



# "Transforming Faith: The Impact of Digital Media and Technology on Community Engagement in Contemporary Pentecostalism" in Southern Africa

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## Abstract

This research explores the significant influence of digital media and technology on community involvement in modern Pentecostalism in Southern Africa, with particular emphasis on the United Family International Church (UFIC) and the Prophetic, Healing, and Deliverance Ministries (PHD). As society embraces a digital age, these religious organizations have adeptly integrated various forms of media, including radio, television, social media, and mobile applications, to enhance their reach and foster connections with followers globally. This research aims to highlight how such integration serves as an evangelistic tool that transcends geographical and cultural barriers and addresses the diverse needs of congregants, particularly younger demographics. The study uses qualitative research methods to emphasize religious groups' need to harness media and technology for spiritual development and practical theological discourse, empowering believers to engage meaningfully within their local contexts and on broader platforms. The findings illustrate how the strategic use of technology has transformed traditional worship practices and facilitated community involvement, especially during physical constraints, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic. Conclusively, this research underscores the adaptability and innovation of Pentecostalism in utilizing available resources to spread the gospel and strengthen community cohesion. This study implies that the integration of technology has transformed traditional worship practices in an important and meaningful manner.

**Keywords:** Media, Technology, Evolving Pentecostal Practices, Community Engagement, UFIC, PHD.

## Introduction

Technical advancements and religious practices have been intricately connected throughout history, shaping how individuals engage with their faith and spiritual communities. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly accelerated the trend toward adopting online platforms for spiritual engagement and gatherings. Technology, from prehistoric rituals to modern online platforms, has facilitated religious expression, discourse, and community development. Religious organizations have had to adapt to the swiftly changing technological landscape of new media and digital communication. This study addresses the central question: How do media and technology influence the evolving practices and community engagement within Pentecostal churches, particularly in the contexts of the United Family International Church (UFIC) and Prophetic, Healing, and Deliverance Ministries (PHD)?

The study's objectives are:

1. To examine how UFIC and PHD Ministries leverage digital tools such as live-streaming, social media, and mobile applications in their teachings and services.
2. To analyse how these technological tools enhance engagement with younger congregants and address the community's diverse needs.
3. To explore how technology integration has transformed traditional forms of worship and community involvement within these churches.
4. To propose methods for effectively utilizing technology to enhance church services while addressing the ethical concerns and challenges associated with its implementation.

### **Definition of keywords/terms**

#### ***Media***

According to Janssen (2014), media are the outlets or tools used to store and deliver semantic information or contained subject matter, described as content. The phrase generally refers to elements of the mass media communications sector, including advertising, digital media, photography, film, broadcasting (television and radio), print media (publishing), and news media (Martin, Jon, Seth, Grant & Kelly, 2014). Giessen (2015) believes each channel needs a unique, media-appropriate strategy to transmit material successfully. Examples of media are books, periodicals, radio, television, movies, the internet, social media, and cell phones. In this regard, the study analyses how UFIC and PHD ministries use these forms of media.

#### ***Technology***

The word "technology," which initially meant "systematic treatment," dates to the early 17th century and was used to refer to "knowledge of how to make things," which included architectural endeavors (Brown, 2009:105). According to Skolnikoff (1993, 13), technology is the use of conceptual knowledge to accomplish practical objectives, particularly in a reproducible manner. More recent technological advancements like the printing press, telephone, and internet have lowered barriers to communication and ushered in the knowledge economy (Skolnikoff, 1993). Technology, then, is the outcome of putting scientific knowledge to practical use. Thus, technology results from applying scientific knowledge to real-world applications. People developed many types of technology to test new concepts and create more effective ways to accomplish tasks. Hence, churches like UFIC and PHD use these technological innovations to relay the gospel of Christ worldwide.

### **Brief Background of UFIC and PHD Ministries**

#### **United Family International Church**

The United Family International Church (UFIC) was established by Emmanuel and Ruth Makandiwa in August 2008. Initially, it emerged as an interdenominational ministry that convened during lunchtime. The church's mission is to positively influence people's lives through prophetic insight, supernatural manifestations, and scriptural teachings. Its services encourage, uplift, and empower individuals and families to lead their best lives in Christ. UFIC is headquartered in Harare, Zimbabwe, where its main church building can accommodate 30,000 people. The church has branches in several countries, including Botswana, South Africa, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Zambia. Given its extensive following, UFIC has embraced technological advancements to engage its global membership, hosting live services on platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram. In 2013, UFIC launched its 24-hour television channel, Christ TV.co, accessible online and via free-to-air decoders.

The church has effectively expanded its outreach beyond Zimbabwe through various media outlets such as Facebook livestreaming. Afolaranmi (2020) suggests this transition has significantly transformed the operational dynamics and interactions within religious

communities, particularly among younger congregants. Integrating technology into traditional worship practices and community engagement has resulted in significant changes (Ojo, Adelaja, Adio, and Afolaranmi, 2024:59). The link between Pentecostalism and media technologies dates back to the early twentieth century, with radio broadcasts serving as the first platforms for expanding evangelistic outreach (Mudau & Tshifhumulo, 2025)

### **Prophetic, Healing, and Deliverance Ministries**

PHD Ministries was established by Prophet Walter Magaya on October 28, 2012, with an initial attendance of merely 45 individuals. The origins of the ministry are often linked to Magaya's visit to the Synagogue Church of All Nations (SCOAN), which Senior Prophet TB Joshua led at the time. According to Chitando and Biri (2016:73), this affiliation has significantly benefited Magaya, considering TB Joshua's considerable following in Zimbabwe. Consequently, Magaya has emerged as "Zimbabwe's very own TB Joshua," enabling local congregants to seek healing and deliverance without traveling to Nigeria. PHD Ministries is distinguished by its emphasis on deliverance sessions, healing practices, and prophetic teachings, embodying characteristics typical of Pentecostal traditions. The church's website articulates that PHD Ministries believes that God utilizes Prophet Magaya as an instrument for prophecy, healing, and deliverance to liberate individuals from bondage.

In 2015, the ministry extended its impact beyond Zimbabwe by expanding its outreach to Botswana and South Africa (Chitando & Biri, 2016: 72). The ministry conducts live services on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Sundays, which are broadcast on its dedicated Yadah TV channel. This channel is the primary medium through which Prophet Walter Magaya's sermons and related content are disseminated. Furthermore, the ministry's website provides comprehensive information regarding events, lectures, and various ministry activities. PHD Ministries actively engages with its followers and disseminates updates through social media platforms, including Facebook and YouTube, thereby fostering a digital community around its teachings and practices. This help Christians to grow spiritually even without the physical conduct of services. To support this, Mudau and Tshifhumulo (2025:3) allude that many individuals can access sermons, sacred texts, and discourse through internet channels and engage in worldwide worship.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study employs media ecology theory to explore the impact of new media technologies on human communication and, by extension, on religion. Media ecology examines media as its entity, adhering to McLuhan's well-known maxim, "The medium is the message" (McLuhan 1964, 7). In this context, Strate (2008:130) emphasizes the importance of focusing on the medium itself, as it wields a more significant influence on human affairs than the specific messages we convey or receive. According to Strate (2008), the symbolic form of media is far more significant than its content. Consequently, the media ecology approach is particularly well-suited for analyzing how the UFIC and PHD ministries adapt and respond to evolving media landscapes, as it underscores the intricate connections between media, culture, and social practices.

Drawing from media ecology theory, we understand that communication technology is a principal catalyst for societal change, with media as extensions of the human senses. This interconnectedness of technology, culture, and human behaviour makes media ecology valuable for understanding and analyzing media and technology usage. It positions media as tools and environments that shape our perceptions of reality, social interactions, and cognitive processes. This perspective enables a critical examination of how various media forms influence the lives of UFIC and PHD ministries, church members, and society. Media ecology theory facilitates understanding the social effects of media and communication technologies,

explaining how these technologies shape individuals' perceptions of reality. This study lies at the intersection of media, technology, and religion.

This theoretical framework serves as a lens through which the study examines the transformative impact of media and technology on Pentecostal practices. By integrating media ecology theory, the framework provides a comprehensive understanding of how UFIC and PHD navigate the complexities of modern religious expression in an increasingly digital world. The findings of this study aim not only to contribute to theological discussions but also to offer practical recommendations for religious organizations striving to adapt to evolving societal norms and technological advancements.

## **Methodology**

The data for this study were systematically collected and analyzed using qualitative empirical methods, incorporating original research and secondary sources. This study primarily investigates the transformative effects of media and technology on contemporary religious practices, specifically focusing on UFIC and PHD ministries. It examines how these religious organizations leverage media and technology to evangelize and fulfill the directive outlined in Matthew 28:19. The qualitative methodology permitted church members to articulate their experiences and perspectives regarding services delivered in a more "modern" format. This illustrates how innovative approaches in communication strategies attract and engage a wider audience through the media utilized.

## **Sampling and Selection Procedure**

For the qualitative interviews, the sample included both youth and elderly members who regularly attend the UFIC and PHD ministries. A total of 15 youths aged from 20 to 40 years and 15 elders were purposively and randomly selected to ensure a balanced representation of diverse experiences within the congregation. These reflective members of their respective communities possess significant knowledge about the church's practices and beliefs, which enriches the findings of the study. The church members utilized snowball sampling to identify individuals they considered reliable sources of information regarding the church's teachings and practices, particularly in relation to how UFIC and PHD Ministries use digital tools like live-streaming, social media, and mobile applications in their services. Among those selected were pastors and senior members who have attended the church for over a decade. This study captures both the contemporary perspectives of younger participants and the institutional memory of the church organization as reflected in our interviews.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations were prioritized to ensure the safety and well-being of the respondents (Arifin, 2018). Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection, ensuring they understood the purpose of the study and their right to withdraw at any time. Additionally, confidentiality and privacy were protected by using pseudonyms for all respondents. None of the participants was incentivized to take part in the study. Interviews were coded as 'Mrs. X' for female participants and 'Mr. X' for male participants, with the age of respondents also being recorded for reference. Given the church's conservative stance on information dissemination, actual names were not used, thus guaranteeing anonymity, allowing participants to provide information freely without fear of reprisal from church leaders. The researchers ensured that all recorded data and questionnaires remained confidential. Their responses were securely stored in a password-protected safe and will be kept for five years.

## **Data Analysis**

Transcribed interviews and focus group discussions were analyzed using thematic analysis. This process involves transcribing interviews and focus group discussions. Coding the data to identify repeating themes and patterns relating to media and technology use. Organizing the themes to answer the research questions and objectives, focusing on how these technologies enhance engagement, transform worship practices, and facilitate community involvement. The data was grouped under the following headings:

1. Community Building and Support
2. Engagement with younger congregants
3. Transformation of worship practices
4. Media and Technology on Future Trends of Pentecostalism
5. Challenges and Distractions of Media and Technology

### **Limitations**

This study identified many possible limitations, including the inherently subjective nature of qualitative research, the possibility of bias during interviews, and encounters in generalizability due to its focus on specific churches. Nevertheless, the study aims to provide valuable insights into the role of media and technology in contemporary Pentecostal practices. By utilizing this methodology, the study aimed to enhance our understanding of how media and technology promote greater engagement and practice within the UFIC and PHD churches, while also addressing the contemporary challenges faced by religious communities.

### **Discussion and Findings of the Study**

The study revealed several significant findings regarding the role of media and technology in the practices and community engagement of the UFIC and PHD. These findings underscore the transformative impact of technological integration within Pentecostal churches and how it shapes their religious practices and community interaction. This discussion explored the implications of these findings, including how technology is reshaping the landscape of religious engagement, influencing congregational dynamics, and addressing the diverse needs of modern believers.

#### **Community Building and Support**

PHD Ministries and UFIC have both utilized technologies to create virtual communities where members can connect, support, and share experiences. Online platforms facilitate the formation of small groups and forums for discussion, spiritual growth, and mutual support, addressing the diverse needs of the congregation. This virtual community building has proven essential in maintaining fellowship and engagement among members, especially during social distancing.

Traditional forms of worship and community involvement have changed due to the incorporation of technology into church services. While almost everyone appreciates these technological advancements, churches like UFIC and PHD are not left out. They have accepted and welcomed this change with both hands, thus acknowledging that technology can be a very effective tool for expanding the audience for church services. This use of media and technology has allowed UFIC and PHD members who might not be able to attend in person to attend services and other activities online.

#### **Embracing Online Worship**

The UFIC and PHD ministries have recognized new media opportunities to expand their outreach and engage a wider audience. These churches offer online access to services and





events through live streaming on platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and their dedicated TV channels (Christ TV and Yadah TV).

Horsfield and Tazzyman (2018) argue that social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, have transformed into virtual spaces for religious expression, community building, and outreach. One of the youthful PHD ministries members was quoted as showing excitement about never missing church services, although she works even on Sundays sometimes. She mentioned that her church conducts services three times a week on Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday, and she gets time to go online and watch when she is home from work. She pointed out that.

I am a proud member of PHD ministries and going to work on Sunday has never let me miss church services because I watch all the services online when I return home from work. Now, church members gather and pray virtually, a feat that would not have been possible without the power of new media (Mrs. X, 27 years, 2025).

These initiatives have strengthened the spiritual connection between churches and their members, enabling active participation in worship regardless of physical location. Integrating new media has become essential to the spiritual journey for UFIC and PHD members. Schaper (2020:35) suggests that online worship will likely gain popularity due to its environmental benefits, such as eliminating parking issues and reducing utility costs. An elderly UFIC member showed joy that her daughter, who has left for the US, still enjoys church services even while in the diaspora. She said:

Members of UFIC worldwide have the joy of worshipping from the comfort of their homes. My daughter relocated to the US, but she still watches services online. It is also hard for her to physically attend and enter a church building because of her work, but she always watches services online when free (Mrs X, 60 years, 2025).

## **Live Streaming Services**

The most significant characteristics of burgeoning Pentecostal movements in contemporary Africa are their proficient utilization of technology (Hackett, 1998). These movements harness various media technologies to expand their ministries and engage audiences that transcend national boundaries. This strategic integration of modern media, such as Yadah TV channel, has played a pivotal role in enhancing the visibility and popularity of Magaya's ministry. PHD Ministries maintains a website ([www.phdministries.org](http://www.phdministries.org)) and operates a dedicated Yadah TV channel. To ensure that devotionals, Bible study materials, sermons, and other resources are easily accessible, both UFIC and PHD ministries have developed online platforms and mobile applications. These tools provide members with straightforward access to spiritual content, strengthening their faith and deepening their understanding of the Bible.

Furthermore, an interviewed UFIC member was enthusiastic when narrating how he watches his Prophet's message via an app. He narrated:

We have an Orel Plus app, multimedia software that offers motivational books and audio and video content to support every believer, whether young or elderly, in their spiritual health. I do not miss services. If I cannot attend physically, I open my app and view messages from the prophet (Mr. X, 46 years, 2025).

Regardless of where church members live, the above programmes and apps have enabled congregants to take part in continuing discipleship journeys and actively interact with their

religion. Due to time zone differences (since both churches accommodate a global audience) and personal obligations, live-streaming video enables members to join services wherever they are more conveniently. Live streaming enhances the whole experience of worship by incorporating audiovisual elements that contribute to powerful images and captivating musical performances. Most people prefer live services over recorded ones, and they encourage congregation members to communicate with the pastor and each other (Campbell, 2020: 54).

### **Social Media Engagement**

UFIC and PHD have effectively leveraged media and technology to expand their reach beyond traditional geographical boundaries. Live streaming of services and events has enabled followers globally to participate in worship, significantly increasing attendance and engagement. This accessibility is particularly vital in times of restrictions, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic, where physical gatherings were limited.

UFIC and PHD ministries have increased missionary efforts using social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Their official websites, <https://www.ufiministries.org/> and <https://www.phdministries.org/>, are resources for anyone looking for spiritual guidance and a center for evangelistic content. These ministries have broadened their evangelical outreach by using digital media to connect with people who might not have heard about the church. The ministries have successfully spread their message and interact with people worldwide because of the power of modern media, which has helped the denominations flourish. This aligns with what Corrigan and Carlson (2015) say about churches using media technology to stream live services and websites to provide religious content, hold virtual worship sessions, and enable online donations.

Internet marketing and viral content also enable churches to reach a larger audience and attract new members (Horsfield & Tazzyman, 2018). Social media engagement is relevant because it can readily tell others about the positive effects of their faith in their lives, inspiring and uplifting other congregation members. The comment sections on UFIC and PHD ministries' social platforms testify that social media helps change people's faith and belief in God. One's testimony goes a long way in uplifting the next person who could be going through the same. Social media platforms enable open dialogue and the exchange of viewpoints on religious subjects. In this vein, a UFIC church member boasted about how his prophet addresses all his congregants and discusses online with them. To substantiate himself, he narrates:

Prophet normally does live question-and-answer sessions, during which he answers all questions raised by the congregants. For me, social media helps church members discuss matters of their faith, which ultimately helps them grow spiritually. Congregants can communicate outside the church doors, participate in conversations, and share testimonies on social media (Mr. X, 35 years, 2025).

### **Engagement with Younger Congregants**

One significant finding of this study is enhanced engagement with younger demographics through the strategic use of technology. Media integration resonated particularly with younger congregants, often digital natives accustomed to interacting through screens. This demographic shift necessitates an evolving approach to ministry that speaks to the cultural realities of the younger generation. Social media serves as a messaging tool and a platform for community building, allowing for interaction and dialogue to strengthen members' ties.

Youth engagement is a critical aspect of church growth and sustainability. According to this study, the PHD Ministries and UFIC defined the youths as congregants who are under the age of 40. The younger generation is deeply immersed in technology. Their digital experiences

significantly influence their interaction with faith and religious practices. Social media plays a crucial role in shaping their views and participation in religious activities (Ojo, Adelaja, Adio, & Afolaranmi, 2024:59). Innovative use of media appeals to younger generations, providing them with relatable and accessible faith experiences. Digital content, such as podcasts and videos, helps bridge the gap between traditional practices and contemporary interests. It is evident that podcasts bring people to church and are frequently listened to by many. The two ministries use podcasts as an excellent approach to creating a distribution channel. This is effective in the fact that individuals are far less picky about the links they click or the websites they subscribe to than the music or sermons they listen to on their headphones or in their cars (Ojo, Adelaja, Adio & Afolaranmi, 2024). Hence, most people listen to the two ministers' sermons while driving to work or in taxis. A youth who was interviewed had this to say about podcasts:

I am always on the internet and am fascinated by podcasts. This then lures me into listening to the sermons by the ministers of the word. Podcasting is a practical method of motivating youth and spreading messages worldwide. Most youth like me cannot attend services because of school and work commitments, yet we can still stay involved in the community by listening to a church podcast (Mrs. X, 19 years, 2025).

The UFIC's messages enter the everyday lives of its followers through a church podcast, and even its past sermons are repurposed and posted, which is a simple method to compile the church's sermons into a permanent (and constantly accessible) archive.

However, reflecting on the ethical implications of this technological shift is also important. While technology can create opportunities for engagement, it may also risk superficial connections if not approached mindfully. Furthermore, technology accessibility poses questions around equity, as not all congregants may have equal access to digital resources, creating potential divides within the community.

### **Transformation of Worship Practices**

The integration of technology has led to a transformation in traditional worship practices. Services that once relied solely on physical attendance now encompass multimedia presentations, interactive sessions, and virtual prayer meetings. This evolution modernizes and enriches the worship experience by incorporating diverse forms of expression, such as music and visual arts, enhancing overall congregational participation. The rise of the internet and digital communication technologies has enabled the creation of online religious communities, allowing individuals to connect, share resources, and engage in spiritual discussions without geographic limitations (Campbell, 2022). Digital media plays a crucial role in spiritual development and discipleship within UFIC and PHD ministries. Major events in PHD ministries are promoted through billboards, posters, and public transport advertisements (Chitando & Biri, 2016:76). PHD ministries effectively use posters, banners, and large billboards to spread their message. The messages promise to eradicate poverty, illness, misery, and infertility. PHD also uses posters to get messages to the people, especially about prayer lines, one-on-one sessions, bookings, and other services. Calendars are also used as a medium to relay the gospel to all parts of the world because calendars also have main events on them. Public transport, such as buses and taxis, also advertises significant events through stickers. Furthermore, the only national broadcaster, the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation TV, frequently provides live coverage of important events held by the PHD ministries.

### **Multimedia worship formats**

To improve the worship experience, congregations like UFIC and PHD have moved to conduct services through visual and aural elements beyond traditional preaching and music. Multimedia worship formats refer to a style of worship service that uses a variety of media



elements, such as video, audio, images, and text projected on screens (Jancovic, Volmar & Schneider 2019). These elements frequently include projected lyrics, scripture passages, and pertinent imagery to accompany the worship elements (Jancovic, Volmar & Schneider, 2019). Below are the formats used to make services more appealing and fun.

### **Digital Music and Sound Effects**

One of Pentecostalism's most significant media practices is the production and distribution of gospel music, which has become very popular in many African countries. The dominant media platforms used to record, distribute, and consume Pentecostal music evolved from audio cassettes to CDs and DVDs to contemporary digital audio files (Ibrahim, 2023). Worship teams enhance musical experiences and create engaging worship spaces by utilizing digital musical instruments, synthesizers, and sound effects. Incorporating loops or pre-recorded tracks can add nuance and complexity to live performances, enriching the overall musical arrangement. PHD and UFIC Ministries creatively employ music in their services. While gospel music is quite popular in Zimbabwe and the Southern African region, Magaya has not hesitated to collaborate with secular artists to attract and entertain the large crowds that attend his services. According to Chitando and Biri (2016), Magaya believes that the end justifies the means. For Chitando and Biri (2016), Magaya posits that if many people come to enjoy secular music (although many secular artists try to "sacralise" their music during shows at PHD ministries) and end up listening to his message, the work of the kingdom of God would have been advanced. Music is a key factor in understanding the popularity and expansion of PHD Ministries in Zimbabwe and beyond (Chitando & Biri, 2016). Listening to music can make a new environment more comfortable, and emotional connections can be forged through music. Thus, congregants go back home, rejuvenated in their spirits. Magaya is doing all he can to ensure the gospel reaches all corners of the world.

### **Media and Technology on Future Trends of Pentecostalism**

Although COVID-19 has spurred advancements in the media, even more positive changes are on the horizon. According to Dougherty (2020), new technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), augmented reality (AR), and virtual reality (VR) have the potential to significantly transform religious experiences and practices. VR and AR technologies allow participants to engage in virtual sacred spaces and religious ceremonies, creating immersive environments for religious rituals, pilgrimages, and spiritual simulations (Grieve & Hayworth, 2019). Additionally, AI-powered chatbots and virtual assistants offer personalized spiritual counseling, guidance, and prayer support to meet the diverse needs of religious followers (Deutsch, 2018). Bennett (2021) maintains that as technology evolves, new opportunities will emerge for Pentecostalism, potentially reshaping how faith is practiced and experienced. Technology has been utilized for religious engagement, community development, and spiritual expression in many countries and eras, from ancient temples to virtual realities.

### **Challenges and Distractions of Media and Technology**

In the twenty-first century, religious leaders, scholars, and practitioners face the critical challenge of balancing the benefits of technological advancements with the preservation of religious traditions and values (Tsekpoe, 2019:285). One significant concern is the potential distractions during worship services, as congregants may engage with media platforms unrelated to their faith. Furthermore, there are growing worries about the commercialization of spirituality and the ethical ramifications of incorporating technology into religious practices. Discussions have surfaced regarding the commercialization of faith within specific ministries. For instance, churchgoers are often expected to invest substantial money for a "One-on-One with the prophet," indicating heavy commercialization of the prophetic dimension (Tsekpoe, 2019:285). Chitando and Biri (2016:76) also note that followers are encouraged to purchase custom bracelets, T-shirts with distinctive messages, and photographs of the leader and his spouse. The UFIC and PHD ministries are implicated in these practices that encourage financial contributions from their members.

Internet connectivity is another issue, especially in most parts of Africa, where most church followers live. Members' ability to engage with new media platforms and participate in online activities may be restricted by their lack of access to dependable internet services. Load-shedding, slow internet, and power disruptions present further difficulties. It is something that Southern African nations like Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Zambia are well acquainted with. One PHD member was emotional when she explained how her parents in rural areas could not have access to the word from her pastor. She explained thus:

Back in the village, my parents and siblings experienced double trouble; they lived far away from the church and did not have smartphones to connect to the internet to access services. My little sister has a phone but typically faces the challenge of data and electricity (either load-shedding or no electricity at all). My parents are not adequately trained in new media, which presents another difficulty in the digital gap (Mrs. X, 45 years, 2025).

Another challenge when services are done digitally is that the Pentecost churches under discussion must uphold their theological purity. It must deal with problems including false information, internet disputes, and the possibility of weakening biblical doctrines. On this note, however, Magaya is always in the news for the wrong reasons. Recently (January 2025), he was on the news regarding fake PhD credentials, with the University of South Africa denying that he was their student. Such issues put Magaya, as a leader of such a big denomination, in the spotlight. Likewise, Makandiwa saw himself trending (March 2025) after challenging all prophets, seers, and other traditional healers. He offered a million US dollars to anyone who could correctly predict what was in his pockets. Such statements got the whole world into a debate as to whether a man of God needed to do such, especially considering the people in the country he stays in are poor. Why could he not channel the million dollars to orphanages or schools?

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the role of media and technology within the practices of UFIC and PHD highlights a transformative era in Pentecostalism. As these churches continue to navigate the technological landscape, the focus on community engagement, ethical considerations, and the integrity of worship will be crucial. This study demonstrates extensive potential for outreach and relationship-building in the digital age. However, it comes with responsibilities that necessitate careful stewardship from both leaders and members. Using qualitative empirical methodologies and synthesizing original research with existing literature, this study significantly contributes to the academic discourse at the intersection of religion, technology, and community dynamics, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. The findings suggest that UFIC, PHD, and other religious organizations should continue to embrace and effectively utilize technology while addressing the associated challenges. Training leaders and congregants in digital literacy and the ethical use of technology is crucial. Additionally, creating a balanced approach that combines online and in-person interactions can help maintain strong community ties while harnessing the benefits of technology.

The study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by providing empirical insights into how Pentecostal churches, specifically UFIC and PHD, utilize various media and technological tools. It demonstrates how these churches respond to contemporary challenges, such as the limitations imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic, thus enriching the discourse on the resilience of religious practices. Gathering qualitative data directly from church members about their experiences and perceptions regarding the use of technology in worship could provide a grassroots perspective on its effectiveness and areas for improvement. Future studies can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the interplay between technology, media, and religious practices in contemporary society by exploring these areas.



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