
Once a month	1	7

From Table 4.4, it can be seen that more than half 80 (53%) of the respondents indicated that they used available social media platforms in the churches daily as far as church activities were concerned. About a quarter of them used social media platforms once a week. Other responses were as follows; 21 (14%) used it for a period of 1-2 times a week, 14 (8%) used it for 3-4 times a week, 5 (3%) and 1 (7%) used it for 5-times a week and once a month respectively. These results point to the fact that social media platforms are being used by churches daily to run their daily activities.

Further, head pastors were asked how long their churches had been using social media platforms. The following were the responses:

The head pastor of the Charismatic Evangelistic Ministry (CEM), stated that:

*“to me more than ten (10) years” and from The Maker’s House Chapel International:
“We have been using social media platforms since the inception of the church; so far about six (6) years ago.”*

These responses from the pastors signify that the churches saw the need to use social media platforms immediately after the social networking platforms were implemented.

4.2.4 Purpose of use of social media platforms by churches.

There are myriads of reasons why a church would adopt social media platforms for its daily activities. In light of this, respondents were asked to indicate the activities for which social media platforms are used in the churches. Table 4.5 shows responses from respondents.

Table 4.5: Purpose of using social media platforms by churches.

Items	Yes		No	
Live to stream	113	74	39	26
General communication with members	106	70	46	30
To call for meetings	78	51	74	49
To inform members of functions.	83	55	69	45
To inform them of decisions	81	53	71	47
Spreading the gospel	97	64	55	36
Public awareness and education	78	51	74	49
Post pictures of daily activities	86	57	66	43
Donor reporting	15	10	137	90
Solicit donations	36	24	116	76
To mobilize members of department /	54	36	98	65

As demonstrated in Figure 4.5, a considerable number of respondents established that social media platforms were used by the churches for live streaming. A sizeable number of 106 (70%) confirmed its use for general communication with members, while more than half of the respondents totalling 78 (51%) indicated that they used social media platforms to call for meetings. Another, 83 (55 %) respondents confirmed that they used them to publicize pending functions. Also, 81 (53%) of them indicated that the churches used social media platforms to inform church members of decisions made by the churches especially decisions by the church councils. Further, 97 (64%) of the respondents indicated that they use social media platforms for spreading the gospel, while 78 (51%) responded that they used social media for public awareness creation and education. Another 86 (57%) confirmed that the church used social media platforms to post pictures of daily activities. Only 15 (10%) respondents indicated they used social media platforms for donor reporting.

Additionally, 36 (24%) and 54 (36%) respondents used social media platforms for soliciting donations and for mobilizing members of departments and societies. It can be inferred from the responses that most churches use social media platforms for general communication with members.

From the findings, in terms of access, the study found that smartphones were the most used gadgets to access social media platforms by the two churches. This finding is in agreement with the works of White, Tella, and Ampofo (2016) and Helland (2005) where it was found that mobile phones were the most used digital devices to access social media platforms. Of course, it can be explained that mobile phones have now become a necessity in terms of communication and perhaps the easier and best device which can easily be carried along, and as a matter of fact, supporting social media access is just one of its functions. No wonder, most of the church leaders use them to access the adopted social media platforms.

Again, the study found that social media platforms adopted by the churches were being used by churches' leaders daily to run their activities and mostly for Live streaming and general communication with members.

This finding was also confirmed by a response from the head pastor of the Charismatic Evangelistic Ministry (CEM) was that:

“We use social media platforms for our church activities because we realized in recent times that it is the fastest way of getting information out and broadcasting messages to members of the society or community. And it comes easy to almost everybody. Anybody can access social media platforms, no matter where they are, they can have access provided there is the availability of the internet”. Also, by the study, we realized that it is one of the easiest and quickest way to get information to our members.”

Similarly, a pastor of The Maker’s House Chapel International had this to say:

“We use social media platforms to propagate the Gospel, for advertising, spreading the word across the globe and for reaching people who are not closer to us.”

It was evident from the responses of the head and deputy pastors of the two churches that as a matter of fact, social media platforms performed phenomenal roles in running the activities of the church, more importantly, reaching out to the masses; both church members and non-church members alike.

The pastors were further asked to give reasons behind their choices of the adopted social media platforms. According to one participant of MHCI, the reasons were as follows;

“We are using that medium because we think it’s commonly used by most people and perhaps very reliable to reach out to members and others. The head pastor of CEM also stated categorically that;

“As said earlier, we realized these that we have adopted are easy to access and easy to use especially WhatsApp. Now too, with our phones, we can easily access Facebook, get alerts from YouTube and others. Also, we chose them because they are always available and do not require or need much IT knowledge to use them.”

These findings are consistent with the findings of researches undertaken by the Ghana Social Media Usage Statistics Using Mobile (2015); Pittman (2012) and Lacy (2021) where it was revealed that most church members access adopted social media platforms daily with the main purpose of getting informed about the activities of the church as well as engaging themselves with live streaming programs irrespective of their geographical locations and time of day.

Social media platforms contribute immensely to churches by lessening the burden of reaching members and getting them connected with church activities and also very compelling to use in this era where the world is working assiduously to cut the spread of the novel COVID-19.

4.2.5 Policy on the use of social media

A policy, according to the Oxford dictionary (2010) is a set of ideas or plans that are used as a basis for making decisions, especially, in politics, economics, or business. To ensure sanity in the use of social media platforms for church activities, there is the need to put policies in place. In this direction, the researchers sought to know if there were policies in place to control the use of the social media platforms adopted by the churches. Respondents were asked to classify policy statements of their churches as Excellent, Very Good Good, Average, Bad, or Very Bad. The responses are presented in Table 4.6

Table 4.7 policy on the use of social media

Item	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Average	Bad	Very Bad	Non Response
Be Authentic Be honest about your identity.	53 (35%)	35 (23%)	26 (17%)	12 (8%)	18 (12%)	8 (5%)	-
Use a Disclaimer If you publish content to any website outside of the church and it has something to do with the work you do or subjects associated with the church, use a disclaimer such as this: <i>“The postings on this site are my own and do not represent Church positions, strategies or opinions.”</i>	47 (31%)	41 (27%)	29 (19%)	21 (14%)	9 (6%)	5 (3%)	-
Don’t Use Pseudonyms Never pretend to be someone else. Tracking tools enable supposedly anonymous posts to be traced back to their authors.	36 (24%)	49 (32%)	35 (23%)	35 (23%)	12 (8%)	12 (8%)	-
Protect Your Identity While you should be honest about yourself, don’t provide personal information that scam artists or identity thieves could use	36 (24%)	47 (31%)	41 (27%)	15 (10%)	10 (7%)	3 (2%)	-

Respect Your Audience Don't use slurs, personal insults, obscenity, or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in the church community	44 (29%)	31 (20 %)	49 (32%)	15 (9%)	12 (8%)	1 (1%)	-
Monitor Comments Most people who maintain social media sites welcome comment	29 (19%)	51 (37%)	35 (23%)	19 (13%)	12 (8%)	6 (4%)	-

As can be gleaned from Table 4.6 concerning the policy statement “Be honest about your identity” 53 (35%) respondents indicated Excellently, 35 (23%) indicated Very Well and 26 (17%) indicated Good. Also, 12 (8%) of the respondents chose Average, whilst 18 (12%) and 8 (5%) indicated Bad and Very Bad respectively. This result is an indication that most of the church leaders are honest about their identity regarding the use of social media platforms for running the daily activities of the churches.

With the policy statement “If you publish content to any website outside of the church and it has something to do with the work you do or subjects associated with the church, use a disclaimer such as this: *The postings on this site are my own and do not represent Church positions, strategies or opinions.*” The following results were obtained: A sizeable 47 (31%) respondents indicated excellently, 41 (27%) indicated very good and 29 (19%) chose well. Further, 21 (14%) indicated average. On the flipside 9 (6%) of the respondents rated the statement as bad and 5 (3%) as very bad. It can be inferred that most of the church leaders perceived the policy “*The postings on this site are my own and do not represent Church positions, strategies or opinions*” as highly positive.

Regarding the policy statement, “Protect Your Identity: While you should be honest about yourself, don't provide personal information that scam artists or identity thieves could use”, 47 (31%) respondents rated it as very good, 41 (27%) indicated good, while 36 (24%) chose excellently. Those who chose average were 15 (10%) and on the flip side, 10 (7%) rated it as bad whilst 3 (2%) representing the least response rated it as very bad. This result is also an indication that protecting one's identity is a crucial factor in the use of social media platforms.

With the policy statement, “Don't Use Pseudonyms: Never pretend to be someone else. Tracking tools enable supposedly anonymous posts to be traced back to their authors”, 49 (32%) respondents rated it as very good, 36 (24%) rated it as excellent whilst 35 (23%) rated it as well. Other reactions were as follows: average, 35(23%), bad, 2 (8%) and very bad 4 (3%). It can be deduced from these results that the policy on tracking tools that enable supposedly anonymous posts to be traced back to their authors is appreciated as far as using social media for church activities are concerned.

About the policy “don't use slurs, personal insults, obscenity, or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in the church community”, 49 (32%) considered it as good, 44 (29%) respondents indicated excellently, whilst 31 (20%) and 15 (9%) rated it as a very good and average policy respectively. On the other hand, 12 (8%) rated it as bad and 1 (1%) indicated very bad. This result is an indication that the policy “don't use slurs, personal insults, obscenity, or engage in any

conduct that would not be acceptable in the church community” is a popular policy in the use of social media platforms in the churches.

Considering the policy statement “monitor comments”, 51 (37%) of the respondents rated it as very good, 35 (23%) indicated good, whilst 29 (19%) rated it as excellent. Also, 19 (13%) rated the policy average and 12 (8%) and 6 (4%) rated it as bad and very bad respectively. It can be deduced from these results that when churches take the trouble to monitor comments, it will ensure sanity as compared to social media platforms used by organisations in which comments are not monitored.

As revealed, the study found that there were policies established for guiding the use of social media platforms in both churches. These policies served as guides to church leaders and members in the course of their communication on the platforms. For instance, the study revealed that church members could not just post anything on the church’s platforms that had nothing to do with subjects associated with the church. This, in effect brought sanity to the church platforms. The policies guided church members as to how to access the social media platforms to conform to the standard of the churches. These findings are in agreement with those of Dean (2017) who found that policies on the church’s social media platforms were incredibly useful, not only in terms of protecting the church’s image but also to help align everyone with the mission of the church. The findings are also consistent with the works of McKinney (2014) in which it was found that the use of policy on social media platforms was very critical because it gave the management of churches, the right to avoid certain subjects and remove inappropriate comments and posts on the church’s platforms. Similar findings were found in researches undertaken by Okyere, Agyapong, and Nyarku (2011) and Black (2010).

It is obvious from the findings that, policies guiding the use of social media platforms are critical in guiding users to be mindful of what to post and how to react on the platforms in the quest to achieve the goals and missions of the church.

4.3 Challenges with the use of social media platforms.

Despite the phenomenal benefit of social media platforms to churches as identified and elucidated earlier, it is obvious that their use is also saddled with some challenges. Respondents were asked to indicate the kind of challenges they faced when using social media platforms for running the day-to-day activities of their churches. The results are presented in Table 4.17.

Table 4.7: Challenges faced by respondents in the use of social media platforms

Items	Yes		No		Nonresponse	
	Freq.	100%	Freq.	100%	Freq.	100
There is inadequate training on how to use the social media platform	72	47	80	53	-	-
Difficult to get access to strong internet.	58	38	93	53	1	1
There is slow internet connectivity.	89	59	62	49	-	-
The social media interface looks complex and I am unfamiliar with the features.	27	18	124	81	1	1
I don't have a personal computer to access the social media platform.	22	14	130	22	-	-
Power outages sometimes deny me of accessing the Social media platform.	69	45	83	55	-	-

As can be gleaned from Table 4.7, 72 (47%) respondents responded in the affirmative that there was inadequate training on how to use social media platforms. Another, 58 (38%) indicated “Yes” to the statement, “Difficult to get access to the strong internet”. A large number of 89 (59%) respondents confirmed that there was slow internet connectivity which posed challenges to the use of social media. Also, 27 (18%) respondents affirmed that social media interfaces looked complex with unfamiliar features. Further, 22 (14%) of the respondents indicated that they did not have personal computers to access the social media platforms while 69 (45%) out of the total number of respondents affirmed that power outages sometimes denied them access to the internet.

Further, head pastors were also asked to indicate some of the challenges the churches had encountered in the course of the use of the social media platforms for their activities.

The head pastor of MHCI Shared:

“One of the critical challenges is a poor network which interrupts messages being broadcast on the social media platforms. Others also complain that using social media platforms consumes much of their data which is much expensive and unbearable”

The pastor was further asked to make suggestions to reduce such challenges to the barest minimum to help improve the use of social media platforms for running church activities.

The respondent brought out his submission by stating that:

“I think any church that would want to use social media platforms as a means of communicating with its church members should be ready to have all the necessary

instrument in place so that it wouldn't be a fifty-fifty per cent work but a full hundred per cent activity."

The Head Pastor of CEM shared with the researchers some challenges as indicated below:

"People trying to put messages that do not meet the standard of the church, unnecessary posting, posts that are not Godly because as I said earlier, we are a religious organisation. Like Facebook for instance, sometimes, some people giving feedback try to attack other churches/ministers in praising us which we don't agree to. Sometimes unbelievers tend to make unguided statements and so on... but we manage to handle them. Sometimes we get them off our pages and walls."

He further concluded by sharing with the researchers some recommendations that if employed, can help reduce challenges.

"Some of the social media platforms, we don't have total control as to what can be posted there and what cannot be posted there. We would wish that as a church when we register to use a certain social media platform, we would have the right and access to deny messages that are not Godly, unguided statements and to also block people who would like to use it for the wrong reasons. Some of them, we don't like to use it for some reasons; like Facebook, because you can't help as to what you can have access to or not unlike now the WhatsApp. Now there is a process where the leader can be the only one to post messages/information on the platform which allows for total control of the leaders."

It can be observed from the ongoing conversation that the cardinal problem facing churches in the use of social media platforms for running the day-to-day activities of the church was the issue of control. They did not have absolute control over the platforms and these issues can be reduced to the barest minimum if policies of the church were observed.

The first challenge was slow internet connectivity. Internet is one of the critical factors in accessing any social networking platform. As one of the major reasons for the choice of social media platforms by churches is for them to stream live their programmes. One of the inhibiting factors was slow internet connectivity as revealed by this study. As was remarked, those fastest internet networks were very expensive and thus draining their coffers.

This finding supports the responses by the head pastor of MHCI as shared:

"One of the critical challenges is a poor network which interrupts messages being broadcast on the social media platforms. Others also complain that using social media platforms consumes much of their data which is much expensive and unbearable"

As stated earlier, this finding is in support of the works of Chukwudi, Ogu, and Monday (2016) who undertook a study on the use of ICT and social networking websites as a tool for evangelism

where it was found that one of the critical inhibiting factors to the use of social media platform was slow internet connectivity. Similar findings were found in the study by Andrews (2011), Appiah, Dwomoh, and Kyire (2013), and Akakandelwa (2015).

Another challenge found by the study was inadequate training on how to use the social media platform. It is obvious that irrespective of the careful selection of a social media networking site, without training, it will be difficult for intended users to access it. This finding is consistent with the study by Okyere, Agyapong, and Nyarku (2011) where it was found that inadequate training was a core factor that had led to the inappropriate management of social media platforms by church leaders. Similar findings were found in the study conducted by the following authors such as; Aduloju et al. (2009); Asamoah-Gyadu, (2007), and White, Tella, and Ampofo, (2016).

A further challenge that was revealed by the study was the fact that some leaders of both churches considered the social media interface as complex and they were unfamiliar with the features. The finding is an indication that enough attention had not been paid to the features of the social media platforms adopted for use in the activities of the church. This finding is in tandem with the study by Hayes (2014) who investigated the user interface design for online social media and found that users found the interfaces of social media platforms complex and unfamiliar which eventually affected the extent of their use.

Another challenge the study found was power outages and fluctuations as a challenge that sometimes deny users the comfort of accessing social media platforms. This finding supports the work of Adomi (2007) in which it was found that in most African countries, power fluctuation was a major problem faced by churches in their efforts to go digital to spread the gospel. It is also, consistent with the findings of Akonu (2005) who found that power cut was a bigger issue to those who wish to use social media platforms to follow church activities.

5.1 Conclusion

The introduction of social media has changed the mode of communication drastically, making it faster, easier and convenient. No wonder, numerous churches have begun utilizing social media in their ministry efforts with the intent to publicize, pray, encourage, and promote events. Also, the use of social media platforms by the churches is more compelling amidst the COVID-19 pandemic where social gathering is not encouraged. The use of social media platforms for the running of church activities is gaining roots in most charismatic churches. They are handy when it comes to supplementing the traditional face-to-face church activities and easy access to church members missing church. Further, it helps churches to break the geographical barrier, making it easy for church members to be part of church programmes, irrespective of their locations. However, the use of social media platforms among churches is lumbered with some teething problems which need to be tackled. For churches to derive maximum benefit from the use of social media platforms, the management of the two churches needs to put in a lot more effort to mitigate the emerging challenges of use as well as strengthening their policies guiding the use of social media to run church activities.

6.1 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the study.

6.4.1 Orientation and Awareness Creation

Firstly, it is recommended that orientation and awareness creation should be intensified for the whole church to enable them to buy into use. This move should be done periodically after church services, at group meetings, or during church workshops. To intensify this, leaders of the churches should quickly orient all new members or even visitors to ignite their interest in the flexible church activities as compared to other churches. Social media gives churches a chance to share the Gospel in the digital world. Sharing stories through content, photos, and events keeps churches in front of their followers. Every post is a connection to churches' audience that reinforces their message. Every time someone shares the church's post, the message spreads even further, which means churches have a greater chance of being found and followed by those who are seeking answers about faith, the Bible, and God.

6.4.2 Training

The church should provide adequate continuous training for leaders since the functional features of the version of the social media platforms keep changing. Much emphasis should be put on the interface, and functional features of social media platforms of the churches that will be required by church leaders and members to access church programmes. This will ultimately enable users to be conversant with the tools as well as helping them to navigate the adopted social media platforms with ease. Also, IT personnel of the churches should be given the needed training to guide church members on how they can utilize the social media networking site adopted by the churches. Thus, basic computer training should be organized for all church members, paying attention to the older ones since they are mostly considered as technostress and this will help provide a level playing field as far as the use of social media platforms for church activities are concerned.

6.4.3 Policies

There should be continuous education on policies regarding the use of social media platforms, enforcing members to be abided by them and as well, emphasizing its importance to the church. The policies should encapsulate the dos and don'ts which must be explained to church members. This will help them understand and to appreciate the need to be abided by the church's policies. In effect, this will guide them to be cautious of what to post as the churches are operated by the standard of the Holy Bible.

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