

Social Media and Church Communication

The role of modern technology in transformation of church interactions: A case study of Christ embassy church Norway

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Abstract

The adoption of media in churches has for a long time been predominantly geared towards its growth. The introduction of social media in the last decade has not only pushed the growth of the church beyond its premises, but it has been a game change, its ability as an enabler of human connection and promotion of participation culture has provided an opportunity where church stakeholders have become more engaged in theological issues and also with each other.

The key research question for my study is geared towards finding out how social media influences transformation of church interactions and how it challenges on the authority of the church and its leaders as a source of religious information. Mediatization theory and especially mediatization and the molding force of social media have been used to support the units under investigation. Communication transformative nature of media as is depicted in mediatization theory can best be operationalized using the molding force of media. In my case mediatization of communication has been operationalized using the molding force of social media and its logic. I have tested how the rational of social media have infiltrated the church and dictated its structure using four elements of social media logic, programmability, popularity connectivity and datafication.

My case study is a charismatic Pentecostal church known as Christ Embassy; this church is justified as my case study because it has been among the front leaners in utilization of internet technology. The international church boasts as the first church to have a 24-hour Christian setline network to broadcast from Africa to the rest of the world. Its founder Pastor Chris is one of the most followed pastor having over 1.2M followers on twitter and 1.9M followers on Facebook.

My empirical data that was developed though observation and interviews came from both the conventional church service and the online church service at a Christ embassy church branch in Norway. Through data analysis my main findings is that social media has empowered church leaders to lean more towards secular preaching and therefore challenging the conservative preaching that is predominant among pastors. Therefore social media seems to make Pentecostal theology more compatible with secularly acceptable world views.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

It is in no doubt that social media is increasingly having a great impact on the public discourse and communication in today's society. More currently microblogging services like twitter, social network sites like Facebook, video sharing platform like YouTube and online live forums -just to mention a few- are examples of social media that are believed to have a potential in transformation of communication in different aspects of life. Inevitably just as social media affects other aspects of human life it has also become an important aspect of the religious life. Many religious organizations use social media very actively as part of their communication both with their members and beyond. In her anthropological work on the salient popularity of the Pentecostal charismatic churches, Birgit Meyer observed that charismatic Pentecostal churches puzzles many researchers by their transnational organization structure and their link in being born again and going global, she observed that these churches presents themselves as ultimate embodiment of modernity , characterized by having huge churches, elaborate use of technology, high quality gospel music and instigating trend-setting mode of dressing that successfully signified mastery of modern world. This study explores how social media influences transformation of church interactions and also how it challenges authority of the church and its leaders as a source of religious information. One of my main finding is that social media logics have a transforming effects on how preachers generate and present theological contents. Social media seems to make Pentecostal theology more compatible with secularly acceptable world views.

Social media is a complex term with multilayered meaning and therefore there is no single definition that can best explain the term social media. This study will approach social media as a collective of online communication channels dedicated to community based input, interaction, content sharing and collaboration (Rouse 2016). Van Dijck argues that social media can also be looked at as online facilitators or enhancers of human network, he derives his meaning from participatory culture model, the model implies that the word “social” as associated with “media” implies that platforms are user centered and they facilitate communal activities, just as the word participatory which emphasizes human collaboration. (Van Dijck, 2013, p.11) The participatory culture model as it is argued by Christian Fuchs is highly opposed to the mass media and broadcasting model typical of newspaper and television, where there is only one sender and many recipients (Fuchs, 2014, p. 2). The society in the

contemporary world have become more democratic and are in dire search of a platform that would offer both the user and the audience a chance to get more involved in creation and circulation of culture and content. (Jenkin, 2008) social media in its simplest form can be looked at as a web application that enables users to create online communities to share information, ideas, messages and other content in a social network

These characteristics properties of social media are in many ways opposed to the communication culture of many traditional churches. As Bailey & Storch points out, churches have excelled at a one way communication in which the message is delivered to passive and silent viewers (Bailey & Storch, 2007, p.15) Baileys & Storch argues that, although the one-way communication has been a conservative and accepted traditional way of disseminating information, the trend has changed, the new generation that comprises of a group that have grown up in an internet driven-culture, is more active and engaging and it has a culture that celebrates and finds value in participation. This thesis will investigate how such traditional one-way communications by churches are challenged by social media.

The thesis will look into how social media influences church interactions. The focus of the study will be on the global mega charismatic church; Christ Embassy Church international (CEC), with a specific focus on one of its branches in Norway.

CEC also known as Believers' LoveWorld incorporated, is a mega church and a Christian denomination founded by Pastor Chris Oyakhilome in 1990, it was started as a prayer group at the University of Edo State where Chris was studying architecture. The church has since become a global network of churches spanning across different countries. The church headquarter is in Lagos, Nigeria, where it boasts of having over 40,000 followers (Nsehe, 2017). Pastor Chris as an architect of the church presents it as a tangible form of modernity, tapping into modern technology to improve its representation as a source of religious information, these has seen the church developing and owning different media channels. However, my study will show that modern technology is not a neutral tool of information channeling. The analysis will show that it has a deep influence on church communication. The argument coming out of the analysis is that social media has a transformative effects on the theological content of the studied church.

Christ Embassy Church is chosen for this study because it has highly utilized internet technology which includes social media and online video streaming sites as one of their

communication strategy. In 2003, the church through its founder, pioneered a 24-hour Christian satellite network that was the first Christian network to broadcast from Africa to the rest of the world, this has in overtime given rise to five satellite stations; the 'LoveWorldTV' based in UK, 'LoveWorldSAT' in south Africa, 'LoveWorldPLUS' in Nigeria, 'LoveWorldUSA' based in the united states and the 'LoveWorldCanada'. These stations are available on their official websites as well as on mobile apps (Falaye, 2015, p.231) (Nsehe, 2017). The church through its social media account '@PastorChrisLive' has over 1.9 M followers on Facebook, over 1.2M followers on twitter becoming one of the most followed church in Africa. Through its internet multimedia ministry IMM the church organizes a global online worship service to all its branches across the globe; this happens every first Sunday of every month. The online worship service will be the focal point of this study. The quest of finding out how church interactions are transformed by social media will be based on an analysis of one such online worship service that was aired in one of the branches of Christ embassy in Norway.

In order to discuss how a service using social media transforms church interactions, this online worship service will be compared to a traditional worship service taking place in this branch at the same day. The analysis of how social media influences church interactions in this local branch will include data developed through interviews with the local pastor and young people attending both the online service and the traditional service

1.1 Motivation

Some 5 years ago I came to Norway to study a bachelor in leadership and theology from HLT, it was during the first year as a student that I volunteered to work as an assistance head of technical department at a Christ embassy church branch in Oslo. At the department I was in charge of general operation of church media devices; sound systems, internet connections, worship application, projection and presentation, internet and print media among other operations. I was able to perform some of these tasks because I had a bachelor degree in business information technology where I experienced first-hand how technology influences business. Working at Christ embassy exposed me to the online worship services, there were player meetings and conferences on skype, there was the cell chats on WhatsApp and then there was the global communion service that was aired live from the church streaming site IMM, internet multimedia ministry; churches across the globe through this online platform, were able to participate in the online service through asking different sets of questions where

a panel of pastors from the mega church located in Lagos Nigeria discussed the questions in response. The setup of the online service that allowed the audience to drive the topics was a fascinating occurrence to me; the church was more inclusive and engaging. Three years later I joined University of Oslo for a master in Intercontextual theology and again I was exposed to different courses that offered more light on how religion can be assigned meaning basing on the situation within which it is being practiced. I became more curious to know and understand how religion can be a part of or make sense in the already technologically driven society and how the two can relate to each other without overbearing one another. During this time I came across a book ‘the *blogging church*’ by Bailey & Storch while assisting a student who was doing media and religion from MF. In this book Bailey & Storch were looking at different ways church ministries can benefit from blogging and one of the major benefic according to them was the transformative nature of blogging through availing a two-way model of communication, this highly informed my topic of study. Through this study I have become more aware of how social media can influence church communication in unintended and unexpected ways.

1.2 Primary Research Question and Theoretical framework

The topic of this study is to find out how social media influences church communication. In order for me to optimally address this topic two research questions will be asked.

1. How have the new and modern communication tools like social media transformed communication within church settings?
2. How has utilization of social media in communication, impacted the authority of the church and church leaders as source of religious information?

1.2.1 Mediatization theory

I will clarify my research question through a presentation of mediatization theory which is the theoretical framework of my work. According to Campbell, mediatization theory has very swiftly become a central key concept used as a lens to focus attention on the role the media plays in social and cultural change. As a theoretical approach mediatization has been interpreted and applied in different spheres of life (Campbell, 2017, p.18). Drawing on the work of Hjarvard, Lövheim points out that mediatization acts as a lens that measures transformation of three aspects of religion. First how media has become a source of religious information in society, second how it has become a producer of religious experiences, as a

religious symbols, practices and beliefs become raw material for media's own purposes and shaped according to the procedure of popular media genres, and thirdly, how media has develop into social and cultural environments that take over many functions of institutionalized religion such as providing moral and spiritual guidance and a sense of communication (Lövheim Mia as cited in Lundby, 2014, p. 551). In this study I will use mediatization theory basing on the two principles as we have seen above, first I will use it to gauge how the molding force of social media has transformed interactions within Christ embassy church, second I will also use mediatization theory to study the effects of social media on religious authority.

1.2.1.1 Molding Force of media

The first question on how the new and modern communication tools like social media have transformed communication within church settings will particularly be addressed through the concept of media logic. The concept of the molding force of media can best be understood by looking at the concept of media logic that has for a long time been used within mediatization research. The concept of media logic is widely associated with David Altheide and Robert Snow, to them media logic can be understood basing on how media as a form of communication influences the way we see and interpreted social affairs. In their own terms, the two authors defined media logic as a set of principles or common sense rationality cultivated in and by media institutions that infiltrates public sphere and dictates its organizing structures, these principles or elements include the various media and the formats used by this media. Formats consist, for example how material is organized, the style in which it is presented, the focus of emphasis on particular characteristics of behavior, and the grammar of media communication. Format becomes a framework or a perspective that is used to present as well as interpret phenomena (Van Dijck & Poell Thomas 2013 p.3, Hepp Andrea 2012 p.2). With the emergence of new technologies like computer mediated interactions, mobile computing and the growth of social media in the 1990s, the concept of media logic was reshaped and mutated more towards social media logic, in this age of social media, information became more defined or dictated by the affordance of web technologies like browser and search engines like Google chrome and Bing for internet explorer. Social networking sites like Facebook and twitter as well as user generated content sites like YouTube and other video streaming sites.

Social media logic

There are four main elements of social media that can help in explicitly expounding the logic of social media, these element includes; *programmability*, *popularity* *connectivity* and *datafication* (Van Dijck & Poell Thomas 2013 p.5). For Altheide and Snow, programmability in mass media logic implies the ability for a central agency to manipulate content in order to define the audience's watching experience as a continuous flow, in other words it's the editorial strategy applied to make sure the audience are glued to the screen from one session to the next. Shifting to social media the concept changes whereby programming flow changes to programmability and content and audiences changes to codes and users. In addition in social media logic, the one way traffic yielded to two-way traffic between user and programmers. Using this concept my research will try to gauge whether there is the effects of content or program manipulation in the online session that creates an experience and ensures the stakeholders to seek for more audience. (p.5)

According to Poell and Dijck, popularity as the second principal of social media logic implies a potential mechanism of social media in pushing likable people to become media personalities, this is highly dependent on their ability to lure crowds or capture mass attention, these likeable personality often achieve a celebrity, entertainers or a famous status in the eyes of the users. The principal also implies the power of the media in agenda setting or pushing certain topics to the fore, for Altheide and Snow this principle In turn helps to shape public opinion through filtering out influential voices and assigning certain expression more weight than others. In simple terms the principal of popularity is based on the pursuit of online attention through filtration that influences what people find important. Each platform has its own design geared towards boosting popularity. For example twitter uses algorithm that assign more weight to people with high number of following, such people are more visible and they are more influential. On YouTube we find algorithm that assign more weight on most viewed videos, google analytics for site traffics and on and on. These metrics are increasingly accepted as standard ways to measure and rank people and ideas; these rankings are reinforced by user through social buttons like share, following, liking, viewings or subscribing. Using these popularity rankings people with huge number of followers can easily push their causes or agenda (p.7). This concept will enable me gauge how pastors in the online and traditional services may change their theological reasoning in order to increase their popularity.

Thirdly Altheide and Snows present connectivity as another concept within which social media logic can be understood, they argue, as quoted by Poell and Dijck that the basis upon which social media was developed was aimed at linking content to consumers, in other words they were developed in pursuit of connectivity or as enablers of human connections. For example user-generated contents like YouTube was aimed at connecting users to self-made content, Facebook was aimed at connecting and sharing content among students. (Van Dijck & Poell Thomas, 2013, p.8). In religion this can mean connecting the content in form of theological issues to the congregants. Unlike the concept of 'spreadability' introduced by Jenkins, Ford & Green which emphasizes more on the power of audience agency and deemphasizing the power of platform agency as a driving force, the concept of connectivity emphasizes on a mutual shaping of users and platform as the driving force of connectedness. Therefore there is an interconnection between users to content, user to user, platform to users and also platform to platform. It should be noted that social media platform unlike mass media platforms are hardly limited to geographically or demographically designated audiences; instead, they expedite connections between individuals, to emphasize on this Barren Wellman argued that social media expedites a shift in sociality from densely knit groups to loosely bounded social networks which he called networked individualism, this type of sociality revolves around the person rather than the group or locality (Van Dijck & Poell Thomas, 2013, p.5). From this notion therefore the platform enables users to choose others to connect with and communicate on an individual level, therefore enabling these users to create their own social networks and communities.

I will be interested to know how the social-technical affordance of networked platforms empowers individuals in participating, engaging and spreading their ideas or information about religion in churches, I will also seek to know different strategies the church is using to ensure connection from a well-knit church group to a wider social network group where individuals can create spread their own information individually. The concept of connectivity will also play a vital role in my analysis; I will use it to find out how users apply social media to question and negotiate theological claims made by pastors in a more one-way sermons.

Lastly the principal of datafication as an element of social media logic is coined to denote the ability of a media platform to harvest or capture data for predictive and real time-time analysis. These captured data reveals more about audience for example it can reveal more about viewers' profiles, taste and preferences or even opinions which in turn helps in fine

tuning programs to fit the audience preferences more effectively. Social media have the potential to mine online traffic for indicators of trending topics, keywords, sentiments, public view point or frequently shared and liked items (Van Dijck & Poell Thomas 2013 p.9). This concept will not play a major role in my analysis, but I will check whether Christ embassy church has a mechanism of capturing real time data from their targeted audience and how this data is filtered and analyzed.

1.2.1.2 Media and Authority concept

The second research question of religious authority has become a paramount aspect used to understanding religion and religious role in different aspect of life. New forms and contexts of religion identity and practice are emerging; traditional sources of religious symbols, truth claims, and meanings find themselves in competition with new and emergent ones. (Hoover p.6) In the era of media saturated societies, popular and entertainments culture has become increasingly important in shaping social and cultural meanings and effects. Hjarvard argues that in the context of media, authority does not imply execution of orders; rather it is concerned with the ability to command audience. He continues and argues that when the media becomes a source of religion information, the logics of media influences the way in which religion is presented or perceived. The question of media representation in this study implies a need to understand how the media represents religion and under what circumstance does religion becomes news worthy in the eyes of popular media¹ (Hjarvard, 2016). Christensen argues that news media primarily tend to focus on religion when religious actors tend to be out of sync with general values of society (Christensen 2012 cited by Hjarvard, 2016 p.14). Borrowing from this notion, Hjarvard adds that since the media is in the business of seeking audience attention, it will tend to shape religion towards achieving this goal. Therefore, religious actors have to comply with this demand or get isolated. For me to understand how social media is shaping the authority within the church I will base my analysis on three theoretical concepts: legal, traditional and charismatic authority. These concepts originated from Max Weber, and they have been discussed in a social media context by Hoover.

¹ Hjarvard uses the documentation of Broberg (2013) on the opinion page of one of the major Swedish daily, *Aftonbladet* titled *The study of the role of religious actors* to put more lights to his argument, where Broberg asserts that religious arguments exert little authority, and religious actors tend to use secular arguments for example by reference to science, humanism or modern values of freedom and equality (Broberg, 2013,p. 45 cited by Hjarvard,2016, p. 14) He also pointed out to the publication of the Mohammed cartoon in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* that turned into a global conflict as a good example of a media dynamic in audience command.

Legal authority, Weber argues according to Hoover, that legal authority generally emanates from established laws and political traditions defined in relation to bounded memberships or citizenships. In religion, legal authority is related to discipline, enforced practices, doctrinal systems and prescribed behavior (Hoover p.20). In legal authority, power flows from the legal system to both the governor and the governed.

Traditional authority, this authority according to Hoover is established through an existence of a long-standing and accepted set of shared values and traditions. Unlike legal authority, in traditional authority power rests not within a structured or instituted law/legal system but it is within a long standing position of an ethnic, culture, national or religious traditions. Religiously traditional authority is murkier as it is obscure and highly hermeneutical in nature.

Charismatic authority, this authority is established or is highly associated with individual, Weber argues that this authority focuses more on an individual or group of individuals exercising authority and their capacity to influence and convince those at whom their authority is directed (p.20). Unlike the tradition and legal authority there is no external validation, the justification here is based on the capacities and qualities of the authoritative figure or figures. Religiously charismatic authority is significantly expansive; presumably, the founders of all the great religions possess this type of authority

As I mentioned earlier, the three concept of authority will help me in understanding the authority in the two worship services and to analyze how social media influences these authority. I will discuss this by comparing how authority is established in the traditional service versus the online worship service.

1.2.2 Media construct

Although Mediatization may be considered a general process of modernity, the way in which the process occurs varies and depends on various contexts that can include historical, geographical and institutional context. Meyrowitz (1993) presents a three metaphoric constructs of media; media as conduit, media as language and media as environment. I will apply these concepts as analytical tools in answering the research questions. The concept will be highly useful in order to differentiate between various dimensions of how social media influences church communication in regard to online session, and locally in Oslo branch.

First, media as conduit is according to Meyrowitz the most common image of a medium. A medium is a sort of conduit that is important insofar as it delivers content (1993, p. 56). The

question of the content is one of the most important aspects of an analysis of any media. Some of the vital questions that the conduit metaphor leads to include: What is and where does the content originate from? How accurately do media content reflect reality? How do various audiences interpret the content? What effect does the content have? While there are differentiated medium through which content can be transmitted, the differences in messages stand out as the first thing to see and respond to.

Therefore the question to ponder is; why is media continuing to challenge the traditional religious institution as a source of religious experience and knowledge? Hjarvard (2016) argues that centralized control of information by religious institute has become increasingly difficult both because of mass media predominantly secular oriented toward this kind of information and as a result of the existence of network-like and interactive media tools like the social media (p.10). I will address the question about media as conduit by investigating where the content of the online session originate from and to what extent the pastors frame their answers in a more secular acceptable manner. I will also try to find out how the content from the online session is distributed and various distribution strategies the church uses to command more audience.

Meyrowitz's second metaphor, media as a language, draws attention to the unique grammar of media. To draw upon this metaphor analytically means explore the particular expressive variables or production technique within each media (Meyrowitz, 1993, p.58). Meyrowitz argues that the grammar analysis focuses more on the plasticity² of a medium in altering the presentation and meaning of content element perhaps to fit the demand of a particular context (p.59). This metaphor will help me to look at how the panelist in the online session use their voice, the kind of words they use and to what extent their language differ from how the pastor use his voice during the traditional worship service. The analysis will make it possible to address to what extent the online session represents another kind of language than pastors usual apply when they preach. Are they presenting their religious messages that comply with the demand of popular media genres, and if so, is it possible for them at the same time remain true to their mandate? Is the language used in the online session in the business of seeking audience attention, and are the religious messages altered and subordinated to this demand? In

² Plasticity in this case implies the quality of being easily molded or altered in accordance to a particular demand, or to fit a particular demand. Merriam Webster

other words, does the online session alter its language in order to become news worthy? Are the languages on the online session an example on how the secularism nature of journalistic news media influence and alter the messages preached by this church? (Hjarvard, 2016, p. 10).

Thirdly, media as environment, considering media as environment would imply that media, depending on the context, is a component that constitute a public sphere, and at the same time plays an important role to various social institutions. Hjarvard argues that media has attained some of the societal functions that religious organization had earlier held a privileged position to perform (Hjarvard, 2016). For example, media have become a space for setting up or performing public rituals and custom events, such as celebration or mourning. Various forms of media provide a ground where one can share good news and also provide a space for emotional consolation in times of crisis. The media has also encouraged new ways of preaching, worship and praising behavior through fandom and celebrity culture. It should also be noted that mass media and social network forms national and cultural communities where an individual gets a chance to communicate with the wider community and experience the sense of belonging (Carey, 1994). For Meyrowitz:

Media as an environment implies that each medium is a kind of environment or setting or context that has characteristics and effects that transcend variations in content and manipulations of production variables. (Meyrowitz, 1993, p.61)

Therefore for Meyrowitz the understanding of media as an environment calls for an analysis of the medium, which involves a close analysis of medium features. He prompts that each media has its own characteristics that make it physically, psychologically and socially different from other media and from live interactions. He is particularly concerned about the fact that the development and use of media might alter the function of social roles and institutions whose structure and functions were dependent in some way on the characteristics of previously dominant media (Meyrowitz, 1993, p.61).

Hjarvard states that social media has successfully dis-embedded social interactions from a local and traditional context and implanted social interactions into larger and more modern setting. For example social network media like Facebook or twitter make use of sociable forms of communication, characterized by small groups in face-to-face contexts, yet these small groups can be transformed into a larger networks of mediated friendship, which are influenced by various logics based on, for instance

commercial consideration (Hjarvard, 2016, p.9). The online session is interesting in this respect. It is a social media session, but it is casted locally where people meet face to face. I will investigate the online session as environment by looking at how the local Oslo branch participated in the online session, and compare it to the traditional worship service. This comparison will make the similarities and differences between the two environments. My analysis will focus on how people dressed, how they behaved and how they communicated with each other during the two different worship services.

1.3 Empirical research on Pentecostal churches and media

1.3.1 Social media research on religion and church transformation

Social media has continued to play an important role in transformation of cultures and institutions practices and operations and in the long run transforms such societies themselves. (Lundby, 2014) Media has widely been used in various Pentecostal churches throughout the world especially in America, Latin America and Africa for different purposes. Most of these studies have concentrated on the influence of social media or media to the growth and globalization of Pentecostal churches. This study therefore, intends to investigate influence of social media on church communication.

McClure (2016) using panel data from the national study of the youth and religion, conducted an empirical study geared towards exploring the effects of social networking sites on the religious beliefs of emerging adults. His main focus was to find out whether young adults who uses social networking site are more inclined to condole religious pluralism and syncretism. McClure findings reveled that, social network site (SNS) users are more likely than non-SNS users to believe that it is acceptable for someone to pick and choose which religion belief they adopt regardless of what their religious tradition or church teaches (McClure, 2016,p.829) although his data highly indicated that emerging adults are likely to condone religious syncretism due to the unprecedented access to new ideas, beliefs and practices as provided by SNS, they remain less likely to become pluralistic as they not more likely to believe all religions are true. These findings will not be fully confirmed in this study, actually those who attend the online session are presumably quite young people and they seem to be more traditional in their theological reasoning than the pastors leading the service.

In their book '*the blogging church*', Bailey & Storch conducted a study that was aimed at finding out how ministry can benefit from using blogging, they conducted different interviews with different church leaders who have utilized blogs as one of their medium of communication. Bailey and Storch argued that churches traditionally use a one-way

communication strategy mostly associated with TV broadcasting. In this method the audience is mostly silent and passive; there is less chance of eliciting response from the audience. One of the benefits as is pointed on this book is that when a church uses a blog it gets an opportunity to have a two-way communication strategy. A blog provides a one-to-many communication in a one-to-one way. They said that blogs are written for a single use but read by thousands; blogs are designed to invite feedback and comments as part of a conversation between the writer and the reader (Bailey & Storch, 2007, p.28). This two-way communication is conversational in nature as both the audience and the reporter participate in the process of communication. This will to some extent be confirmed in my analysis, but the two-way conversation as it will be discovered comes with some costs in terms of challenge to religious authority.

According to Larsen (2000), Pew Foundation did a quantitative study and found out that the congregation use internet to strengthen their faith and spiritual growth of their members. This also helps them to evangelize across the world. From the faith-based groups interviewed, key important of internet were identified. These include that it is an anonymous method of inquiry in the ministry, the organizations are able to display their visions, missions and activities through website, linking one another and organizations are able to do outreach. The same foundation carried out a research to know how Americans use internet for faith-based reasons. Among the key findings are; most of them use online platforms to do faith-based issues like emailing on spiritual content and reviewing more about the religious events, they mostly use the website for personal spiritual growth and others seek for faith-based experiences (Hoover, Clark & Rainie, 2004).

Most of the churches have started using internet for the expansion of their ministries. They use internet to access their websites, podcasts, prayer rooms, and blogs where they discuss their own things. Research shows that various churches use these platforms to reinforce their traditional approaches. Some of the churches make live streaming through the internet as they practically continue with their regular services at the center. Some researchers argue that non-interactive internet ministries have more followers and they are widely spread as compared to those using internet to stream live (Malphurs, A. & Malphurs, M. 2003). Such intentions to use internet as a way to reinforce traditional approaches might underestimate the transformative logics of media, which is key in this study.

De Witte (2003) argues that Pentecostals themselves are much concerned in the manner in which adoption of media technologies is occurring and the impacts they have in the Pentecostal religion. Some questions arouse regarding this issue. For instance, some people ask if Christian stickers being used by some individuals on cars, shops or listening to Christian songs and watching through the media, are born again Christians. The respondents of this study who were the pastors, in the interview, they were of the opinion that the video films watched by people are just for entrainment. Despite much investment in the radio, TV, and top music bands, the level of devotion is still low.

As some denominations embrace the concept of technology in its activities implementations, others seem to be very pessimistic about it. The pessimistic see social media as a tool bringing a lot of fantasy and therefore propose to maintain their traditional approaches. The author continues to argue that social media draw people away from reality, which is the same way of drawing them from the Christ. Video images blur the image of Jesus and people cannot clearly reflect on Christ (Meyer, 2002).

Ukah (2003) did a study in the redeemed Christian Church of God in Nigeria. His findings indicated that information technology plays a critical role in the church today through globalization. The church today, makes its broadcast through television station. Most of the church leaders like this kind of modernity and usually link the internet as God's solution to world missionary logistics challenges. Williams (2008) also identified in his study that worship experience was changing. In his study of a Baptist local church in USA, he discovered that the emergence of media technology made quite some changes in the contemporary worship, a finding that will be followed up in this study.

Stroope (2012) did a study using the national data from Baylor religion survey 2007 to determine the degree within which social networks forged in religious congregation shape religiosity among the US Christians. Using Baylor dataset Stroope (2012) assesses whether social embeddedness in religious congregations is associated with religious activities and religious and religious belief while holding constant key background characteristics of individual and their congregations (2012, p.274). The study in support of prior theory indicated that religious social networks promotes participation in religious activity this is in line with other scholars like Coleman who argued that the more an individual social ties are fused in a particular group, the more strongly the group is likely to conform his actions and

beliefs to those of the group network (Coleman,1990, Granovetter,1992 cited by Stroope, 2012,p.275).

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

2.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the planning, the procedure and the methods of data inquiry that I followed during my field work, in other terms referred to as methodology. For me to provide the best data possible to answer my research question, I chose a research design that combines ethnography and netnography, this is in line with the argument of YIN who stated that a research design is the logical arrangement or structure that helps link the empirical data to a study's primary research questions and, eventually to its conclusions (Yin, 2009. P.26). it can also be looked at as a plan that that helps to obtain the best research data possible and from this data obtain the most accurate results possible that helps address the research question(Luis H. Toledo-Pereyra, 2012). Therefore in the following discussion I will provide a brief introduction of what ethnography and netnography research entails in this study. This will be followed by an overview of how I established my materials through highlighting my sampling and data collection techniques, there after I will discuss the issue of access trust and finally ethics.

2.0.1 Ethnographic Research

Hammersley and Atkinson provides a most basic understanding of what ethnographic research is, by looking at it as an aspect of what the researcher does in the field, they stated that Ethnography usually involves the researcher participating overtly or covertly, in people's lives for a period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, and or asking questions through informal and formal interviews, collecting documents and artefacts- in fact, gathering whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the emerging focus of inquiry (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2008, p.3). They further argued that, in an ethnographic research, data analysis involves interpreting meanings, functions and consequences of human actions and institution practices within a local or wider context. The product of such analysis may include verbal description, explanation, and theories (p.3). My research fits as an ethnography since in the field work I was required to participate as a member of Christ embassy in Oslo for a period of six weeks, during this period I participated in their local Sunday worship service for six times, I also got a chance to participate in two of

their online worship service where I acquired an observer as participant stance³. It should be noted that although the congregants were aware of my observation activities I was only a passive observer and I did not require to interact with them, rather I was observing the environment and how the leaders and the congregant interact or behave during the local worship service and also on the online worship service. Everything observed during this period was recorded on my field note book. I was also required to conduct an interview with my selected participant at the end of the six week. Participating and having a close access to different people within this period come in handy as I was able to acquire an insider identity this helped to ease the process of selecting my informants. I was also able to easily acquire trust among my informants.

2.0.2 Netnographic Research

The word netnography is according to Kozinets defined as a concept that is used when collecting data. It is methodological approach to conducting ethical and thorough online research that combines online communications work, participation and observation analysis and research presentation. (Kozinets, 2015, p. 1) in this study I will use netnography to explore how social media is influencing interaction transformation in charismatic Pentecostal churches, I will also seek to explore how these transformation challenges the authority of church and church leaders as a source of religious information. My netnography material will mainly comprise of a YouTube video that captures the online worship service of Christ embassy international. The video lasts for one hour and twelve minutes, my analytical focus in the video is the question and answer segment that is contained in the first 42 minutes of the video. Kozinets points out that, netnographers have two basic choices to make when capturing data and the type of data analysis that they plans to pursue will highly dictate these choices. The two choices that Kozinets states in his book are to code the qualitative data manually or to use a data analysis software program (Kozinets, 2015, p.172). In my research I will use manual data analysis, my analysis will include text, audio and visual information, the use of software analysis program in my research will be limited only to screen capture software. For example I will make use of TinyTake software program to capture screenshots on the YouTube video for analysis. Blurring effects offered by TinyTake software will help me in

³ According to Kawulich, the stance of an observer refers to the degree to which the researcher involves himself/herself in the culture under study. The observer as participant stance, the researcher is an observer who is not a member of the group and who's interest in participating as a means of collecting data Gold 1958 (as cited in Kawulich, B. B. 2005, May).

hiding identifiable images, faces or names of my informants in the video. it will also help me to add pseudonyms in place of real name to maintain anonymity.

2.1 Establishing my Empirical material

2.1.1 Ethnographic data

My ethnographic material comprises of the data collected from congregants in the local worship service, this material as we shall see in the following discussion will be established through interviews where a team of seven informants will be sampled purposively. There will also be material collected from the church as a premise during the local worship service; these materials will be established through participatory observation.

Ethnographic Sampling

In any social enquiry, sampling is an important function that needs to be considered in high regards, this is so whether the research is qualitative or quantitative, in a case of ethnographic research, sampling is still needed as the researcher cannot observe or record everything that occurs (Hammersley and Artkinson 2008 Burgess 1982). There are two main sampling methods, probability and non-probability sample. In a probability sample elements in the population are chosen at random and have a known probability of selection, which can be easy to represent statistically. In a non-probability sample approach, elements in a population are deliberately selected basing on certain features or characteristics of sampled population. (Ritchie and Lewis 2003). There are various approaches that have been developed that are associated or help expound non-probability sample method, these includes; convenience sampling, quota sampling, purposive sampling, snowball sampling or bias sampling. Since the aim of the study is to explore the impact of social media on church interactions, purposive sampling technique was adopted.

Purposive Sampling

In this method, the choice of participants, locales or other sampling elements is criterion based or purposive (Patton, 2002). The sample units are selected because of a certain features which will enable exploration of and more understanding of the central theme and puzzles that the researcher wants to study. These may be socio-demographic characteristics, or may relate to specific experiences, behaviors, roles, etc. (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003, p.78). In the case of this study sample units were selected basing on experience, people who have been most active in the online session and or are active members of the church were given the highest consideration as potential informants. Kombo and Tromp state that the research in this

technique purposely targets a group of people believed to be reliable for the study (Kombo and Tromp, 2006, p. 82).

Case Study Sampling

Selecting a case study for investigation can be looked at as a form of sampling involved in ethnography, but sampling within a case is also highly important, this is because decision has to be made about where to observe, when, who to talk to and what to ask as well as what to record and how (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2008, p.35), therefore this means that we are not only deciding on what is or what is not relevant to the case under study but also sampling from the data available. There are three major dimensions along which sampling within a case occurs: time people and content

Time

Time may seem an obvious dimension in social life therefore its significant is often neglected. It should be noted that any attempt to present the entire range of persons and events in the case under study will have to be based on adequate coverage of temporal variation. In any event long uninterrupted periods of fieldwork are not always encouraged, the longer the period between recording and observation, the more troublesome will be the recall and recording of adequately detailed and concrete descriptions. (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2008, p.36). In this project I used a selective approach as a strategy to optimally utilize my time well, first the six weeks I spent with the church was purely for orientation purposes, I chose to be visiting the church every Sunday within the six weeks to get an insider kind of stance this was to ease my selection and interview process, I also utilized this period to introduce myself and the purpose of the study which boosted trust. In the 5th week I took two days to organize for the venue and date for my potential informants, the meeting which happened on a Sunday took only 1hr where I briefed my selected informants about why they were selected and the whole process of interview. In the 6th week, I participated in the local worship service for a period of 2hrs, during this time, relevant observation of the church environment was conducted, I observed the pastor from the dress code to the communication style used to deliver the sermons, I was also keen on how he generated the sermons, I observed the choir and their praising style, I also took note of the church physical setup and finally observed the congregation position during the worship service. All this information was noted in the field work notebook that I had carried with me.

People

As I have mentioned above, the selection of the people was purposively done, I chose the most active members to the worship services. Through the help of pastor as my gate keeper I was able to come up with seven participants. These participants were organized into two interview group, one was an individual interview with pastor as the only participant, the other one comprised of six two participants from leadership position and four participant from the congregants these were organized as a group interview

2.1.2 Netnographic data

My Netnographic data comprises of the data collected from the online worship service, this material as we shall see in the following discussion will be established through participatory observation and also from interviewing the local audience of the online worship.

Sampling and choosing Data

Just Like in ethnography, netnographic sampling was purposely done, I purposely choose my worship session basing on its relevancy to my research focus. Kozinets argues that relevance is a vital criterion that helps one to decide which particular elements of the online interactions and experience that will be captured as well as guiding one to the sites where such elements can be found (Kozinets, 2015, p. 170). In the case of my study, I am trying to explore the influence of social media on church interaction, as this is a contemporary phenomenon, one of the criterion that used to determine relevancy is time, I sort elements that contains data which is not older than two years, I also sort elements that contains data that is rich and relates to the phenomenon at hand. The YouTube video that I chose contains rich and descriptive posting from across different platform, there are several YouTube editions of the session with different titles, there are different blogs post of the session also. In addition the interactions on the session have topics that range from theological aspect to social aspects of life. Another aspect that I used to select my session was the session participant, in the session, there were participants from different nations; among them was Africa, America, Asia among others.

The session takes 1hr, my main focus will be on the question and answer segment, this section comprises of the dialog conversation between the four pastor panelist and the audience who participate through asking different questions., analysis will be conducted on the edition of the video, on how the pastors generate and communicate in the session, there will also be an observation of their dress codes and their articulation of their answers. I will also select

different participant whom I will analyse the question and topics they help bring to discussion.

2.1.3 Data collection Methods

Interview

According to Kvale, an interview can be looked at as an exchange of views between two persons discussing about a topic of mutual interest (Kvale 2009:2). On the other hand in-depth interview can simply be viewed or described as a form of conversation (Burgess 1982). As a form of conversation it produces a fundamental process through which knowledge is constructed in normal human interaction (Rorty 1980), although interviews have little resemblance with normal everyday conversation, there are key features that set it apart, these include; it is designed in a way that combines structure and flexibility, that is although the interview will be semi-structured, the interviewer will have some sense of the topics that they wish to explore, therefore an interview guide will come in handy, second the interview will be interactive in nature, the researcher will tend to ask questions in an interactive manner, ensuring or encouraging the interviewee to talk freely, thirdly the researcher uses series of probes and other techniques to achieve depth of responses in terms of penetration, exploration and explanation. This is normally done through follow up questions. Another key feature of an in-depth interview is that, the interview data needs to be collected in its natural format; this is mostly possible through recording, since note taking might change the form of data. Finally in-depth interviews are conducted face to face. Considering these features, this research adopts a semi-structured interview approach, this means that an interview guide was utilized, this guide contained relevant questions and within the interview process relevant follow up questions were used as a backup in case the informant needed more clarity on the question being asked.

The data was gathered through face to face interview conversations among the participants, and within a written guide of questions, though open ended with follow-ups. Kombo and Tromp say that these kinds of interviews are based on the use of an interview guide which is a written list of questions or topics that need to be covered by the interview (Kombo and Tromp 2009 :93). Follow up questions were asked where the participants required a more understanding of the question, and also in the case where the response was at a fairly surface level, follow up questions were asked to determine a more deeper understanding of the participant's meaning. Recording of the interview was done using a recording device.

Participatory observation

Participant observation is a method of data collection that is highly useful in any qualitative research; it is a method that enables the researcher to provide a written photography of the situation being studied. (Kawulich 2005). Briefly, participant observation can be looked at as a logical description of events, behaviors and artifacts in the social setting chosen for study (Marshall and Rossman 1989: 79). In this study situation the researcher assumes an observer as participant stance or position, this means that the researcher is an observer whose main aim is to collect data and is therefore not a member of the group being studied. The researcher observes or interacts closely enough with members to establish an insider identity without participating in the activities of the study. Taking a stance as an observer as participant, I participated in the one hour online live session where I took relevant notes of the proceedings. For an easier capture of data, I only observed the church environment during the online session, thereafter I downloaded the online session from YouTube to help me make more observation and analysis with a recorded video that was easier to take back or forward for clarity of data capture. The main idea here was to observe how Pastor Chris and his panel respond to different theological issues that are raised in the forum. Analysis will involve theological topics, language techniques, expression and choice of words, the response and the engagement of the audience in the entire session will also be studied. The researcher was also involved in environmental observation that is the physical setup of the church before during and after the online worship service.

2.2 Field Work Access

2.2.1 Nairobi experience: outsider researcher limitation

My ethnographic field work was initially planned to be in Kenya. I had arranged a 45 days trip to Kenya. Within this period I had planned to attend two online worship services (7th January a mock session and 4th February final session) where I was due to conduct a 1 hour participatory observation and thereafter do a two hours interview; one hour with a church leader and another one hour of group interview. This did not materialized due to three various issue. First the timing was not right; my research request came at a time when the ministry calendar was busy. It was a crusade month and therefore, most members and their leaders were out on crusade mission. Second the church follows a bureaucratic structure with a different department; there was a lot of delay and consultation between different departments. I arrived in Nairobi on 3rd of January and after contacting my gatekeeper we agreed to

physically contact the church reception, the receptionist indicated that I had to send a post to the department of media who represents the church and its leadership in matters concerning media and technology. This is the department that would contact the pastor regarding our request. The reception also told us that the church had a month of crusade and therefore it was a bit difficult to reach the pastor. I sent a letter to the department of media, in the letter I had attached, the NSD⁴ form, the letter of introduction, and a copy of my school ID. Three days after, I got a call from the department head and he agreed to a meeting on 6th of January. The department head agreed partly to my quest as he only allowed me to attend the online worship service on 7th January but just as a first time guest but not a researcher, he further agreed to pursue my request with the pastor. After different back and forth sessions with department of media, I was introduced to pastors assistance who was also the head of cell department, after thoroughly introducing myself she promised to contact pastor on my behalf, all along I was requesting a direct contact with pastor and she told me that it's not the right protocol.

The third issue was confidentiality; I learned that the ministry of Christ embassy was unique to its members, I had an incidence with one of the cell leader a potential informant to my research, she sort to know the name of my son and after telling her, she couldn't agree with my reason and she said that as Christ embassy they believed that a name must have a meaning on its own, there was a way Christ embassy members name their children, the way they dress, the way they talk. They had a sense of high belonging, they almost operated within Christ embassy cloud and they were not so comfortable to share information with non-members who they felt were not willing to understand their faith. Most of their response was initiated with a phrase '*I as a Christ embassy member*'. On 29rd of January 2018 I received a call, and I was informed by pastor's assistant that my application to conduct my research at Christ Embassy church Kenya was rejected. Some of the reasons that were highlighted as a possibility why my application was not considered were among others; the church wished to maintain the confidentiality of its members and that they would like to consult further with the main church in Lagos on how to handle such cases.

2.2.2 Norway Experience

I came back to Norway Mid of February 2018, although my research work in Kenya failed, I had learned a lot and I was determined to use my experience on my next field work. After a

⁴ NSD- Norwegian Center for Research Data, a limited company owned by the ministry of education and data, their main purpose is to provide guidelines and assist researchers with regard to data gathering, data analysis, and issues of methodology, privacy and research ethic.

thorough discussion with my supervisor, we came to a conclusion that it was possible to conduct my field work in Norway. This was possible because, Christ embassy branches all over the world participate in the online session at the same time and in the same way. Therefore my case study location changed and from Nairobi to Oslo and so were my informants.

Unlike in Kenya, the church in Oslo follows a different structure of organization. It was easy for me to reach the decision making body and other leaders. I performed a location search of the church and on march 18th 2018 I attended their service and I personally introduced myself to the church reception, and requested an appointment with the pastor to my amazement this did not take much time, I was taken to the pastor and after a formal greetings, he remembered me (I had served in the church briefly some 4 years ago). Despite the fact that the pastor knew me briefly, I maintained research fidelity as one of ethical consideration, by thoroughly introduced myself and my research to him; I made a brief introduction as a researcher, the purpose of my research, the process the research will take, the time the process will take, I also ensured confidentiality and security of data, this was through ensuring anonymization of any identifiable data and finally stated to him that participation of any informant is voluntary. The pastor having understood my request and the purpose of the study granted me full permission recruit my participants and to conduct my research in their church, he also consented to becoming one of the informants in the research.

2.2.3 The selection of participants

The process of selecting informants was purposively done; this was highly based on informant's role or experience they have had through attending the online worship service (Ritchie and Lewis 2003, p.78). From the attendance list that was available at the reception desk, I was able to select a pool of possible informants out of the most active members of the church, active members to both the local worship service and the online worship service. I purposely targeted this group of active members as I believed they were the most reliable to answer my research question: the influence of social media on church interactions.

From this pool there was a pastor who had earlier consented to my request. The choice of pastor as the study informant is based on occupation; this is so because as a pastor of the church he is involved in daily church communication through preaching and delivering summons, he is also very relevant in answering the question regarding the challenge of social media towards the church/church leaders as a source of religion information. In the pool I also

selected nine more potential participants, other than experience, the other criterion I followed in selecting this group included language and occupation (Patton, 2002, Ritchie and Lewis 2003, p.78). For example there was one female qualifier who was a church translator; she was in charge of the translating English sermons to non-English speaking Norwegians. There was one male who was the head of technical department and another one who was the choir leader. Two other possible participants were working as pastor's assistance; they helped him in various church activities, like leading prayers acting on his behalf when he is in absentia. The last bunch comprising of four participant included ushers, choir singer and other members of the church. I particularly chose to sort my participants basing on language; I purposely required that participants were able to express themselves in English as I wished to interview only English speaking participant as I was not able to speak Norwegian.

2.2.4 Gaining access and recruitment of the participants

The experience I got in accessing the field research in Nairobi (as mentioned in section 4.3.1) came in handy, I learned that my identity had a lot to do with how my informants view or respond to me, I learnt that Christ embassy members had a high sense of belonging and were reluctant in sharing information with people outside the group. Throughout the course of doing this research I have also come to learn that Pentecostal charismatic churches and its leaders are constantly under criticism in the media. Pastor Chris the pioneer of CEI has a share of long list of criticism therefore the members of his church shy away from any sort of media coverage in fear of negative coverage. Having this knowledge my first strategy of accessing the Norway research field was to become a regular church attendant especially visiting the Sunday worship service, during this time I was acquainting myself to the church members, I was always left behind after the service and conversed with the pastor and other service personnel, I was fortunate to receive help from pastor who knew all the members and pin pointed me to good informants and helped me get their contacts. Having stayed with the church as a regular attendant for three weeks I received positive feedbacks from most of the informants I contacted.

I made direct contact with prospective candidates by phone calls and later by email to inform them about the project and ask if they wished to participate. All the candidates I contacted appeared positive towards my research and were willing to participate. I chose my time well as I learned most of them were working. The most convenient day for the interview was on a Sunday afternoon. Three of the candidate declined as the time of the interview was not

suitable for them. From then and in the entire duration of field study, I made a brief introduction of myself to every participant, the purpose of study, I also briefed them of the research process and sort consent to record the interview proceedings. I also assured my participant that the research was confidential and that any recognizable name or identity will be anonymized and or deleted upon completion of the study. This is in relation to the ethical standard in gathering data as stipulated by NSD and also in line with Bryman’s view where he states that “the identities and records of individual should be maintained as confidential” (Bryman 2012 p.136). Although I recruited almost all the participant directly through two group initial meetings, two of the participants who were working as pastor assistance were recruited by pastor, they did not attend the two preliminary meetings and I had not meet them before.

In accordance to the anonymity principle, I assigned my participant fictional name. I noted informants from the local worship service as Informant A, B, C, D and E, local interviewed pastor as interviewed pastor A then the local preaching pastor a Pator A. Informants from the netnographic material as we will see later will be Audience 1, 2, 3, 4 and 4. Online preaching pastors as pastors 1, 2, 3, 4. The following table helps illustrate the number of informants, clearly indicating their fictional names, their position and the worship service

#	Participants fictional name	Position in church	Worship service
1	Informant A, local Norwegian branch	Member	Local Worship
2	Informant B, local Norwegian branch	Member	Local Worship
3	Informant C, local Norwegian branch	Member	Local Worship
4	Informant D, local Norwegian branch	Member	Local Worship
5	Informant E, local Norwegian branch	Member	Local Worship
6	Informant Pastor A, local Norwegian branch	Pastor	Local Worship
7	Pastor A, local Norwegian branch	Pastor	Local Worship
1	Audience 1, online	Audience	Online Worship
2	Audience 2, online	Audience	Online Worship
3	Audience 3, online	Audience	Online Worship
4	Audience 4, online	Audience	Online Worship
5	Audience 5, online	Audience	Online Worship
1	Pastor 1, online	Pastor	Online Worship

2	Pastor 2, online	Pastor	Online Worship
3	Pastor 3, online	Pastor	Online Worship
4	Pastor 4, online	Pastor	Online Worship

2.3 Sources of data

Another source of primary data, was a YouTube video. This was previous live recording of an online worship session that had happened in an earlier date. This video was downloaded from the church YouTube channel and stored for further analysis.

2.3.1 Foreshadowed Problem Approach

Research design in an ethnographic work is approached in a relatively open ended manner that normally begins with an interest in a particular area of social life. Ethnographers typically borrow the idea presented by Malinowski called foreshadowed problems, their orientation is an exploratory one. They start with a focus on a specific set of research questions, then definition of data collection strategies and then a test of findings against evidence.

The first step towards an ethnographic research design is to convert the foreshadowed problems into a set of questions to which an answer could be given; this answer could take narrative description of a sequence of event, a generalized account of practices of a particular group of people, or a more abstract theoretical formulation. In our case our foreshadowed problem is oriented towards exploring the impact of social media on church interactions,

Using the foreshadowed approach, the first step involved a description of the church setup of both the local and the online services. This was closely followed by the questions exploring the impact of social media on church interaction; this will be broken in to two parts, one exploring transformation of communication, and the second part looking at church authority as a source of religious information.

2.3.2 Research Setting and Case Study

The other significant factor that plays a role in shaping the way in which research problems are developed in ethnography is the nature of the setting chosen for study. One of the basic needs of a research is to determine the sort of location that would be most appropriate for investigating research problem; this is normally based on a case's suitability, feasibility of carrying a research there, and the access to the selected case. Therefore in order for a researcher to identify a suitable case, there is need to conduct a preliminary analysis of the

setting , this includes collecting relevant information about the setting, interviewing any person who can be easily contacted who has experience or knowledge about the setting, and also visiting the setting. For the study purposes, Oslo is our potential study location due to its centrality, being the capital city of Norway and where most immigrants reside. It is also suitable being characterized by many Christian denominations; Oslo is also both heterogeneous and cosmopolitan city since it is the capital city of Norway. Within its heterogeneity and cosmopolitanism, effects of globalization and modernization are more rampant in Oslo as an urban setting than in rural areas of Norway, in addition access to internet in Oslo is so much easier due to the high number of internet service providers(ISP) making Oslo a suitable place to study impact of social media on church interactions. In addition throughout my Master's study, I will be residing in Oslo, this means that in terms of logistic and geography I know the area which is an added advantage to the research. This therefore was also a factor to consider for the choice of location.

In this research, the use of ethnographic case study was adopted. Yin states that a case study is an empirical inquiry where the main focus of investigation is on a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin 2009:18). Yin further states that a case study is suitable for research questions that seek to answer questions like how? why? He also alluded that the case study might be explanatory, exploratory or descriptive. In this project, the research question takes an exploratory approach that is the project seeks to explore how social media impacts church interactions.

A case study is also suitable when the extent of control over behavioral events is limited. this means that the investigator has a less chance of controlling the event. In addition a case study is highly suitable when a phenomenon to be studied is highly contemporary and in a real life situation. The phenomenon of the study in this project is highly contemporary, where a church (in this case Christ embassy church in Norway) uses an online forum to host a panel of pastors to tackle theological issues; these theological issues are audience generated, all this happens in real life; by seeking to understand how such a phenomenon has impacted interactions within a church setting, a case study will be preferred. Christ embassy church as mentioned in the introduction is a suitable case because it has highly utilized social media as a communication strategy, the evidence is an online forum. This is highly because case study will enable me to explore the nature of the phenomenon in details and within the context of the study.

2.3.3 Global Communion Service YouTube Recording

The Global Communion Service is a periodic online worship service that is organized across Christ Embassy Church branches every first Sunday of every month. The service is broadcasted live from the main church in Lagos, through the church's WEB television known as cLoveworld television ministry. Any person with access to internet can log in to this site and participate. Non-members are only able to participate in the question and answer segment (this is one of the reasons why I want to focus more on this part). For a member church branch, a special login page is provided; these enable exclusive rights to all the content. This means that only the church members or non-members who attend a designated Christ Embassy church premise have exclusive rights to all the contents. For example, Christ Embassy church branches are provided with access codes to the site (the access codes are given to a Pastor in a particular branch) this therefore means that any member or any person who attends the church in this particular day is free to participate as an exclusive member. The online service is mostly hosted by the lead pastor together with other pastors who together tackle theological issues from the audience. The online session that has been used as a data source in this project was downloaded from Christ Embassy's official YouTube channel. The video lasts for one hour and twelve minutes, my analytical focus in the video is the question and answer segment that is contained in the first 32 minutes of the video. The rest of the video contains highlights of upcoming events and other advertisement.

2.4 Ethical consideration

This is the ending part of the negotiation of research relationship that needs to be considered highly. Ethical issues will be observed for the benefit of both the participant and the researcher. Beauchamp and Childress provided four ethical principles that can guide any field researcher in considering ethical issues; first the researcher should be autonomous enough to be able to respect the rights of an individual, second a researcher should conduct the research for the well-being of a society, the research should be beneficial, the researcher should not do harm and lastly the interview or research should be done in a just way (Beauchamp and Childress 1983). Jane Lewis also provides for different approaches to negotiating research design, this includes.

Informed consent: she argued that in any research study, consent from sampled participants must be obtained, that is there should be a clear willingness from participants to be part of the project. For participants to provide their participation consent, it is the work of the researcher

to provide them with some information that includes the purpose of the study, who the researcher is, how the data will be used, their requirement as participant, and the time required. For Holloway and Wheeler, informed consent means that there is an understanding that participation is voluntary. This research regarded the consent of participant highly. A letter of introduction that gives the relevant information regarding the research was sent to participant, where they were requested to read and sign as way of agreeing to participate.

Anonymity and confidentiality; according to Lewis anonymity means that the identity of the people taking part in the project should never be known outside the research or research team. On the other hand she argues that confidentiality means avoiding direct or indirect attribution of comments, in reports or presentations, to identified participants. The issue of storage of data also falls under this category, any storage device or gadget that will be used to store data should be labeled and kept in a way that it doesn't compromise anonymity; also there should be separation of data and other materials. The researcher therefore made sure that the participant remains anonymous through assigning fictional names to participant and any device that contained their data as it will be seen in the analysis. There will be no indirect or direct attributions of comments to identified participant. Participants were ensured that all personal data will be deleted after completion of the project.

Protection of participants from harm; in any research project, it is highly important to consider ways in which participation may harm the sample members. The issue of harm arises mainly in researches that have sensitive topics that might lead participants to disclose painful or sensitive information that they rarely or never previously shared. Research topics that touch or can lead to issues like family, religion stand, sexuality or health should be regarded as sensitive and may lead participant to regret participating in a project. Participants should be given a clear understanding of the subject matter a study will address before being asked to take part. This research is majorly touching on the topic of social media and church communication. As it is a requirement, an introduction letter was sent to the informant that clearly explain what the subject matter is all about, there was an assurance that possible sensitive questions will be avoided or will be omitted in the recordings in case they arise without the knowledge of the informant. The informants were also assured that they are free to pull out of the project during or after the field study.

CHAPTER THREE: ANALYSIS

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of my ethnographic and netnographic material that I gathered during my field work. I will use thematic analysis as my method of data analysis, according to Braun and Clarke thematic analysis is the process of identifying, examining and recording patterns or themes within qualitative data. These themes represent patterns in a dataset that are important to the description of a phenomenon or a research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In my study I have carefully developed themes from my theory and also from my empirical data, in my analysis I have combined a deductive and a more inductive approach, often referred to as an abductive research strategy.

Theoretically, I came up with three themes that I based on the concept of media as presented by Meyrowitz, who look at the media in three aspects that is, media as an environment, media as a language and media as conduit. The three themes helped me to efficiently categorize and present the data I gathered through participatory observation and from the informant's response.

Looking at media as conduit, I will seek to explore and identify how the molding force of social media available in the online and local worship service has influenced the generation and distribution of theological content. In particular I will seek to know how or whether the molding power of social media has enabled the connection of theological content to its

stakeholders which includes the congregant, in connection to this I will explore how or whether this connection poses as a threat to the authority of the church leaders as a source of religious information.

In the second theme; media as environment, I will seek to explore how social media as a component that constitute public sphere, is molding the physical church setup, how it is encouraging new ways of performing religious events, and how celebrity culture associated with social media environment is influencing new ways of dressing and behaving during worship services. Eventually I will seek to know how these platforms are providing a challenge to the church as a public institution where church events are performed. In other words I will seek to gauge whether social media has attained societal function that the church had held a privilege to perform.

Lastly media as a language will address the expressive variables or production techniques. In this I will check how the logic of social media alters the presentation and meaning of content element to fit the demand of a particular context. In other words I will try to address the power of social media in shaping public opinion through filtering out influential voices and assigning certain expression more weight than others.

For clarity of my analysis I will first present and analyze the traditional church service. This analysis will make the significant communication features in the online service become more clearer. Both the analysis of the traditional and online church service will be structured according to the three themes I mention above; media as conduit, media as language and media as environment. The analysis will comprise three parts; the first part includes the analysis of my reflection as a participant-observer this is in line with Kozinets who argues that in a netnographic research the netnographers becomes their own data in what he terms as the researcher-as-instrument. Therefore, through my observation experience I will create data, create analysis, and create presentation and representation (pg.164). The second part includes analysis of my informant's responses or views and then the third part will be the summary of the findings.

3.1 Traditional Church Service (TCS) Setup

Christ embassy church Norway is a neo-charismatic Pentecostal church that is part of a mega church known as Christ embassy international or BelieversLoveWorld. The church is located in the suburbs of Oslo the capital of Norway, its congregation is highly comprised of

immigrant from Africa and East Asia. The following is an imagery presentation of the setup of the church during a traditional church service that happens every Sunday as I noted in the field work notebook.

The church is operated on a rented office that comprises of two doors the main entrance to the building and the door to the church that normally remains open. Just at the door, there is a reception desk and besides the reception, there is hanger stand where the attendees hang their coats. At the reception, I met with the reception who after welcoming me requested me to fill my details to a book, that I later discovered captured the list of attendance.

After filling in the personal details which includes names, contacts, first time or member among others, the reception then directed me to the door, where once more I was meet with another person, who was having a tag, the tag inform of an ID, was well designed to be visible at a distance, the font used for the name was clear and conspicuously designed in a shouting white color with a blue background, the name on the tag was USHER, after welcoming us , the usher directed us to a sit on the second row from the front. On the isle the red carpet was elegantly place and gave the place an executive look, the rest of the floor was laid with a blue carpet that marched with the wallpaper that stood behind the pulpit. The chairs were arranged in rows for on each row. The pulpit stand was made of glass and had the believers love world logo engraved on it, the pulpit platform was raised to give it some elevation and was laid with a red carpet that marched the isle carpet. On the stand there was a wireless microphone, a bible and an iPad. To the left of the pulpit there was a section where the choir was stationed, there was a key bond and band instrument, the choir members wore black and yellow attires that looked classy and fashionable, the sits were decorated with white pieces of clothes and they looked different from the rest of the seats in church. To the right of pulpit, there was a set of four seats and a table, there were two flower vases besides the seat, one of the seat in the middle looked different in color form the rest this was reserved for the pastor. In the front near the pulpit there was three set of speakers, two on each side and in the middle was a monitor speaker, at the back, there were two more speakers each on the corner. There was a technical bench where the microphone receivers and other arena were placed. There was a computer, a camera stand and a Sony camera. There was also the speaker control receiver that connected wires that run to the speaker. There was a wire running from the computer to the projector that was place in the upper from near the pulpit

The Sunday summon was scheduled to start at midday, at around 11:30 am half of the seats were already occupied. From the look of the attendant, there was a feeling as though they wore the clothes from the same closet; nearly 70 percent of the men in attendance wore nicely designed fitting suits, with shiny and corporate shoes. Nearly 50% of the women were looking corporate; it felt like there was a clothing competition. The service started with praise and worship from the choir. The lead singer conducted the songs with a well balance tone, it felt like it was in a studio, the projector was on and the technical person displayed the lyrics to the songs that the choir performed. The choir performed the songs in a well-choreographed manner and everyone sang along the choir, the keyboard guy provided the right accompaniment that was supplemented by the drum, it was a live performance. Some few minutes to the hour, a person appeared from the front row with a wireless microphone and called for an order as the pastor was coming in, the pastor was introduced as the man of God and, as he was walking to his sit, everyone was standing, he walked majestically towards his seats accompanied by his wife and two men.

The pastor was looking fashionable, with a well-cut fitting suit, he was wearing brown shiny shoes that matched his belt, and his wife was wearing a blue dress with high-heeled shoes. Both men accompanying him were also wearing trendy suits. The sermon from pastor was on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The title was Building the spirit, which he based on different scriptures, but he majorly referred to the book of 1Corinthians 14:1-14. throughout the sermon Pastor was passing left right across the podium, and he appeared to use much of his body language to insist on his points, for example he was pointing, laughing, jumping and also raising his voice especially when shouting Amen, he prayed mostly in tongues which was significantly loud with heavy tone. Most of what he preached was scriptural based, that is, his preaching was entirely through bible scriptures. Throughout the sermon, the audiences were listening silently, and they could only shout amen or indulge in prayers. some of the audience were having iPad and other tablets that they used to look up bible scriptures, there were some few that used them for other purposes like taking pictures, recording videos others appeared to concentrate too much on their tablets than listening to the summon. The service ended at two and pastor announced that the online warship was set to start at around 17:00hrs.

3.1.1 The Conduit

As I mentioned previously, the theme on conduit concerns the impact of social media on theological content of the local service. I will seek to identify how the molding force of social media has influenced the connection of theological content to the local congregants. Basing on my empirical data, I developed two topics, the impact of social media on one-way content generation and on the one way-content delivery. These two topics are in connection with the viewpoint of Bailey and Storch 2007, who argued that church communication has traditionally been one-way where sermons are delivered from pastor to passive and silence audience. (Bailey and Storch 2007)Therefore, I will seek to answer whether the molding force of social media has influenced change in the one-way content generation and delivery. I will also seek to find out how this changed has impacted on the authority of pastors.

3.1.1.1 My reflection on One-way content generation and distribution

From a general observation, some significant pointers confirmed pastor's involvement in the creation of theological content. For example, he builds up the topic 'Building the Spirit' from a statement in the following way:

Man is a spirit, he has a soul and it lives in his body, that is what Paul told the elders of Ephesus when he called them. We quote this scripture all the time but let us go to Acts 20:28-32 and we will trace this statement, said the pastor while pointing at the projecting screen. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified [...]" here Paul was talking to them (elders) about what will happen to them after he leaves them, there are some people who will rise among them as grievous wolves. If God builds you up there is an inheritance for you (congregants). He will build you up starting with your spirit, soul and body. If he (Paul) was talking about building up physically, then primarily they (elders) would not know or foresee the grievous wolves among them, they can only know this by their spirit. PRAISE GOD! Let us go to the book of Corinthians pointing again to the projecting screen (Pastor, Local Norwegian Branch)

The local pastor presents a statement that he claims that the congregants including him quotes all the time, he then points out a scripture on the screen from the book of Acts 20:28-32 that tried to bring some light into the statement. His interpretation of the scripture is that God is able to build a person's spirit, soul and body and through this, the person inherits an ability to

foresee hidden things. To provide more light on his sermon he again points the congregant to the book of Jude. Despite the display of the scripture on the screen, there was less traces of social media logic in pastor's sermon that would yields a two-way traffic where users get an opportunity to engage or influence content generation. Pastor is primarily involved in creation of the sermon through scripture interpretation. From his interpretation, one would question the meaning of the term buildup that is if it meant 'withstand against' rather than 'fore knowledge of' as pastor claims. The silence of the congregants can perhaps be interpreted as caused by the lack of opportunity to engage with the pastor, or based on the traditional authority of the pastor, which is validated through a long-standing and accepted high regard to pastors position in the church. There was a sense of agreement that the pastor was a man of God and his word are guided by the Holy Spirit and therefore true and final: it should be noted that before the start of the sermon the MC introduced pastor as the man of God.

In another instance pastor takes a new strategy whereby he creates content through asking question, and answering the question basing on the scripture.

How can one have his spirit built up? I will tell you in a minute... he craps loudly and said can we have the book of 1 Corinthians 14:2 on the display, orders pastor as he points to the screen. "For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries." Translation: if I talk in the spirit I am not talking to you, It's a conversation between me and God, and it is one of the way that my spirit can be charged up, energized. Verse 14 it tells us "For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful" it says when I pray my mind might not be able to comprehend what am praying about at that time, but as I go higher in praying in tongues I can have an idea of what I prayed about. (Pastor, Local Norwegian Branch)

Here the local pastor in an effort to build up his topic 'building up your spirit' has formulated a question that sort to provide answers on how one can build up his/her spirit. He then sorts an answer from the scripture in the book of Corinthians. Just like in the previous example, his interpretation of the scripture becomes the sermon of the day. His view is that when one speaks in an unknown tongue, they speak the language of God. He says that praying in tongues is a conversation between a human being and God, and praying in tongues is one way that the spirit can be built up. Although the human is involved in the conversation, his mind might not be in a position to comprehend the meaning of the prayer. The strategy by pastor through connecting questions to the scripture confirms that indeed the users are less involved in content generation. This is a

typical style of sermon generation among the many charismatic churches. Pastor in this instance confirms that when one is filled with Holy Spirit he acquires other worldly abilities, for example one is able to speak the language of God. The topic on the Holy Spirit as is preached by pastor in this scripture also confirms the traditional doctrine of charismatic churches who advocated baptism with the Holy Spirit. The charismatic Pentecostal churches believes that one of the evidence of the Holy Spirit is identifiable through speaking in tongues, therefore this confirms the authority of the church that is legitimized through its practice of speaking in tongues

3.1.1.2 Informant view on the one-way content generation

As mentioned in chapter two, I conducted interviews with both the local pastor and a group of young people attending both the traditional and the online service. From their responses, there is clear evidence that pastor is solely responsible for generating sermons. After asking the local pastor how theological topics are generated in the local service differently from the online he said the following

[...] mostly before coming to church, I pray and ask God for guidance towards what I should preach. The Holy Spirit reveals scriptures and topics that make the sermon.
[..](Interviewed Pastor, local Norwegian branch)

After asking a follow-up question to find out whether there are questions from congregants in the local service, Pastor responded this way:

[...], in the local service when one has a question, he/she would be required to come to the office therefore this means reaching only to this person. [...] (Interviewed Pastor, local Norwegian branch)

From the main response, the local pastor acknowledges that, most of his topics are divinely guided, they are revealed to him through the Holy Spirit. In the second response, pastor points out that, the questions that are asked locally amounts to personal matters and do not require public hearing. This therefore means a personal arrangement between the pastor and the person with the question. The office of the pastor is used as the venue and not the church pulpit. This can be interpreted to mean that there is less chance for the congregants to participate in the creation of the sermon, there is less connection between what is preached and what concerns the congregants. Through the guidance and revelation of the Holy Spirit, the local pastor gets legitimate authority to lead the church in the sermon as divinely revealed.

Similarly one of the informants from the group interview had the same view. When I asked her the difference between the local and online service, she said the following.

[...] the difference would be in agenda setting. The local pastor determines and moves according to his agenda, in his agenda there is a predetermined topic to preach though the holy spirits play a key role [...] (Informant C, local Norwegian branch)

Here the informant reveals that the local pastor comes up with a plan of the day, in this plan a predetermined topic of the preaching is developed and delivered. She also just like pastor acknowledged the workings of the holy-spirit in helping the local pastor on what to preach. This therefore confirms the traditional authority of the pastor as a source of religious information, through divine revelations, this is in line with the definition of traditional authority by Hoover who argues that traditional authority is rooted in the text.

When I presented a follow up question in regard to whether the local pastor answers question. Two informants had the following answers:

Sometimes in the local church, pastor answers question but in special session not in between service, for example there was a day where the local pastor held an open session to discuss about same sex marriage where those with questions were given an opportunity to ask question. Since the topic was sensitive a lot of people were not for it, and it wasn't working as everyone was quiet. It's not like in the online session that one can ask without revealing much of their identity and therefore make it easy to ask or air their views on a sensitive topic [...] (Informant D, local Norwegian branch)

[...] in local assembly, most questions are asked in person through private meetings with pastors. In additional the local pastor always pre-determines his sermon which normally the members are unaware of so there is no opportunity to ask questions since you are not aware of what the pastor will preach [...] (Informant E, local Norwegian branch)

In the above responses, informant D confirms that there are occasions when local congregants are given an opportunity to engage or ask question during a worship service but this happens on special occasion. This was contrary to the views of interview local pastor and informant E who maintained that questions are on personal basis. Informant D went on to site an example where Local pastor organized a special service to discuss same sex marriage, although this was a topic that was open for discussion, a lot of people avoided engaging in it because of its

sensitivity. He also confirms that if it was held on a different platform for example an online platform, it would have been easier for one to engage anonymously in such a topic. This confirms the challenge of the local pastor in engaging the congregants or getting feedback. One of the reasons for this is a wrong choice of platform; the second is that congregants shy away from church discussion to protect their identity against discrimination or prejudice that may arise from their point of view. Therefore this is an indication that congregants are not presented with an opportunity to influence or freely air their opinions on topics that may have contributed to the content, thus pastor is left to generate content that may have less connection with the audience need

Informant E had similar view as the one from the interviewed pastor, she confirms that the questions asked are private and are handled privately. He also acknowledges that the predetermined sermons from Local pastor are mostly unknown to the members. In other words the sermons are not in touch with the members and therefore they find them less interesting to engage in or ask questions. This is against the principles of connectivity, where there is an opportunity for the users to be able to connect with the content

3.1.2 Findings

From the analysis as is observed above, there is less evidence of the existence of and the influence of social media in linking up the content of the sermon to the needs of the user. The following are the findings that I discovered

Critical disconnection, from my analysis there is undisputable evidence that proves that pastor predetermines the theological content in the local church. Although the local pastor gets divine help, this remains a one-way content generation that is predominantly common with most religious institution. As the analysis confirms, this way of content generation loses the connectivity of the content and the users. Bailey and Storch views it as a one way communication where the audience are passive and silent the fore less engaged in content creation. Therefore the workings of social media that facilitate user engagement or participation in content creation are not present (Fuchs 2014, Bailey and Storch 2007)

Confirmation of authority: throughout my analysis, there are major revelations that prove the long standing traditional and accepted authority of pastors as the source of religious information. In the analysis pastors through the help of the Holy Spirit are accepted or held in high regard as true interpreters of religious text. The local pastor's authority is legitimized or is drawn from the Holy Spirit doctrine associated with charismatic Pentecostal. Christ embassy in particular believes that when an individual receives the Holy Ghost, he receives divine enablement for Christian service and witness. (Hoover, 2016). In this case this authority may have been challenged if the audience were provided with an opportunity to engage in content generation.

3.1.3 The Language

The language theme will help in bringing the analysis to the impact of social media on the language of delivery in the traditional worship service. (TCS). The expressive variable within a medium, the grammar, the body language, and the tone will be some of the data that will be presented for analysis.

3.1.3.1 My reflection on Language as a researcher-as-instrument

The choice of grammar was characterized by strong word syntaxes and the voice of the pastor was loud and overbearing, for example while reciting confession statement this is what the local pastor said:

YOU CANNOT PROGRESS IN CHRIST IF YOU KEEP QUIET, WHAT YOU SAY IS WHAT YOU POSSESS, SHOUT!! I CAN DO EVERYTHING THROUGH CHRIST THAT STRENGTHENS ME, I KNOW WHO I AM, I AM A SEED OF ABRAHAM! (Interviewed Pastor, local Norwegian branch)

While requesting for the display of the book of Corinthians this is what the local pastor said:

How can one have his spirit built up? I will tell you in a minute... he craps loudly and said can we have the book of 1 Corinthians 14:2 on the display, orders pastor as he points to the screen (Interviewed Pastor, local Norwegian branch)

In the first instance the local pastor initiates the service with recitation of the confession statement. The confession was done in a very loud and intimidating voice. The word 'you cannot' opens the statement from pastor. The declaration in the second line was initiated by the phrase 'I can do'. When the pastor was praying in tongues or shouting 'Amen' to insist on a point he was particularly loud and his voice sounded alien. There was heavy use of body gesture that was characterized by finger pointing, clapping, and use of feet as a way of insisting a point. This is a typical and conservative style of preaching that is associated with most charismatic Pentecostal churches. This long standing and acceptable behavior of preaching among the charismatic pastors can be associated with the belief in Holy Ghost fire. This fired up preaching is an indication of authority or power of the Holy Ghost that manifests in fired up preaching and charged voices. Its backing is scriptural for example in the book of Acts 2:3-4.

In other instances pastor appears to use unintelligible speech. For example while preaching some of his pronunciation was having elements of his native tongue and therefore was difficult to understand or comprehend, in other instances pastor spoke Pidgin English. For

example pastor repeatedly used the phrase “*a beg o*” in place of “*please or I beg you*”..... He also used “*my broada*” to mean “*my brother*” or “*bredren*” to mean “*brethren*”. Although locally the native Nigerian had no issues with understanding the local pastor, the church introduced voice translators to make it easy for members to follow and understand what their pastor was saying. While praying in tongues the language was not decipherable by the congregant or by pastor himself. This alien language has been confirmed by the Bible and also the local pastor confirmed this when I interviewed him, He said:

For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful it says when I pray my mind might not be able to comprehend what am praying about at that time, but as I go higher in praying in tongues I can have an idea of what I prayed about.(Pastor, Local Norwegian Branch)

The unintelligible speech, the Pidgin English and the Nigerian accent of the local pastor can be associated with poor communication skills, however this is true the authority bestowed upon the pastor as divinely guided and filled with the Holy Ghost, legitimizes him to his position as the conveyer of the message of God.

3.1.4 Findings

Aggressive communication, the style of communication was characterized by strong language that was provocative and intimidating. This aggressive nature of communication derives its legitimation from the bible, there is an essence believes by the charismatic Pentecostals that when the Holy Spirit fills a person his whole body is fired up and can manifest itself with fired up voices and actions. This can be seen in the book of act 2: 3-4. The strong language perhaps can be associated with the authority as stated by Chaves, who said that religious authority controls access to the goods both of this world and of the afterworld, the goods to which the authority preside over might include deliverance from undesirable conditions, or offer positive goods such as eternal life, perfect health, great wealth or other values.(p.756) in his statement pastor says YOU CANNOT PROGRES and also WHAT YOU SAY IS WHAT YOU POSSES. This is the language of command.

Confirming authority, according to Chaves, religious authority structures are distinguished by the fact that their claims are legitimated at least by a language of the supernatural or through reference to a supernatural being (p.756). The local pastor authority is derived from reference to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit enables him to use God-talk. This is in contrary to the views of Hjarvard who argued that popular culture is significantly secular and has a high

reference to science, humanism, or modern values of freedom and equality. Therefore locally perhaps due to the absence of a platform where audiences are able to freely air their freedom the conservative authority of pastors basing on their ability to link to the supernatural is unchallenged.

3.1.5 The Environment

This theme takes the study focus on an analysis of the physical setup of the church environment, emphasis will be put on finding out how molding force of social media is influencing the church environment. Church setup, church presentations and events setup, the dress code, worship and praising behavior will be presented and analyzed.

3.1.5.1 My reflection on environment as a researcher-as-instrument

The use of technology and technological tools during the traditional church service was highly conspicuous: the church was setup to include access to WI-FI, screen projectors to enhance scripture presentation, voice translators, and high end speakers and microphones.

The wireless internet connection was provided for to all members attending the church service, I noted that most members in attendant were having smart phones and requested for wireless password from the technical bench. During the sermon most of them used the gadgets for voice recording, video and photo shooting. I also noted that the use of gadget during the church service distracted concentration of most members. During the entire service despite having a tablet and a hard copy of the bible, pastor preferred having the scripture on the screen, He on many occasion ordered for it on screen, for example, the two instances show pastor requesting for the scripture on the screen

Man is a spirit, he has a soul and it lives in his body, that is what Paul told the elders of Ephesus when he called them. We quote this scripture all the time but let us go to Acts 20:28-32 and we will trace this statement, said the pastor while pointing at the projecting screen

How can one have his spirit built up? I will tell you in a minute... he craps loudly and said can we have the book of 1 Corinthians 14:2 on the display, orders pastor as he points to the screen.

The existence and use of technological tools in the local service can be looked at as a way way of enhancing delivery of sermons as is generally expected in a Pentecostal church organization. However much this is true, there is a deeper effects of the existence of some of these tools, for example the availability of a wireless internet connection caused disruption and lack of concentration among the members who on several occasions appeared to get more drawn to their gadget than towards the preaching pastor. On the other hand the internet

provided connectivity of the members and the rest of the world and therefore offered an opportunity for the congregants to participate in spreading the local sermon to the rest of the world. The scripture was projection with pomp and conspicuous colors, there was animation of the scripture that was characterized by fading in and out of words from the bible. The instance with which alternation of the scripture from one chapter to another was with high speed that enabled the congregants to focus more on the sermon than spend more time to looking up for the text in their hard and soft copies, these manipulation of content through the style of presentation offers an audience experience just like in mass media like Television.

The traditional church service was highly comprised of audience that seemed to put much emphasis on their dress code. Generally there was corporate way of dressing that was marked by high-end designer suits for men and trendy and fashionable clothing for women, the formal way of dressing was complemented by the formal way of behavior. Nearly 70 percent of the men in attendance wore nicely designed fitting suits, with shiny and corporate shoes. Nearly 50% of the women were looking corporate; it felt like there was a clothing competition. The trendy fashionable dressing can be associated with the views of Hjarvard 2016 who said that media influences new form of worship and trendy behavior associated with popular and celebrity culture.

3.1.5.2 Informant view on the Environment

Most of my informant testified the existence of modern technology in the local service that they all agreed that was geared towards enhancing growth and reach out. For example when I asked how the local church participate in online worship services my pastor informant said the following:

[..]The internet multimedia department provides us with login details to the web streaming platform. Each church branch is provided access to the forum basing on their location and region across the world. (Interviewed Pastor, local Norwegian branch)

Similarly, two of my informant from the group interview said the following when I asked a follow-up question seeking to know how Pastor Christ connects with local churches.

He gets to us, we have a platform called internet multimedia, so through that means we are able to stream live to various locations, different nations. So we have the platform, livestreaming. (Informant B, local Norwegian branch)

[..]He brings out the father figure in all our branches, he walks through this multimedia. I don't know if it would have been possible, but with the high-tech that is now available. We are able to reach out to him and he is able to reach to us and guide the church in Holy Communion (Informant E, local Norwegian branch)

The local pastor identifies an existence of a web streaming site that is available locally and through this the local church in Oslo is able to access the online session. Similarly the two informants also confirms the existence of the internet multimedia site that enhances the reach out between Pastor Chris and the rest of the world. The existence of a streaming site in the local church provides a new space or an arena where the church can perform its events. The media have become a significant arena for orchestrating public ritual events involving celebration as well as mourning. In the case of Christ embassy they use the online session using the multimedia session to conduct the Holy Communion.

When I presented my informant with a question seeking knowledge on how else the church uses technology besides the online session, the interviewed pastor said the following:

We also have other platform that we use, for example we use skype for our prayer meeting network. We have kings chat conference where we can discuss with other church leaders online. (Interviewed Pastor, local Norwegian branch)

When I presented the same question to my informant in the group interview, one of the informant had this response:

In his previous teachings, Pastor Chris said that the ways of the world as presented through internet and social media is tampering with the good work of the church, therefore there is need to have our own media outlet. Locally we use kings chart instead of platform like WhatsApp to celebrate birthdays, announce event and gather for prayers (Informant C, local Norwegian branch)

The local pastors response is a clear evidence that, social media is providing a new space for the church to conduct its prayers. He identifies skype as a platform the local church uses for its prayer gathering. He also identifies a kings chat an instant messaging app available on mobile phone as their space for organizing conferences, similarly informant C also shares the same view, to him the creation and ownership of theses platform is not only an alternative space of worship, but it offers a shield from the influence of people owned media platform.

The question on the effects of technology on the development of the church was responded to in a positive angle, as expected almost all the responded said that social media has enhanced the growth of the church through widening and diversifying coverage and reach out. Social media has also enable people to have the church wherever they are, they don't need to come to the church premises, and they can have the church right in their bedroom or homes

[..] We are going to get into a time when it will not be easy to get people to gather in the church. So the church needs to prepare for this phase and be able to reach the people wherever they are. Remember is the same thing that will happen physical business, there will be no time for this everyone will be shopping online virtually. (Interviewed pastor, local Norwegian branch)

One of the responded in the group interview said.

Social media has also enable people to have the church wherever they are, they don't need to come to the church premises, and they can have the church right in their bedroom or homes (Informant A, local Norwegian branch)

The local pastor recognizes that, there will be a time that the physical church will fail to attract a gathering of congregants and therefore the church needs to embrace this change and formulate ways or adopt to the inevitable change. This perhaps is the reason why the church is embracing the online platform as a new space for performing its rituals as we have seen in the above analysis. He predicts that the church will eventually become virtual. Similarly informant A agrees with pastor, for him there will be no need for people to gather in church, rather the church can be present in their bedroom. Although to the pastor and other informant, the diversification of the church seems a positive thing that all churches needs to embrace, the threat of unity in fellowship should not be neglected, Wong In some parts of the world, globalization has given rise to the phenomenon of 'believing without belonging', hinting at a move away from structure altogether, as can be seen in the development of virtual Christianity or virtual church. (Wong, 2008, p.822)

3.1.6 Findings

The element of programmability in the above sermon can be traced through looking at the style in which the scripture was presented. There was pomp and conspicuous colors used in projecting the scripture. The scripture animation that included fading in and out can be characterized with the format framework of mass media logic, where manipulation of content

is for audience watching experiences. This manipulation of content through programing is predominantly a mass media logic associated with television broadcasting (Van & Poell, 2013). Although there is existence of mass media logic, the effects of social media logic that is user-centered is less evidence.

Influence of popular culture, Birgit Meyer observed, observed that charismatic Pentecostal churches presents themselves as definitive example of modernity, characterized by having huge churches, elaborate use of technology, high quality gospel music and instigating trend-setting modes of dressing that successfully signified mastery of modern world (Meyer, 2004). this is highly in agreement with the kind of discovery I made from my field work as I have discussed above

New space of worship, from my analysis it is quite clear that the local church has found a new space where it can perform some of its functions. For example Christ embassy church uses skype as a space to perform prayers, there is also conferencing on kings chat. This proves the workings of Hjarvard, who argued that media have acquired some societal functions that religious organization had previously held position to perform. In my case skype has become a new place of praying therefore exerting pressure to the church as a privileged place of prayer and worship.

Challenge to church unity, in the article Christians outside the church, Wong describes a post-institutional phase, where Christianity split up into not only different confessions or denominations but also in and outside the church. Wong continues and describes a phenomenon of believing but not belonging, a phenomenon that my informant have confirmed. Informant A confirmed that the church can be individualized and that it is not necessary to come to church, these therefore can be interpreted that the influence of social media is threatening the greater gift of church fellowship and creating a more worldly acceptable individual believe.

3.2 Online Church Service (OCS) Setup

I will now processed to the analysis of the online church service (OCS). The OCS is a program that belongs to the mega Christ Embassy Church based in Lagos. It is as mentioned a service that is streamed live across all the branches of Christ embassy globally. The service is broadcasted live from the main church in Lagos, through the church streaming sites that includes cLoveworld for an open audience and the Internet Multimedia Ministry (IMM) for

members only. The online worship service which is also known as the global communion service is organized in three segments, the first segment is the praise and worship, the second segment is the question and answer and the third segment is the holy communion service where Pastor Chris heads the church in celebration of the communion through preaching and partaking of the sacrament bread and wine. The online service is organized periodically, every first Sunday of every month, the lead pastor (Pastor Chris) organizes a joint communion service that he hosts online, the purpose of this service is to enable the president (as they call him) of the church get in touch with other branches across the globe, this is so because he is not able to visit each and every branch. The service is broadcasted live and concurrently in all the churches across the world. The following is a descriptive representation of the physical setup of the online church as I recorded in my field work note book at a Norwegian branch.

The online church service started at around 18:30hrs and it lasted for 1.5hrs. One of the most significant observations that I noted before the start of the program was the dressing code, in the traditional worship service, the congregants donned high-end and fashionable clothing, during the online service, the dress code was casual and the congregants appeared at ease, there were no ushers to direct them on where to seat, everyone chose their favorite sitting position, the local pastor was also wearing casual clothing and he mingled freely with other congregants. A few minutes to the start of the program, the technical bench was actively testing the connections and making final setup of the church, unlike the normal service, the projecting bond was pulled to the ground to enable projection of larger and more visible images, the sound system was also tested and after making sure everything was set, the lights were switched off and everyone got into their seats.

At exactly 18:30, the online global communion service was started, the service started with a trailer-like introduction, that showcased what is to be expected in the online service. This was done through voice overs, narrations and animated videos fading off and on and across the screen. The disembodied narrator had an orotund voice that was high in articulation and precision. The eye-catching animations and the narrator's voice made everyone feel eager to see what was coming. After the trailer, there was the praise and worship segment, in this segment there were several musicians that curtain-raised the event by performing in front of a huge congregation in the arena; this was to pave way for the arrangement of the section where pastor and his panel would host the program. At exactly 18:45, the MC appeared and made some few opening remarks and then introduced the men of God (the panelist that included the

lead pastor and three other pastors), all the camera rolled and focused their lights to the space where the four panelist were sited, it was a studio like arrangement, all the pastors donned high-end and executive suits, they were sited on a white curved couch that matched with the well laid grey carpet. All the pastors had digital gadgets in their palms that they appeared to consult throughout the program. The host pastor had his tablet placed on the table together with few papers that contained printed questions from the audience, he had his hair curled, shiny and well combed, and his nails were long and well kept. Pastor's speech was well refined, the tone was moderate, his pronunciations were not affected by his native Nigerian language.

The background was well-lighted with elegant and patterned wallpaper that improved the ambience of the studio. On the screen there were words running across; "*pastor Chris live*". The discussion for the day revolved around 5 questions. The first question was from a Nigeria audience, this question revolved around the issue of God as a creator, the audience sort clarity on whether sickness is a creation of God. The second question came from an audience from South Africa who sort to understand the contradiction between the book of Mathew and Luke regarding the Genealogy of Jesus. The third question came from South Africa; this audience was concerned with an issue about life after death. The fourth and the last question was concerning the topic on we are in the world but not of the world, the audience from Malawi sort to understand how the way we live on earth as Christians affects the way we will live in heaven and wanted a evidence from the bible that can back this argument.

At exactly thirty minutes past, pastor released the live audience who were receiving the broadcast on the network across the globe, and was left with the members of Christ embassy only⁵ indicating that the channel was available for people who are non-members (not members of Christ embassy) and was left with the members of the church only. After releasing the audience on the network, there was a short break that was followed by two advertisements that lasted for 4 minute, the first one was a commercial advertisement for the sale of devotional books for kids, and there was also an upcoming event for the youths.

After the commercials, the lead pastor came to announce more upcoming events for the church. At this point also, he mentioned a mobile app known as Pastor Chris digital library

⁵ The global communion service is broadcasted using various online streaming channels where anyone with access to the internet can participate, this is limited to only question and answer, the rest of the service is left for the in-house members who were participation within their respective churches.

(PCDL), this mobile app provided access to an unlimited digital teachings from Pastor Chris. The lead pastor also directed for a recap display of a previous event where the church hosted Pastor Benny Hinn, one of the pastors that the church hold in high regard, Pastor Chris and Benny Hinn plus other pastors from West African region shared the platform and preached to the congregation in turns. The program ended with the pastor leading the partaking of the Holy Communion which was done concurrently across all Christ embassy churches, thereafter there was an ending prayer which was done in tongue and the service ended.

3.2.1 The Conduit

This theme as I mentioned earlier, will focus my attention on revealing how social media has empowered the connection of users to the content. There are two topics that I have developed to enable a thorough analysis of my data; the user generated content and the power of user in content distribution. First I will reflect on the response of the users/audience of the online service, and then I will proceed to analyze the views of my informant at the local church. Finally I will come up with the findings.

3.2.1.1 My reflection on user generated content

The data I gathered provided clear evidence showing that online users were engaged in asking relevant questions that triggered discussion from the panel of pastors in the online worship service. The discussion about God as a source of sickness came from an audience from Nigeria who asked:

Thank you pastor for this opportunity, you taught us during one of the ICLC⁶ that God doesn't inflict sickness upon any one, but the book of 2 Samuel 12:15 says "and the lord struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick". I have researched so many translations and they all confirm that the sickness came from God, please pastor help clarify this issue (Audience 1: online from Nigeria)

The audience from Nigeria asks a theological question, where he confronts Pastor Chris with discrepancies between preaching and what and what is found in the bible. The question he brings out is whether sickness originates from God or not, where on one hand Pastor Chris in a previous sermon said that the sickness was not from God and on the other hand the bible says the sickness was from God. This way of addressing the pastor through negotiating their understanding on a particular theological content has similarities to the concept as described

⁶ International Cell Leaders Conference that is a conference organized worldwide by Christ embassy church every year

by Altheide and Snow where they argued that the principle logic of social media is connecting the content to the user, thereby offering liberation and communitarian potential to the users. The user from Nigeria is presented with a potential not only to reflect and ask a question that connects to a previous sermon but through social media platform, the user is also able to bring out a contradiction between what is preached and what is in the bible, therefore exerting considerable influence over the contribution of content.

From the Nigerian audience, there is also the influence of popular culture that is displayed by Pastor Chris teaching, his preaching is moving more in to secular world view contrary to the traditional view of his church members. This is in line with the argument of Hjarvard who argued that popular culture is significantly secular and has a high reference to science, humanism, or modern values of freedom and equality. The preaching that God doesn't inflict sickness by Pastor Chris is humanism in nature as no one would wish sickness to innocent children but to the Nigerian audience the bible is clear that God struck David's child with sickness as a punishment to David. This therefore provides an example of how the logics of media is influencing charismatic preachers to become less provocative in their preaching and interpretation of the bible and thereby conforming to secular and popular worldview. This conformation is unintentionally creating a challenge to conservative and traditional authority of the church.

Similarly another instance in the video that showed user generated content is when the audience sparked a conversation that revolved around the contradiction on the background of Jesus Christ as is seen from the book of Luke and Mathew. The audience who pastor identified from South Africa asked:

Pastor please, I would like to know why the genealogy of Jesus is different in the gospel of Matthew and in the gospel of Luke (Audience 2: online from South Africa)

The audience is interested in finding out how the bible presents two different genealogy of Jesus in two gospels; this is in contrary to Pentecostal evangelists who present the bible as inspired and accurate word of God⁷. How then would the bible present two different background of Jesus? For the audience from South Africa to ask a question of this magnitude

⁷ Christ embassy international has developed statements of faith that are solely based on the bible, their first statement of faith is that, they believe that the bible contains the inspired and infallible word of God. This is found on their main website at <https://christembassy.org/our-statement-of-faith/> retrieved on 4th march 2019

he/she must have studied the bible extensively. The importance of this question is that it touches on a paramount issue of whether the bible is to be taken literary, or as an infallible working of God that has no contradiction and thus should present the genealogy of Jesus as one. The extensive study of the bible by the south African audience as is revealed through the question, raises a pertinent issue about the nature of the bible and also just like Audience 1 from Nigeria, questions the authority of the pastor in regard to the presentation of the bible. Again there is a shift from passive congregant to rebelling against a more secular and popular presentation of the bible by the pastors.

The third audience also from South Africa was concerned with an issue about life and death or afterlife, the attention here was shifted from the bible:

Dear pastor , I would like to know if dead people see what is happening to their loved ones on earth if they are watching over us and if they can send a sign or message to the living (Audience 3: online from South Africa)

This is a question about whether the dead can contact the living, the South African audience sort to know what pastor thinks about the relationship between the dead and the living. This question can on one hand be understood from the culture of most Africans and their link to their ancestors and on the other hand it can be linked to popular films. Unlike in the case of audience 1 and audience 2, this audience seem to regard pastor highly, he presents him as a person who might have knowledge on issues of the afterworld, this is in line with Chaves, who in his article argues that religious authority has some kind of control in accessing the supernatural or otherworldly realm, and therefore it is them who holds the key to accessing otherworldly good or bad. This therefore is more of a confirmation to the authority of the Pastor.

The fourth question from an audience form America takes a new angle, the audience shifts the focus from the bible and also from the afterlife to a question regarding relationship or partnership. The audience asked:

“What is the role of our parents in the choice of a partner” (Audience 4: online from USA)

This audience seeks to know what pastor thinks about the influence or authority parents have over their children in matters regarding choice of partners. This is an important question as for

over a long period of time parents have played a paramount role in influencing relationship and marriages to their kids, there has been cases that parents get involved in arranging marriages between their kids this is especially in the case of most African states, it is also a phenomenon that happens for the sake of wealth protection or even lineage continuation especially in many royal monarchies. In the age of technology, popular media presents a challenge to these traditions. Popular media advocates more on relationship that are primarily based on love. It is a norm in Christ embassy that any marriage of a member of Christ embassy should seek the blessing and guidance of a spiritually gifted pastor before its pronouncement, therefore for the audience to ask this question, he was directly challenging the pastor by testing whether he officially supports or opposes the authority of parents in matters of marriage and relationship of their children.

The fifth audience from Malawi brings back the conversation about life before and after death:

Greetings pastor, I love you Sir. In a couple of your sermons you mentioned that the life we live here on earth as Christian will determine the life we will have or enjoy in heaven, I was wondering if you could help with verses in the bible pertaining to this reality (Audience 5 : online from Malawi)

The audience from Malawi seeks to find out the connection between the life on earth and the promised life in heaven, the audience further seeks a clarification or reference from the bible. As we have seen from Audience 1 from Nigeria, similarly this audience is able to connect or bring back a sermon that was delivered previously, where pastor Chris, preached that the life on earth will have a direct influence on the life after life, he appears to challenge pastor to provide a biblical reference where he based his argument upon. To this audience, online session has provided him with a unique opportunity where he is able to ask a very critical question, his question seems to suggest that pastor's sermon is less legitimate as it lacks reference. This may also be interpreted as a question that seeks to know how much knowledge pastor has of the bible.

3.2.1.2 Informant view on the user generated content

I will now proceed to analyzing the views of my informants on the influence of users on the development of theological content. The analysis will include the response of the local pastor that I developed through a single interview. This will be followed by analysis of response from the youths that I developed through group interview.

When I asked the local pastor what and how content is generated and handled in the online as compared to local service he said he following:

From my own point of view, the topics comes from members questions, a lot of Christians have questions for pastor Chris, but find it hard to reach him, I think the online platform created an opportunity that allows individual Christian like the one we saw [referring to audience 3 from south africa] to reach pastor Chris and ask him questions basing on their experience, their life challenges or something that pastor taught and they needed clarification. It also creates an opportunity for Pastor Chris to reach out to individuals with answers to their question. In the local service there is no opportunity to ask questions the local pastor generates sermons guided by Holy Spirit and delivers the sermon and the members listen. (Interviewed Pastor, local Norwegian branch)

The local pastor agrees that many church congregants are in constant search of answers from Pastor Chris, he looks at the online platform as a place where these individuals can find clarification to their questions, he acknowledged that the platform helps in answering some burning questions that may have otherwise been difficult to answer locally as there is no opportunity to do so and that probably only pastor Chris would tackle them. He also confirms that the platforms offer Pastor Chris a chance to reach out and answer the questions. In this case the platform facilitate the connection of user to content, through asking different question the user feels like the discussion or the answer would relate to an issue that affect them. There is also a connection between user and Pastor Chris. Although from his response the informant appears to recognize the influence of social media as an enabler of human connections, he still maintains that the communication is one-way where unchallenged answers comes from Pastors Chris, this confirms the traditional authority of pastors as people with skill set to guide and advice on life challenges and answer some difficult theological questions. This one-way communication is in contrast with the previous analysis where there was evidence of user negotiation, for example the Audience 1 from Nigeria appear to engage pastor Chris in the online forum, about an issue where he believed God caused sickness contrary to pastors interpretation.

Proceeding to the response from the youth group interview, I discovered that most of them agree that the platform has really enabled the user to get involved in content generation this view is in contrast with the view of pastor as we have seen above. After presenting the question of what and how content is generated in the online session they said the following:

If I may add something, we talked about how the content is developed, the converse is out of the individuals who had listened to pastor message and they dint have enough clarity on what pastor was trying to say. For example they read a scripture and they did not have good clarity, so they ask questions on what the writer of a particular context was trying to communicate, that's where most of the questions come from. It might be based on pastor's teachings, pastor might have said something here, and then they heard another thing somewhere else how does he relates it. (Informant A, Local Norwegian Branch)

Informant A from the local branch view was in agreement to what I observed happening live in the online session, in the response he confirms that the discussion was sparked by the audience who in a previous session may have not quite agreed with what pastor Chris may have preached on a particular scripture because they may have read or heard a different perspective elsewhere and therefore they bring it forward to seek more clarity and at the same time bring fore a fact that they may have a different opinion. This can be related to the audience from South Africa who though the bible is presenting different genealogy of Jesus contrary to most preachers. Informant E is confirming that the authority of pastors in the interpretation of the bible content is under some threat. There are different sources of information that end up making the congregant have different views regarding content interpretation that is availed by their pastors.

Another informant had the following response when I asked about the same question regarding what and how theological content is generated:

[...]For example I saw an online segment where a person sent a question, that on a certain Sunday service he witnessed a person being possessed by the devil, yet on another instance pastor Chris gave a sermon in reference to the book of Colossians 1:12-13, that reads: "giving thanks to the father who has qualified us to share the inheritance of the saints in the light, for he has delivered us from dominion of evil and power of darkness, and transformed us in to the kingdom of his dear Son." Pastor Chris here emphasized that according to the scripture we don't really need any deliverance. The online audience was wondering why on one side there is a person possessed with demons and on the other hand Pastor Chris says they don't need deliverance. To answer this question pastor Chris said that if one has given their life to Christ and read the word of God, every work of the devil and powers of darkness is automatically defeated and you are transformed from that darkness to light so there is no need for you to be delivered from anything anymore. But the consciousness of people or Christians is a times wrong because they don't know

what they are supposed to do when temptations comes their way. We allow our bodies to take in a lot of things example bitterness, anger, strive, envy all these things are of the devil and he can't go in to the body if you don't create a room for him. When you have anger issues or get angry you have opened the door for evil to take over your spirit. (Informant B, Local Norwegian Branch)

Informant B tries to link back to a sermon that was delivered in a previous online session, this confirms that the congregants have an ability to remain in touch with sermons that were delivered in past. In the scenario, the informants narrates that an online audience in a previous service asked a question relating to doctrine of deliverance, the audience asked why pastor would say there is no more need of deliverance as his interpretation of the bible in Colossians 1:12-13, while in reality he witnessed a person possessed by evil spirit in church. Perhaps the audience argument was that if indeed we are already delivered, then there would not exist people who are possessed with evil spirit; therefore to the audience the interpretation of pastor does not represent the reality on the ground and his lack of acceptance that even Christians needs deliverance is perhaps to try and avoid contradicting the bible.. Therefore this provides an example of how the process of Mediatization is influencing congregants through providing platforms that enable them to have more freedom to rebel against preaching and interpretation of the bible that doesn't represent reality on the ground.

3.2.2 Findings

Critical connectedness; Altheide and Snow points out, that the principle of connectivity as an element of social media logic implies the ability of the user to link to content, there are various evidence that I found in my analysis where users were trying to bring previous sermons from pastor and trying to connect the sermon to their daily life, unlike in the local service, where the content is developed and delivered by the local pastor with the aid of the holy spirit. In the online service the users are presented with an opportunity to breathe more literal sense to the sermon from pastor, through asking and challenging bible interpretation of pastors. The question from Audience 1 from Nigeria where he connects two preaching from pastor Chris that seemed contradictory is a good example of how the user through social media are not only able to connect to different content, but they are also able to provide their views regarding preaching through their own interpretation. To the audience it is not acceptable that while the bible clearly says that God inflicted sickness on the child, pastor seems to disagree. This can be interpreted that social media is empowering the users to more literal interpretation of the bible in a more provocative and unpopular in the eyes of many, and

on the other hand pastors seems to challenge this view by promoting the interpretation towards a more popular and more acceptable way in the eyes of many.

Confirming authority: from my analysis there are some instances where my informants and online audiences confirm the authority of church leaders as far as content is concerned. There are two instances where online audience confirms that Pastor Chris has access or some knowledge about life after death. For example while asking pastor Chris whether the dead can send a signal to the living, Audience 3 from South Africa believes that pastor Chris has some divine knowledge bestowed upon him to answer such a question. This can be interpreted as a form of authority that Hoover refers to as charismatic authority based on individual capability derived from divine intervention. The local pastor confirms that pastor Chris has authority over him in answering some questions. He confessed that a lot of Christian have questions but believes that only pastor Chris can answer them satisfactory. There are other instances where pastor seems to challenge the traditional authority of the church, for example his view that God doesn't inflict sickness upon anyone contrary to what the bible says, proves that his interpretation is molded in a way that befits the secular and popular world view. It is just unacceptable to cause sickness to an innocent child. The local pastor as we have seen in previously seems to literally present and interpret the bible. Therefore this is an indication that proves that social media is influencing pastors to unintentionally challenge the conservative preaching that seems provocative and less acceptable in the eyes of the secular world.

Challenge to authority; from my analysis it is quite evident that social media has not only provided a platform where users are initiating religious discussion, but are also able to contribute to religious meanings through negotiations. Through my analysis I have found out that some audiences have extensively studied the bible and therefore have authority emanating from their knowledge of the bible. For example Audience 2 from South Africa seems to have widely read the book of Mathew and Luke and therefore has some authority to question why the genealogy of Jesus is presented in two different ways. Therefore this is an indication that social media is empowering the congregant to challenge the authority of pastors that seems to be more secular and therefore driving back a more conservative authority of the church.

3.2.3 The power of user in content distribution

It is quite clear that the online congregation was not only involved in influencing content generation, but the available data has proved that they were also involved in content dissemination. The global communion service that I am referring to as the online worship service was broadcasted live from Lagos to the rest of the world using a streaming site known as the internet multimedia, it is also aired live from the church video streaming site known as cloveWorld, the church then shares it on other social media platforms like YouTube, Facebook Instagram among others. One of the key characteristic of social media and streaming sites is the availability of user engagement section; the share, view, subscribe, like element. After viewing most users used the share element of the platform to distribute to different users across other platforms, for example

The mega church was involved in the distribution of the online service in different platforms.. For example there is an instance on YouTube where the video has been shared with a title

Pastor Chris-question and answers - he explains about the dead. (LoveWorld TV YouTube channel)

On another instance the video is shared again on YouTube channel by Christ embassy international using the following title;

Q&A with Pastor Chris - The role of parents in the choice of a partner. (LoveWorld SAT YouTube channel)

The online congregants were also involved in sharing the service. Using social media, different users were able to edit and share the online service in channels of their choice. For example;

An audience from Ghana shared the video on a blog, with a title “pastor Chris answers can the dead send messages to the living” the article that included the video was viewed by 3365 views and was shared 249 times on Facebook.

The above presentation provides evidence that social media existence and use in Christ embassy church has brought capability whereby users are able to contribute in the spread of content. The sharing feature of social media platform has made it easier for the users to spread the content beyond the premises of the church. As we have discovered the editing of title to include key words is a phenomenon associated with the blogging and social media. Key words and use of common phrases is a component of SEO purposely utilized to enhance site visibility on browsers, this constant sharing and editing capability provided by social media platform has some impact on the users where they are pushed to become media personalities. The framing of titles and assigning some expressions that carry more weight in the eyes of many has been an existing trend in mass media logic, this is the element of social media logic that Van and poell describe as popularity a term that they used to describe mass media ability

to shape public opinion by filtering out influential voices and assigning some expressions more weight, attest to its power (Van and Poell 2007, p.6)

Sharing or spreading the message for Christ embassy is also done on mobile application platform. The church has its own designed mobile application called Pastor Chris digital library (PCDL) all the sermons and teachings are archived in this application anyone with a smart phone can download the app either on Play Store or Apple Store. The app is designed with easy navigation menus for example the most recent releases are put on top, the popular releases follow closely. Others include the search menu, the invite friends menu that is linked to popular social media like twitter and Facebook. On the landing page of the app there is also a genres and Tags section this arranges videos in categories like there is prosperity and finance category, question and answer, healing and health among others. The question and answer section is reserved for the online worship service which is the research material for this project.

The PCDL mobile app is programmed in a way that it pushes the teachings that are most recent, there is also sorting algorithm that measure the trending topic and pushes them high in visibility rank. This design strategy of the mobile app of the church follows the media logic of popularity and programmability.

3.2.4 Findings

User ability to spread content; traditionally the work of spreading theological content was predominantly left to the church pastors and other church leaders. Additionally spreading of these media was limited within the churches premises, on crusade arenas or mass media like Television. In the case of Christ embassy more users are getting involved not only in spreading the sermons but also packaging the sermon to become more appealing to the targeted audience. One of the key characteristics of social media is that they are spreadable media For Jenkins, Ford and Green, the key characteristics of social media is that they are spreadable media (Jenkin, Ford & Green, 2013 cited by Dijck & poell, 2013 p.8), the consumer play a key role in spreading the content, as it can be observed the sermon on the online worship service was presented in a media platform that was equipped with spreadable buttons, the share buttons, in addition the sermon was also uploaded on YouTube where it's possible for any audience to spread the message.

The concept programmability in relation to media logics has also infused the delivery and presentation of theological contents or topics as we have seen in the above discussion. Knut Lundby (2009) argues that the concept of media logic is concerned with the forms or formats of social interactions, logics here refers to the standard, rules or methods of operation of the media. in agreement with Lundby, Hjarvard argues that journalistic media follow set rules or

standards that govern their day today business, for example the delivery, presentation of their content is formatted in line with the demand of the audience, in other words, the popular media are in the business of seeking audience attention and therefore shape, format or alter content to become newsworthy (Hjarvard 2016:10). In the case of Christ embassy there is an incidence where a blogger audience from Ghana creatively formats the title of the online worship discussion in a way that draws more attention from the targeted audience. The topic that was part of the online discussion was concerned with an issue about life and death that was asked by an audience from Nigeria (Audience 1: online from Nigeria). The blogger from Ghana creatively assigned the discussion a topic with the title 'pastor Chris answers; can the dead send message to the living' this formatting of title to include emotive and attention drawing phrases is in line with the concept of programmability and popularity geared towards pushing and assigning some topics more weight as presented by Altheide and Snow. This ability of the user using social media to program and spread theological content provides a good example of how users are getting empowered and challenging the authority of church leaders as a source of religious information.

3.2.5 The Language

The language theme in this part will bring the focus of analysis to particular modalities of representation and interactions. Emphasis will be put on exploring the influence of social media logic on expressive variables in the online session service. that is how the formats of media influence the way religious actors interact with one another and how religious information is framed or represented. I will particularly analyze the verbal language and the theological reasoning of the pastors as they respond to the questions asked by the online audience.

As I noted in the field work notebook, the online worship service was presided over by four pastors selected from different branches of Christ embassy church. The panel comprised of the host pastor (Pastor Chris) and three other pastors. The host pastor would filter the questions from the live audience, and then present the question for discussion in the forum.

In response to the question from the Nigeria audience who sought an answer from pastor regarding whether God struck Uriah's child with sickness, different pastors in the forum had different opinions. For example after reading out the question to the panel the Host pastor responded this way;

“[...]What do you think, with a smile on his face, the lead pastor asked while looking at the second pastor seating besides him (Host pastor: online service)

The remarks from the lead pastor open the floor for discussion, unlike in the traditional service, where despite limited opportunity to ask question, the pastor is a one man show. In this service, the host pastor, presents the question to three other pastors, seeking their views and opinion on the issue. The arrangement and the style of presiding over discussion is the similar to talk shows. Through social media the Nigerian audience is able to provide a theological issue, the host pastor sorts and present the question to other pastors therefore the conversation is initiated.

In response to the question from Nigerian audience, all the pastors in the panel unanimously said that the sickness did not originate from God. For example the first pastor said the following

Thank you so much Sir, Like you said, I think it was in the last communion service, that everything that happened in the old testament was attributed to God both good and evil, even the prophet because he had no revelation of Satan and his deception in the old testament attributed everything to God and God took responsibility because of their ignorance at that time, and so the sickness did not come from God [...] (pastor 1: online service)

Similarly the second and third pastor responded in agreement with the first pastor, they said:

Praise God, Pastor (referring to the Host pastor) I think this is a question testing the basic understanding of who God is. In the scripture the character of God is described by Jesus, he came to the Jews and told them that God is love. Agreeing with pastor 1, he said God doesn't use Satan's tools as his own tools. In reference to the bible he said, he that digeth the pit shall fall in it and he that breaketh the hedge the serpent shall bite him. Ecclesiastes 10:8 God in this case is the restraining power that stopped the punishment of the child caused by his father's sins (pastor 2: online service)

I think he needs to go back to the real context of this story. In the previous chapter, the bible says that it was judgement based on David's acts, God did not send David to sleep with another man's wife (pastor 3: online service)

So did God strike the child? (Host pastor: online service)

No it wasn't God (pastor 3: online service)

Are you saying that what he did was what caused it to happen? Who was responsible for taking action against David, was it the devil? (Host pastor: online service)

As pastor 2 said above, He that breaketh an edge the serpent shall bite, the protection of God is around us, but when we step out of the boundary we get punished (pastor3: online service)

Nathan the prophet went to him and said the child will die, was he just telling the result of the wrong or prophesying a judgement from God? (Host pastor: online service)

In the above case the three pastors in the forum have in one voice pointed out that God did not strike the child, the first pastor answered the question by looking back at the times of the old testament, he said that during this time everything was interpreted as originating from God, both good and evil was from God, there was no revelation of Satan and therefore due to this ignorance the interpretation from the prophet was erroneous and therefore the sickness was not from God. This pastor appears to denounce the prophecy of Nathan; according to him prophet Nathan provided a prediction basing on ignorance and therefore his prophesy to David was erroneous. In doing this he appears to contradict the bible and therefore going against the believe that the bible contains the inspired and infallible word of God.

On the other hand the second pastor looks at the question as testing the extent with which one understands the character of God. He said that the character of God is love. According to him there is no way a loving God can use Satan's tool and therefore he couldn't have struck the child. This pastor views God as the protector, as the one who was restraining the punishment of the child originating from his father's sins. This pastor's view was that the sickness originated from David but not from God. This can be interpreted to mean that the pastor is protecting or sanitizing the image of God. From a bad reputation characterized with striking innocent child with sickness, to good reputation characterized with love. Similarly the third pastor also pointed out that the sickness originated not from God but from the actions of David. In this case there is reluctant almost from all the pastors to acknowledge a God who can strike a harmless child with sickness, this is in line with popular world view as it is generally not acceptable for anyone to cause harm to an innocent child, therefore the pastors in this forum were trying to protect the reputation of God and making God adaptive to modern world view.

On his part the host pastor appeared to agree that God may have struck the child as the bible says;

The reality is that God did send a message to David and he said the child would die, the child became sick, what we need to understand is the context of the sickness. Sickness is incipient death, Is death in process, not necessarily with disease but the word of death that has been spoken against that child was

in process and that was the sickness, the child was not inflicted with some disease, death set in when the prophet gave the word, it was the word of judgement, so true God struck the child and the child had to die. To understand it more, you find Paul in the New Testament is interrupted by the man named by Jesus who was trying to stop the deputy from receiving the gospel, and Paul said to him thou child of the devil, wouldn't you stop perverting the ways of God, now the hand of the lord is upon you and you will be blind (Host pastor: online service)

The host pastor agrees that God sent a message through his prophet Nathan, the message was that the child would die. Although he agrees that God struck the child, he points out that it was not with sickness; his explanation was that sickness is incipient death. He appears to conclude that it was the word of the prophet that set in the death of the child. He gave another example from New Testament where the word of Paul caused a man to be blind. The host pastor is answering the question in a normative way; he tries to explain that though there was a message from God about death, it was the word of the prophet that set in death of the child that is it ought to have happened like in the New Testament. This is against literal interpretation of the bible.

3.2.4 Findings

The language of conversation was dialogical in nature, the four pastors engaged the questions from audience in a discursive manner, and each and every pastor aired their view regarding a topic in question. This is in contrary to the local worship service, where preaching is one way where a single pastor preaches to the congregant in a one-way communication model. The discussion takes a popular model of media talk show where a journalist hosts a forum where a topic is discussed with the host as the modulator. The speech of the pastors in the discussion was modern and assertive there was no high and loud voice, the tone was moderate and fine, this is in line with the grammar of popular and journalistic media. This is in line with the findings of Hepp who stated that media logic consist of elements of communication which includes the various media and the format used by this media, the format includes the grammar of media communication (Hepp, 2012)

The view from pastors that God doesn't inflict sickness on anyone can be interpreted to mean that in their theology God does not punish anyone with diseases; this is against the literal interpretation and reading of the text. This interpretation is perhaps a strategy geared towards protecting the reputation of God, they want to portray a loving God that is not vengeful and therefore doesn't cause any wrath to his people. Although in the bible God does punished Uriah's child this is unacceptable in the eyes of the secular world, and therefore the

representation of God as one who doesn't inflict sickness on children is geared towards making God adaptive to modern world.

3.2.5 The Environment

The most significant observation of the online worship service was its setup. The online worship service was aired live from the church video streaming website. Unlike in the traditional worship service, where we have one pastor preaching to a congregation of silent members, the online service was presided over by four pastors. The topic of preaching as we have seen in the previous discussion originated from the audience. Although the lead pastor was part of the discussion, he assumed the role of the host or presenter, that is, he was in charge of selecting, sorting and directing the discussion, he was also in charge of presenting questions for discussion with the other pastors. The other three pastors who assumed roles as panelist or guests would engage viewers in a discursive kind of preaching that was based on their inquiry. Each pastor would take an opportunity to present their views regarding the topic in question.

The physical setup of the stage was designed in resemblance to a television broadcasting studio, the stage design included a white curved couch that matched with the well laid grey carpet, on the carpet was a glass table where the lead pastor was having his tablet, The stage was well-lit with elegant and patterned wallpaper that improved the ambience of the studio. The presenter (lead pastor) and his guest presenters (other pastors) had their make-up on, their faces were lit, the presenter had his hair well-trimmed, curled and shining, his moderately long nails were well pedicured. All the pastors had high-end and trendy clothing.

As it was observed there were commercial breaks that lasted 5 minutes, this breaks were used to perform commercial advertisement for the church, for example at time 32:45 there was an advertisement of a devotional book for the kids that was called *Rhapsody of Realities for the early readers* this was done through voice over narration combined with animated videos fading on and off on the screen. The voice over narration of a kid on this commercial ad was thoughtfully selected. The following is the message on the advert:

“Rhapsody of Realities for the early reader’s daily devotional for children between the ages of 5 to 9 years makes the learning of God’s word so much fun! Each day’s message, presents God’s word to children in an easy way to read [...]”



Figure 2: daily devotional advertisement on the online worship service

Chapter Four: Discussion and Conclusion

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the discussion of my main findings that is based on the research question. The chapter also presents the conclusion of my study basing on the previous existing empirical studies on media and religion.

4.0.1 The influence of social media on church communications

From my analysis there is clear evidence that social media has introduced a two-way mode of communication. Many literatures on social media and religion presents their main finding that the two way-communication model brings transformation of user from being more active than passive. My study has shown a deeper way of how this mode of communication has affected church communication. First on the users: the model of communication provides a ground that gives the users more freedom and power to challenge and negotiate with pastors. The online platform has features for example, the users are able to contribute anonymously to issues that may seem sensitive or contradictory and therefore making participation safer than in a direct face to face communication that is associated with the traditional service. The anonymity option of modern social media gives the user a sense of protection and makes it easier for users to contribute to issues without fear of sanctions. Secondly the model has influenced pastors to preach in a less provocative and more secularly acceptable manner. That is through social media pastors unintentionally have become more secular in their theological reasoning, they have unconsciously become part of the social media logics.

4.0.2 The influence of social media on the authority of the church

From the analysis, the authority of the users as a source of religious information in the online service has been increased or improved compared to the traditional service. Through the online platform users are able to ask and challenge the interpretation of the bible presented by pastors. Therefore the transformation of communication model through the workings of social media has come with some cost on religion authority, there is a sense in which the more popular and acceptable theological reasoning of online pastors is being challenged by the online users who seems to have a more traditional theological reasoning.

The authority of pastors in the local congregation is still conservative. This long standing traditional authority derives its authenticity from the bible. Their preaching and interpretation of the bible is more literal in nature. These traditional authorities of the local pastor have gained some support from the online user as we have seen in the analysis. However the

workings of social media have influenced online pastors to unintentionally question the traditional authority and therefore causing a significant challenge to the long standing traditions authority of preaching and interpretation of the scripture.

4.0. 3 Conclusion

Hjarvard argues that in media and particularly journalistic media, information is modeled in accordance with the demand of various popular media genres such as news, drama, consumer advice, blogging which is predominantly secular, therefore the media logic plays an important role in framing religious issues to comply with theses. (Hjarvard 2016, p.10) Just like Hjarvard, my analysis seems to confirm this claim as there is a conclusive evidence that the molding force of social media has influenced the way religious information is presented in Christ embassy church. In his article Hjarvard sites the work Christensen who according to Hjarvard argued that news media primarily tend to focus on religion when religious actors tend to be out of sync with the general values of society, therefore the media will tend to shape religion to achieve this goal. It is because of this media condition or dictates that many religious organizations sought to develop their own media ventures. Although this is true my analysis has provided more information to this claim. Christ embassy international has perhaps created its own online session in a bid to escape the logic of media that is available in other owed media outlet, but the church is unaware of the existence of the effects of social media in its own media outlet. As the analysis confirms, the process of mediatization is apparent in Christ embassy , the intention of the online session was for widening transmission scope but my analysis shows that the logics of social media has transformed the message, where the theological reasoning of leaders is becoming more synced with popular and accepted values of the secular society. Therefore my study shows how churches are transformed by modernity and how modernity is not a threat to the existence of religion but rather conformation of religion into its tenet and therefore challenging its authority as a source of religious information.

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Attachments

Interview Guide to pastors

1. Do you as a pastor of Christ embassy church Norway participate in the online live session, if yes how do you participate?
2. What is the purpose of the online live session to your church?
3. What is your contribution as the lead pastor to the online live session?
4. Do you think the online live session is relevant to your church, if yes why do you think so?
5. What is the difference between the online live session and the Sunday service session in your church?
6. What were some of the modes of communication available in your church before the online live session? Was it interpersonal, interpretive or presentation?
7. How has the online live session impacted or influenced your communication strategies?
8. How are theological issues handled in the online live session? Is it a one man show or is it participatory, explain more?
9. What are some of the challenges of using the online live session to pastors?
10. Would you recommend other pastors to use online live streams as a communication strategy?
11. Besides the online session how else is your church using the media and technology in its communication strategies?

Interview guide for the youth group

1. Do you participate in the online live session with Pastor Chris? If yes how do you participate
2. Do you think the online live session is relevant to the local church? If yes why do you think it is relevant?
3. What is the difference between the online live session and the Sunday service session at your local church?
4. How are theological issues handled in both the traditional worship session and on the online live session?
5. How is the information in the online session formatted and delivered? Was there censoring of information involved in the online live session?
6. Is there any theological issue that was tackled in the online session that you can remember?
7. Is there a difference in communication between the pastors when they are on the live session and when they are on the pulpit?
8. Besides the online session how else is the local church using media and technology?
9. how has the adoption of social media in your church affects the development of the church:



