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Application of Artificial Intelligence and Social Media in Evangelization in the Contemporary Society

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Abstract

This piece entitled: 'artificial intelligence and social media in evangelization' is an investigation into the intersection of artificial intelligence, social media and evangelization in the contemporary system. The effects of artificial intelligence offer transformative opportunities for religious outreach and engagement. Through primary and secondary methods of data collection, scientific and sociological methods of data interpretation, analysis and application. It was discovered that application of AI and social media enhance evangelization by enabling personalized content delivery, facilitating real-time interaction through chatbots and virtual assistants. It provides advanced data analytics for strategic planning which extends to the delivering of the salvific message, fostering community building and widespread visibility. The synergy between AI and social media amplify benefits through automated content distribution, targeted at advertising and refined analytics. In spite of the challenges which social media are associated. Recommendations therefore points to highlighting the needs for thoughtful management in navigating the complexities of digital engagement in evangelization.

Key Words: Application, Artificial Intelligence, Social Media, Evangelization, Contemporary Society

Introduction

Contemporarily, social media has become a force of rapid speed in every sphere of human endeavor, evangelization inclusively. Interestingly, the digital age created maximum strength for artificial intelligence

cum social media to profoundly yield transformative measures on various aspects of man's activities. Constantly, man establishes vertical relationship as point of anchor, Obilor, J.I describes as "homo-religiosus" meaning "man by nature is religious or a religious being." Affirming,

Mbiti, J. says: "Man is notoriously religious." it clears the notion that no one is an atheist, everyone has an object of allegiance, be it God or gods. Though, the Psalmist reveals thus: 'The fool has said in his heart, there is no God.' (Psalm 14:1).

Anselm's ontological argument maintains that the denial of the existence of God is the root of admittance...describing Him thus: 'Aliquid quo, nihil maius cogitari posit' (God is something than which nothing greater can be conceived). The act of engaging in religious awareness in any religious outfit and belief birthed evangelization. The original African society is that woven in Traditional Religion prior the advent of Christianity. Then, various denominations on arrival in Africa utilized every possible means in scrambling for adherents with common intent 'evangelization.' Evangelization is man's response to divine order. The great injunction in Matthew (28:19-20) records, therefore go and make disciples of all nations. 'with this evangelization kicked off.

However, the sufferings of and challenges faced by the early disciples escalated the fire prompting the testimony of Tertullian, one of the Early Church Fathers of the Second Century, in his treatise, Apologeticus (L.13)

writes: "plures efficimur, quotiens mentimur a vobis: semen est sanguis Christianorum" which has been literarily translated as "the blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church." Emphatically, addressing the Roman Empire speaks: 'We are not a new philosophy but a divine revelation.' This was further enumerated by the Fathers of the Sacred Council in Dei Verbum (no. 6), that "through divine revelation God wishes to reveal Himself and the eternal decree of His will concerning the salvation of men, 'in order to communicate to them divine goods which completely surpass the comprehension of human intelligence.'

Furthering, Tertullian in Apologeticus (circa AD 197). enumerates: 'The Christians willingness to die for their faith leads to the conversion of others.' These amongst others were raw evangelical measures of that age. In contemporary system, artificial intelligence in the religious revolution proves truth as common course for science and religion in right application as against the notion of some Westerners and other school of thoughts who opine that science would bring religion to an extinct. Mahatma Ghandi condemned the wrong application of science in his documents of seven social evils as 'science without humanity' Today, artificial intelligence and social media in

evangelization strengthen impacts in religious fronts by providing solace to humanity. Recipients of the real-time gospel (evangelization) propelled by artificial intelligence are weary individuals, stricken with diverse challenges, in need of respite, now receive comfort through scientific route in spite of barrier in locations and so on. Appreciating the subject matter, Phillips, Lewis & Bruce, (2013, p.3) write:

'Writing on digital communication, the church and mission, some scholars drew lessons from (Hebrews 1:11) to make the point, in the past God spoke to our ancestors through papyrus and paper in many different and various ways, but in these last days, His word is shown through the digital realm.'

Conceptual Analysis

Merriam-Webster dictionary of the English language says: evangelization means to preach the gospel. It is the act of spreading and promoting religious beliefs. Interestingly, the emergence of AI and social media has introduced new dimensions to these efforts, offering innovative tools for engagement and communication.

Artificial intelligence refers to computer systems capable of performing complex tasks that historically only humans could do, such as reasoning, making decisions or solving problems. This encompasses technologies designed to simulate human intelligence, including machine learning, natural language processing, and data analytics. These capabilities enable AI to personalize content, automate interactions and provide insights based on user behavior. In the context of evangelization, AI can enhance the delivery of religious messages by tailoring them to individual preferences and facilitating real-time engagement.

Social media is a collective term for websites and applications that focus on communication, community-based input, interaction and content-sharing etcetera. People employ social media to interact with friends, family and various communities, platforms, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok, e.t.c, have revolutionized communication by providing spaces for users to share, interact and connect globally. Hodgson, P. E. (2022, p.27), charges: 'The development of science depends on moral convictions such as the obligation to freely share any knowledge that is gained.' encouraging the application of artificial intelligence and social media in

boosting evangelization. Allowing religious organizations to reach a vast audience, creating virtual communities and engaging followers. Social media's interactive nature and broad reach make it a powerful tool for spreading religious teachings and fostering a sense of community among believers. The marriage between artificial intelligence and social media in evangelization has become vehicle to sustainable gospel routine when cautiously navigated. Both factors are reshaping evangelization. The introduction and conceptual analysis present a background to enable rich understanding of the discourse while examining the benefits and potential drawbacks.

Advantages of Artificial Intelligence and Social Media in Evangelization

The merging of artificial intelligence with social media in evangelization is contributing positively in the socio-religious front in this contemporary system. According to Jerome, (2014), 'Because of cultural shift which involves digital communication and the way it reshapes interaction with another, form, maintain relationships, also gain knowledge and understanding.'

Dyikuk, J.J. (2017), posits:

'The Church cannot engage the new media for good if she

remains a passive spectator.' On the contrary, she must take to the various platforms of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Instagram, 2go, Pinterest, Snapchat, Skype, Face time and bogs to mention just a few. Christians must not make the usual excuse that these media have been polluted.

Hence the merits:

1. Boosting of Outreach and Visibility: The application of artificial intelligence and social media through algorithms amplify religious outreach, personalize content, enabling relevant evangelical messages to individual users. Playing active roles in allowing religious organizations reach a global audience instantly while storing lived videos for future consumption of recipients.

Dyikuk, J.J. (2017), advises: 'Pastors of souls should take advantage of the new media of communication and engage the faithful by not just creating an Online-Church but sustaining it.' Because believers regularly participate, use faith experiences (testimony) in reviving and motivating the lukewarm members and as well return gratitude to God. The broaden impacts go beyond traditional geographic and demographic limits faster within a split of second.

2. Advanced Engagement: The artificial intelligence and social media provide

immediate succour to worries and questions of the audience while offering personalized spiritual supports and enhancing user interaction. According to Dyikuk, J.J. (2017), 'New media platforms are invaluable assets in breaking new grounds for evangelization.' Campbell, H. A. (2013:7), adds: "In an era marked by social media, religious self-expression and representation has become an acceptable identity and practice.' These interactive features facilitate real-time engagement, sense of community and connection among followers. Engagement as a rule in social handles provide opportunities for pastors and preachers to stream and provide solutions (instant, follow-up or otherwise) to followers in most cases.

3. The Systematic Style Of Content Creation And Operation: AI's content generation and creation streamline the production of sermons, articles, and posts in a well-structured style that enables an unexacting and steady flow of relevant materials in subject matters. According to Mookgo S.K (2018, p.5), 'Facebook use by individuals and organizations and its popularity makes it imperative for the church to also take advantage of this phenomenon to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In flashback, some Christian folks previously shared an unrefined notion about visual aids,

but today, have embraced social media as means of reaching their flocks and individuals who appreciate their religious presentations.

4. Data-Driven Insights: In enjoying an improved and effective outreach, the artificial intelligence and social media through analyzing engagement metrics and user behavior assist individuals, groups and organizations understand their audience through upgraded strategies. Also supplying detailed feedbacks on the performance of posts and campaigns, enabling more coordinated and strategic communication.

5. Proximate Religious Participation: The application of artificial intelligence and social media have increased evangelization by providing proximate opportunities for religious participants via televangelization. Amongst remarkable instances is the Covid 19 pandemic, religious activities embrace social media opportunities. According to (Evangeli Nuntiandi, No.45), 'This study is significant because through various means of communication today, the message of the gospel is able to not only reach vast numbers of people, but is able to pierce the conscience of each individual, planting itself in his or her heart as though he or she were the only person being addressed.

Disadvantages of Artificial Intelligence and Social Media in Evangelization

Suspected flaws exist amidst the gains in the discourse and in few premises.

1. Needs for Privacy and Ethical Concern:

In handling personal data, raises privacy and ethical issues about collection of data and usage amounting to breach of confidentiality. The platforms often collect extensive personal information, which are misused or exposed, breaching needful security. Social media has become a reservoir of documents in the sense that whatever penetrates the social media space has gained an enduring occupancy and are easily referred or picked when needs arise. Campbell, H. (2017) advises: 'scholars of digital religion must continue to push past studying religion primarily in its traditional and institutional forms and consider how Digitally Lived Religion is morphing and even creating new contexts of meaning with new constituencies.'

2. Misinformation and Manipulation:

Through artificial intelligence and social media, algorithms can inadvertently spread misinformation by prioritizing sensational or misleading content. This influence in content creation leads to the proliferation of inaccurate or biased information about

people, religions and organizations. The rapid spread of information on social media facilitate the dissemination of false or misleading content, affecting the integrity of religious messages as well. Lövheim & Campbell (2017, p.11) in Campbell, H. suggest:

"This requires a shift of perspective, where scholars of digital religion might need to move from focusing primarily on organized religious groups and individual believers, to asking how religious symbols and discourses are used by other actors in society and culture as tools to understand and manage life in a digitally saturated world."

3. Massive Dependency: There are over-reliance on AI tools, it increases lack of personal interaction and a diminished human touch in evangelical efforts, potentially affecting the depth of relationships, outreach and overshadowing traditional methods (of going to church for communal celebration and other religious activities).

4. The Digital Divide and Accessibility:

This spectrum reveals that benefits are often uneven, with disparities between organizations on resources and technological capabilities. In other words, not all potential audience have equal access to social media platforms. Rating the internet availability,

digital literacy and socio-economic status, that limit evangelical outreach mostly to the deserving.

5. Monetization: This factor seems to be of utmost interest to most pastors and preachers against the core mission. This fat royalty earned through specific handles becomes real distraction and unethical, propelling abuse and falsehood in prophetic submissions. Independent religious organizations with less regulations enjoy greater income and less restriction, unlike the orthodox churches. They're better positioned to leveraging from digital evangelizing routines.

Effects of Artificial Intelligence and Social Media in Evangelization

Investigating the subject matter, the pros and cons open reflection on the suspected effects which bother on contemporary society. Barkins, S. (2023), says: 'The development and organizational deployment of AI is accelerating, but the ways in which this will support or diminish opportunities for meaningful work and the ethical implications of these changes remain underexplored.' The effects are:

1. Increased Accessibility: From this point, there seem to be an increase in the global outreach. It is enabling religious organizations transcend geographical and

cultural boundaries, reaching a global audience. The integration of both platforms provide continuous access to religious content, including live streams (EWTN), virtual prayer meetings, and spiritual guidance. This round-the-clock availability supports users in maintaining their spiritual practices and support.

2. Enhanced Community Building: The Internet has proven the world a global village, connotes to the visual communities and facilitating the creation of online faith-based association where individuals connect and share experiences. According to Lewis, B. (2013) 'the Church is now seeking to engage with digital culture a space many spend a considerable amount of time daily. Through ICT, digital culture is unleashing upon us new dimensions of interaction and social relationships.'

It is an extensions of physical congregations, allowing members to stay connected regardless of location real-time activities. It enables deeper commitment among believers in spite of race or color once the sermon affects the recipients. According to Obilor, J I. (2024): 'A sermon must discomfort the comfortable and comfort the disturbed.' This is the core import of a complete evangelization.

3. Challenges in Information Integrity:

The fast dissemination of content speeds misinformation and biased perspectives. It often times distort religious messages while challenging the credibility of faith-based communications.

4. Ethical and Privacy Concerns: Taking cognizance of this factor, artificial intelligence systems often rely on personal data to deliver tailored contents and services. This raises concern about data privacy and security, particularly in terms of how personal information are collected, used and protected. Placing the recipients and preachers on ethical dilemma. It raises ethical questions about the automation of spiritual guidance and the potential for manipulation. Sanders, (2015) identifies: "By placing Inter Mirifica (Decree on Mass Media) on the front burner at the first session of the Second Vatican Council, the Council Fathers set the Church in motion for embracing the digital culture. Therefore, ethical censorship must be employed in social media engagements as to secure trust and integrity not the reversed.

5. Socio-Economic Disparities: This factor creates uneven gap across different regions and demographics, determining who benefits from such medium or left out. Equally affecting the inclusivity of religious outreach.

6. Shift in Evangelization: The marriage of both factors has birthed transformation in the methods of evangelization. Hunsinger, D. (2014) confirms: There is an existence of a new perspective in evangelization. Dyikuk, J.J. (2017), supports: 'One of such changes rocking the Church's boat is the world of information and communication technology. Hodgson, P. E. (2022, p. 27), recognizes: 'What is lacking was the attitude of mind towards the material world that is the essential preconditions of science, in some cases a social structure that allows new ideas to flourish should be tolerated. This points to total acceptance of AI and social media as vehicle for modern evangelization, hence Catholics and other orthodox churches are encouraged to embrace this social change in sustain the spirituality of their young. The shift makes compulsory adaptation to current social change if evangelization must endure. The interactive Apps and immersive virtual experiences offer novel ways to connect with and inspire especially the younger generation. Dyikuk, J.J. (2017), encourages: 'The Church must not hesitate in passing on the sacred patrimony it received from the Lord to the young people of our age. She can meet young people where they are and entice them with the message of Christ as well as the teachings of the Church through a new way

of delivery.' Discussing these effects, pastors and preachers in diverse religious groups are therefore advised to explore the use of modern tools in evangelization, in manners that the essence of the gospel would not be ruined. Dei Verbum (no.25) admonishes that the Pastors of souls and Christians of every state of life should endeavor to spread the Good News of salvation as they can with all skill.

Conclusion

The piece which renders a preview through a concise abstract detailing the need for the discourse, the introduction harbours brief historical insight on evangelization to its' present stage. The conceptual analysis creates right understanding with highlighted merits and demerits. The effects, one can reflect on the complex interplay of opportunities and challenges amidst. As technology enhances the outreach and engagement of religious messages, it also introduces new issues related to information integrity, ethics and accessibility. In the words of Dyikuk, J.J. (2017), thus:

"The onus lies on pastors of souls to take advantage of the new media of communication to engage their faithful. If the Church lives the internet for the devil to lure her precious and energetic young people to the

mischievous spirits of pornography, fraud and defamation of character, the Lord will ask her. it is crucial to note that He created everything and everything He created was good. It is not just enough to create an Online Church, sustaining it is what matters and this is a task for all Christians.'

Finally, artificial intelligence and social media in the work of evangelization has become platform where religion and science complement the other. The 21st century birthed tremendous social changes where religion and technology are not exempted rather rendering valuable import and solution to the plights of man.

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