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Christianity, Social Media, and Theology: A Church Mission Perspective

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Abstract

The rise of social media has transformed how people communicate and share their lives, creating opportunities for new forms of religious expression and community building among Christians. Social media's intercontextuality allows for the integration of religious discussions with everyday activities, but it also presents challenges, such as the potential confusion between religious service and politics. This article examines how churches and Christians use social media to support their missions, foster online faith communities, and balance the benefits of digital engagement with the risks and ethical concerns that come with these technologies. The research employs a literature review, analyzing academic articles, books, conference papers, and other scholarly sources. The integrative approach critiques and synthesizes existing studies to provide new insights into the role of social media in church missions. The findings reveal that social media facilitates community building, religious expression, and mission work, but it also brings risks like gossip, overexposure, and the potential erosion of physical church communities. The article outlines principles for responsible social media use among Christians, emphasizing a balance between digital and embodied interactions. This research contributes to the understanding of social media's impact on Christian ministry and offers practical guidelines for churches and believers to navigate the digital world thoughtfully. It highlights the importance of using social media to support the Christian mission while maintaining the foundational aspects of faith and community.

Keywords: Christian; church; mission; social media; theology.

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Introduction

Society's communication methods are evolving, as the internet has ushered people into a new way of living. Social media (Merriam-Webster, 2022; Lomborg & Bechmann, 2014, p. 256–265)[1] has significantly altered how people interact. It has enabled the creation of online communities where individuals can share their thoughts and experiences. Discussions on religion in social media particularly focus on its role in shaping religious values, enhancing social values, and providing faith-based content through various approaches. A missiological perspective on social media and religion helps to understand how platforms like Facebook or WhatsApp contribute to the development of church ministry. The growth of church ministries is examined, with a focus on how social media plays a role in this growth.

Lim and Putnam argues that while there is strong evidence linking religiosity with life satisfaction, the exact way religion influences life satisfaction remains debated. Their study using a new panel dataset highlights the social and participatory aspects that impact the link between religion and life satisfaction. The findings suggest that regular attendance at religious services and building social networks in congregations leads to greater life satisfaction, though the influence of friendships within congregations is contingent upon having a strong religious identity. The study found minimal evidence that personal religiosity affects life satisfaction independent of congregational participation and friendships (Lim & Putnam, 2010, p. 914–933).

In another study, Miller and Mundey explored how religiosity impacts Social Networking Site (SNS) membership and usage among young adults aged 18 to 23, using data from the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR). They found that religion fostered prosocial behaviors, organizational involvement, and civic engagement. Catholics and Evangelical Protestants were more likely to be active members of SNS than those who identified as "non-religious," while higher Holy Bible reading was associated with lower levels of SNS membership and usage (Miller et al., 2013, p. 227-253). The researchers argue that both sacred and secular factors influence SNS involvement, with social behaviors including like being in school and participating in non-religious organizations enhancing SNS membership. Certain personal behaviors, such as Bible reading and charitable activities, also affect SNS use. Miller and Mundey propose four areas for future research to further explore how religiosity influences SNS usage and vice versa (Miller et al., 2013, p. 227-253; Purba etal., 2024; p.33-47). Social media has quickly become a vital aspect of the online lives of church members, and this article investigates how churches and Christians use social media to support and reflect the mission of the church.

Methods

This study employs a literature review as its research methodology. A literature review is an extensive analysis and synthesis of previously published works on a specific topic or research question (Fink, 2014; Winanto & Manopo, 2023, p. 1-25). The reviewed literature consists of a range of materials, including books, academic articles, conference papers, association documents, and dissertations. It incorporates the most significant studies and findings from past and current research that has been conducted, providing the background and context necessary for understanding the research's contribution to the field (Jesson, 2011; Ridley, 2012).

The type of review utilized in this research is an integrated literature review. This approach involves critically evaluating and combining representative literature on a subject, which leads to the creation of new references and perspectives. The integrative review includes all studies that

[1] In *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, social media is a form of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) in which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos), "Social media."

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address related or identical research problems or hypotheses. A well-executed integrated review is expected to adhere to the same standards of clarity, rigor, and reproducibility as primary studies. This type of review is common in social sciences research, particularly within missiology (Fink, 2014).

Christianity, Social Media, and Evangelism

The connection between social media and religion has gained significant attention from researchers over the past decade. In their article "Religion, Social Networks, and Life Satisfaction," Lim and Putnam suggest that social networks provide compelling evidence for the social and participatory mechanisms that influence how religion affects life satisfaction (Lim & Putnam, 2010, p. 914–933). Although the rise of online social networks presents new challenges for religious individuals and institutions, Verschoor-Kirss argues that it's incorrect to assume that religion and technology are inherently in conflict. In fact, technology can enhance religious practices by fostering and expanding religious communities (Verschoor-Kirss, 2012, p. 1–12).

Verschoor-Kirss (2012) continues by noting that viewing religion and technology as incompatible overlooks the complex ways in which they can both support and undermine each other. Technology can benefit religion by enhancing communal aspects of religious life, but it can also harm these aspects if it diminishes genuine community connections. Given that social media generally fosters a sense of community, it is likely that religious groups and individuals will increasingly turn to these platforms. However, whether this shift to digital communities might unintentionally weaken the need for physical congregational involvement remains an open question, though it is certainly possible (Verschoor-Kirss, 2012, p. 1–12).

Religion is also linked to self-disclosure on social media. Bobkowski and Pearce, in their study 'Baring their Souls in Online Profiles or Not? Religious Self-Disclosure in Social Media', examine how personal traits associated with religious identity influence the extent of religious self-disclosure online (Bobkowski & Pearce, 2011, p. 744–762). Such openness can strengthen religious identity and foster community, but from a security perspective it also carries risks, as sharing sensitive beliefs online may expose individuals to misinterpretation, discrimination, or targeted hostility. (Bobkowski & Pearce, 2011, p. 744–762). Zviadadze points out that religiosity is not only expressed through traditional religious practices like church attendance, but also in new media forms, such as pastors preaching on YouTube, church bells as ringtones, or using church images as desktop wallpapers (Zviadadze, 2014, p. 164–194). Everton further emphasizes that social media plays a crucial role in church member recruitment and retention, spreading religious ideas, encouraging volunteerism in church activities, and promoting the overall well-being of believers (Everton, 2015, p. 1–34).

The relationship between religion and social media continues to be widely discussed. Faimau and Behrens analyze how religious language and discourses in Facebook-like platforms contribute to shaping narratives around religious authority, identity, and community (Faimau & Behrens, 2016, p. 66–92). Brubaker and Haigh explore the reasons Christians use Facebook for religious purposes and the importance of engaging with religious content on the platform (Brubaker & Haigh, 2017). Coman and Coman argue that in a post-secular society, religious imagery serves not just as a convenience but as a significant cultural element in public spaces (Coman & Coman, 2017, p. 129–143).

However, social media is not without its drawbacks. The use of social networks in religious contexts has both positive and negative consequences. Miller, Mundey, and Hill discuss how both sacred and secular influences shape social media engagement and the behavior of users in religious contexts, such as participation in school or non-religious organizations (Miller et al., 2013, p. 227–253).

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Instead of abandoning social media, it is crucial to recognize both its benefits and drawbacks and find ways to mitigate the negative aspects. Al-Mosa highlights how social media can be valuable by addressing issues that prevent the full activation of social networks in promoting youth values (Al-Mosa, 2015, p. 126–137).

The internet offers Christians exciting new ways to spread the gospel. From forming communities and launching social justice campaigns, to digitally articulating their faith, the internet is revolutionizing how Christians express their beliefs. Many Christians, especially those who grew up with digital technology, use social media and email as a natural part of life. For these individuals, engaging online is as instinctive as letter writing, a way to stay connected and share in the lives of others. It's common for Christians to use platforms like Messenger, Skype, Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, YouTube, and email simultaneously to communicate, with WhatsApp being the most widely used for everyday conversations and group fellowship. Whether they are sharing their lives publicly or privately, incorporating their Christian faith into their online interactions has become second nature for them, with a profound impact on their online experiences (Barna, 2001; Hutchings et al., 2020, p. 148–164).

Christianity, Social Media, and Creativity

Christians with technical backgrounds have leveraged their creative skills and digital platforms to advocate for democracy, criticize church leaders, boycott unethical businesses, and campaign against issues like sex trafficking, even positioning themselves as lobbyists. Through their online presence, they share not only personal stories but also scripture, gospel parodies on YouTube, church events, and engage in religious conversations. They invite their followers to join a vibrant Christian community, both virtual and physical. However, it is crucial that any evangelistic efforts made online are followed by real-life engagement. For those unfamiliar with online etiquette and unspoken rules of sharing, trying to spread the gospel digitally can pose challenges and risks (Stetzer, 2006; Malphurs, 1998).

Just like in the real world, respecting privacy is essential. There is a significant difference between sending a private message and posting something publicly where it can be seen by thousands. While the internet offers a platform for expressing faith, it also brings with it issues such as online harassment, misinterpretation of religious messages, cyberbullying, and the spread of distorted theological views, and sometimes opposition from both fellow Christians and non-believers, much like the challenges faced in everyday life.

Christianity and Social Media: The Benefits Outweigh the Risks

The advantages of engaging with social media and internet technologies far exceed the risks involved. Social media has made accountability easier, as having an online profile encourages people to live transparently and honestly. Prayer participation has also become more accessible globally, with online platforms like Messenger, Skype, Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, YouTube, and Zoom facilitating intercessions for persecuted Christians. On a local scale, some Christians have started organizing small online groups, allowing members who can't attend in person to log in and participate as though they were physically present. New media provides Christians with an effective and convenient way to build communities, share resources, and play a growing role in outreach and evangelism.

As digital communication continues to grow, so does the way Christians express their faith online. While sharing one's Christian life and beliefs with others is not a new concept, the role of evangelism in today's technologically advanced world is a unique opportunity that should be respected, practiced in Christian living, and used to share wisdom.

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Social media's rapid growth is reshaping how people perceive friendship and community. Although platforms like Facebook offer unique opportunities for Christians, they also pose significant risks, such as the spread of gossip and misinformation, excessive self-disclosure, addiction to online interactions, and the weakening of physical church fellowship. Christians need to understand that not all forms of culture foster human development, and these media have their limitations. Social media shapes how individuals are influenced by each communication platform. Despite the speed and reach of social media, it cannot replace the deeper significance of physical interactions. True friendship, fellowship, and community are things that cannot be fully replicated online. However, if Christians avoid gossip and false beliefs, and take care not to expose themselves excessively, they can use this form of communication wisely and effectively. To guide Christians in engaging with social media, the following principles should be considered: (1) Monitor your behavior for unhealthy habits. (2) Avoid late-night or early-morning social media use. (3) Reject narcissism and present your true self. (4) Focus on a few social media friends every month. (5) Be cautious about how others present themselves online. (6) Regularly take breaks from social media. (7) Develop a clear understanding of what a "social media friend" means for a Christian (Rice, 2009).

With the rapid growth of platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, MySpace, LinkedIn, and others, Christians should reflect on how these technology-driven forms of social interaction affect individuals, groups, and society at large. For instance, one may have hundreds of Facebook "friends," but it's important to ask what kind of relationships these represent. What type of "community" do platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp create? What are the benefits and drawbacks of using social media? Consider two examples that illustrate both the positive and negative aspects of social media.

In one case, a man posts a Facebook update to vent his frustration about someone he knows. Instead of addressing the issue directly with the person involved (as advised in Matthew 18:15–20), he posts false accusations publicly for all his "friends" to see. This amplifies the issue, causing emotional harm, spreading lies, and ultimately resolving nothing. Beyond personal conflict, such misuse of social media can damage the credibility of Christian witness, weaken the unity of the church community, and contradict biblical teachings on reconciliation and truthfulness.

Social Media, Theology, and the Nature of Technology

While there are numerous types of social media, Christians tend to focus on the advantages and drawbacks of social media, given its scale and influence. For instance, Facebook experienced massive growth, with 5 million people joining every week during the first quarter of 2009. From August 2008 to March 2009, its membership doubled, reaching 200 million, with the majority joining after February 2007 (Rice, 2009). This rapid expansion of Facebook has created a new and unprecedented form of communication in human history.

The internet is transforming global cultures through its speed, accessibility, and new ways of exchanging information, whether through text, audio, images, or video. The rise of social networking sites (SNS) has prompted critical questions about the meaning and experience of community in the digital world. Christians, who adhere to God's guiding principles for human development (Williams, 2015, p.375–383), need to carefully consider how these technologies shape both the individual Christian self and society. Since the greatest commandment is to love God fully and love others as ourselves (Matthew 22:37–39), Christians should evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of these technologies, holding on to the good and avoiding evil (1 Thessalonians 5:21–22) (Rice, 2009). The understanding of this should start from the beginning of humanity, as this framework helps Christians wisely navigate the use of social media.

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As humans, made in God's image, we are inherently social beings, created by a loving God to show love to Him and others. Christians, in this context, are called to nurture God's creation for the betterment of mankind and to honor God. Even before the Fall, Adam would have felt incomplete and lonely without another human being, an image-bearer of God, to accompany him. Despite being in the garden with unrestricted fellowship with God (Genesis 1–2), Adam chose to listen to the serpent and disobey God by eating from the forbidden tree (Genesis 3).

Though mankind's existence has been wounded and fractured since the Fall, God has not abandoned humanity. Instead, He actively pursued His wayward people, revealing Himself through creation and conscience (Psalm 19:1–6; Romans 1–2), through prophets, miracles, and ultimately through His Son, Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1). God commanded His people to make disciples of all nations, as He holds all authority in heaven and earth (Matthew 28:18–20). Christians, as agents of God's Kingdom, must understand the consequences of the Fall and work toward redemption, leading others to Christ and fostering interactions that promote God's peace and flourishing. As Jesus called His followers to be the salt and light of the world (Matthew 5:13–16), this is the commission He gives to all His disciples (Matthew 28:19–20) (Williams, 2015, p.375–383).

Being the salt and light of the world requires a deep understanding of culture and its effects on all people. Christians should be like the tribe of Issachar, who "understood the times and knew what Israel should do" (1 Chronicles 12:32).

Culture is multifaceted, complex, and often hidden. In simple terms, culture represents the imprint humanity leaves on nature and one another (see Genesis 1:26; Psalm 8). However, these cultural imprints often blend into people's lives without their conscious awareness. This assumption is generally justified, since cultural values and practices frequently operate at a subconscious level, shaping behavior and identity in ways that individuals may perceive as natural, even though they are in fact socially and historically constructed. Effective cultural critique brings these influences to light, as Marshall McLuhan observed (Sing-Nan, 1969, p.161–180). By doing so, Christians can better discern the invisible forces shaping their lives.

Human creativity manifests in numerous forms—ranging from fashion and architecture to orchestras and automobiles—and extends to various forms of communication, including spoken language, smoke signals, and written language. More recently, it has also included electronically mediated communication, such as the telegraph, telephone, radio, television, and the internet. These innovations have opened up a wide range of communication possibilities in a short time, from email to blogs to the now-dominant "social media." This digital transformation has created a "digital agora," a public space for communication, but one where people's physical presence is absent, though interaction remains abundant in these virtual spaces (Estes, 2009; Coman & Coman, 2017). Religion, Popular Culture and Social Media: The Construction of a Religious Leader Image on Facebook. *ESSACHESS - Journal for Communication Studies* 10(20), 129-143).

In his book *The Church of Facebook*, Jesse Rice discusses how new technologies have led to unique, often unanticipated outcomes. He identifies three key effects of social media technology: (1) It has the power to synchronize large populations quickly, creating spontaneous order. (2) This order can lead to entirely new and unforeseen results. (3) These unplanned outcomes require individuals to adjust their behavior to thrive in the newly created order (Rice, 1992, p.18).

To put this in terms of Neil Postman's analysis, technological advancements bring "ecological" changes that go beyond simple cultural shifts (Green, 2022). For example, television significantly altered Indonesian culture in economic, political, and intellectual ways. It wasn't just another medium added to the mix of newspapers, telegraphs, and radio. Political debates, for instance, shifted from lengthy intellectual exchanges to brief televised events, where the most charismatic

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and visually appealing participants often emerged as the winners (Medina, 2008). Postman (1992) argued that the sensibilities shaped by television affect people's understanding of truth and falsehood. This insight can be extended to all forms of electronic communication, which influence how people perceive and engage with the world. It's therefore important to examine the implications of these new technologies before formulating principles for effective engagement.

Some Basic Concerns

Social media platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp often encourage individuals to share personal texts and images on a large scale, which can lead to premature self-disclosure. The issue is that a person may reveal parts of themselves that they are not yet ready to expose. As the Book of Proverbs wisely states, the wise remain silent, while fools speak their foolishness. It is essential to carefully choose who one confides in (see Psalm 1). Some aspects of life should remain private, as not every detail is meant to be shared with a broad audience. Maintaining this boundary helps individuals safeguard their dignity, protect sensitive information, and preserve the sanctity of personal relationships. Social media is filled with trivial and often foolish content, and not everyone should have access to every detail of another person's life. While secrecy can sometimes conceal wrongdoings, it is also a wise practice to protect certain things from being exposed. Social media makes it easy to spread personal content widely, but many individuals lack the discretion to maintain their privacy.

It is also important to be cautious about gossip. Social media, by nature, allows gossip to spread quickly and widely. Gossip is defined as spreading negative information about someone without a valid reason. Biblically, gossip is considered a sin and should be avoided. Even if some statements are true, they may be unhelpful and serve no constructive purpose (Groothuis, 2010). Paul included gossip in his list of sins, placing it alongside adultery, murder, and other wrongdoings (Romans 1:29; 2 Corinthians 12:20).

Moreover, there are times when it is best to refrain from speaking altogether, as Ecclesiastes advises, "The more words, the less they mean, and how does that benefit anyone?" (Ecclesiastes 6:11; see also 5:1-2). This applies to images as well. Many social media users post pictures of themselves in inappropriate or narcissistic poses. Even seemingly innocent photos can be easily misinterpreted due to the ambiguous nature of images.

Social media, in some cases, can be antisocial. Many people, engrossed in their devices, prefer digital interactions over face-to-face communication. This contributes to the issue of "absent presence," where a person may physically be present but is mentally absorbed in their phone, tablet, or laptop. John Medina points out that the human brain is not capable of effective multitasking, whether in church or elsewhere. Christians must focus on shared ideas without distractions from unnecessary digital mediation (Fernando, 1991).[2]

Social Media Engagement Principles

Rice offers several specific guidelines for engaging with social media, which have been adapted and supplemented, as follows (Rice, 2009):Practice regular check-ins: Since social media can lead to "out-of-body experiences" (digital interactions lacking physical presence), Christians should regularly evaluate their use of platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, or similar technologies. It's important to reflect on one's feelings and thoughts—how is a Christian navigating the online world? Social media's constant connectivity makes it easy to get lost in the flow of information without reflecting on what's happening both on the screen and within oneself. Jesus' advice, "pay close attention to how you listen" (Luke 8:18), applies to social media as much as it does to in-

[2] For a biblical study of the meaning of friendship in the Book of Proverbs by Ajith Fernando.

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person interactions. Christians should avoid engaging with inappropriate content, such as immodest photos, and repent if they find themselves tempted. This might involve stepping away from social media altogether if necessary (Matthew 5:27-32).

Avoid online engagement before bed or after waking up: These crucial moments of the day should be dedicated to scripture memorization, meditation, and prayer (see Psalm 119). Starting and ending the day with spiritual focus is important for maintaining a strong relationship with God.

Engage authentically: Social media often fosters narcissism, as many users share idealized versions of themselves. Christians should reflect on how they present themselves online—does their content truly reflect their God-given nature? Are they being authentic, or are they pretending to be something they are not? Christians should remember that God sees everything, including the hidden things, and will bring every action to judgment (Ecclesiastes 12:14).

Focus on meaningful connections: Instead of spreading attention too thin, Christians should dedicate time to engaging deeply with a few friends or fellow believers, focusing on building relationships that matter. It's important to pray for them, send personal messages, and share meaningful moments. Christians should assess whether these interactions are strengthening their relationships.

Practice skepticism in social media activity: Just as one might present a false image of themselves through exaggerated photos or words, it's important to recognize that others may do the same. Social media may not be the best way to understand someone's true character. One should be cautious about placing too much trust in people only known through social media, especially considering the risks of scams and deceit.

Step back if social media becomes Obsessive: If social media begins to negatively affect a Christian's life or lead to unhealthy behavior, it's important to reassess and possibly step away. A spouse or trusted friend can provide valuable insight into how one's online activities are impacting their character. Proverbs reminds us that a true friend will challenge our attitudes and behaviors for our own good (Proverbs 27:6).

Define what social media "friends" mean: Christians should decide what it means to be a "friend" on social media. Some may choose to limit friends to those with whom they have significant relationships, which may reduce the number of connections but deepen the quality of interactions. Others may prefer a larger audience for their posts. The second approach might be more suitable for those who want to use social media to educate and edify others, like pastors or educators, while minimizing personal commentary.

While Facebook "friends" might not replace true friendships, social media can still serve as a mission field for offering spiritual guidance. Although these interactions cannot however in a meaningful manner replace real pastoral care or small group fellowship, Christians can use social media to offer spiritual encouragement. However, it's important to avoid engaging in trivial or hostile arguments on social media. When discussions become unproductive or contentious, Christians should disengage to avoid "casting pearls before swine" (Matthew 7:6). This principle guides how to navigate difficult conversations online, defending Christian beliefs in a rational, respectful manner when appropriate (1 Peter 3:15-16).

Virtual Church?

Some people take social media engagement a step further, even suggesting that social media could serve as a form of church gathering on its own. Estes introduces the idea of "SimChurch," where believers meet in a virtual environment using avatars—graphic digital identities—rather than in person (Estes, 2009). However, since human culture is flawed (James 1:27; 1 John 2:15–

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17), Christians must be cautious of every new development within social media. While some innovations can be used appropriately, there are also boundaries that should not be crossed. As Paul writes, "All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything" (1 Corinthians 6:12). Christians should be mindful that the virtual identity, represented by avatars, often doesn't fully reflect the person behind it. Though such digital representations might be acceptable in entertainment settings, Christians should approach them with caution. This caution reflects concerns that virtual avatars can obscure true identity, invite unethical behavior under anonymity, and blur theological boundaries where physical presence is essential to Christian fellowship.

Both the apostle Paul and the apostle John expressed a deep desire to be physically present with those they wrote to in their letters. For example, Paul expressed his longing to visit the Romans so that he could spiritually strengthen them and be mutually encouraged by their faith (Romans 1:11–12) (Winanto & Bulan, 2024, p.161-170). Even though Paul wrote profound theology, he still sought in-person fellowship with the Roman believers. Likewise, John emphasized the importance of face-to-face interaction, stating that while he had much to write, he preferred to visit and speak in person to bring complete joy (2 John 12; 3 John 13–14). The most meaningful aspects of church life cannot be replicated online, as they require embodied presence. Virtual interactions cannot offer the "right hand of fellowship," nor can they facilitate meaningful activities like baptism, laying on of hands, anointing with oil, or corporate worship—essential components of church life. While social media can play a role in Christian engagement, it must not overshadow the God-ordained structure of the local church and its embodied practices.

Social Media: Limits and Possibilities

Social media offers quick, wide-reaching, and free interaction with many people. However, Christians must be cautious not to become consumed by the addictive nature of social media. While it allows interaction with people beyond one's immediate circle and can be used to communicate truth in love (Ephesians 4:15), it lacks the depth of meaningful friendships that can only be built through face-to-face interactions. Social media can never replace the local church. However, when used intentionally, prayerfully, and with moderation, it can add valuable new dimensions to Christian social interactions that might otherwise be impossible (Peter White et al., 2016, p.3-9).

The effect of social media on Christians depends on both the individual using it and how they use it. Social media challenges traditional power structures, including those within religious hierarchies, as control shifts from platform owners to users, meaning "everyone is a publisher and everyone is a critic" (Kessler, 2013, p.26-35). Despite the impersonal nature of online communication, which can easily distort information, there are examples of good practices for worship, fellowship, and witness for Christ. Social media can also be a tool for overcoming stereotypes and fighting prejudice, though it can also be used to spread such biases. In the context of Christian mission, social media should provide a safe space, foster trust, and help users connect with others. While face-to-face encounters may create stronger connections, social media can still play a role in advancing Christian mission by facilitating positive self-expression, networking, and furthering the understanding of the faith (Lim, 2017, p.23–41; Woran etal., 2023, p.32-51).

Churches need to verify Christian social media users, particularly to address the use of pseudonyms. This will also help prevent users from duplicating accounts, ensuring authenticity. Churches should focus on posting real, credible content to build trust, especially among the middle class and wealthy. They should avoid exaggerating testimonies or overhyping content on platforms like Facebook. Instead, churches can leverage social media to attract non-churchgoers

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or unbelievers by sharing the genuine gospel message, rather than engaging in self-promotion on Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, or other media platforms.

Given the challenges of social media, White et al. emphasize that Christians must approach social media thoughtfully (Peter White et al., 2016, p.3-9). It's crucial to consider the impact of a status, photo, comment, or blog post, both in the present and the future. Christians should recognize that everything posted on social media is permanent and accessible to everyone, and the consequences of their online statements can be far-reaching. While maintaining relationships is important, social media should not become an addictive force. It can be an effective tool for advertising but is less effective in fostering deep, lasting relationships. Christians should limit their time on social networking sites and prioritize time for prayer and meditation (Fatu etal., 2022, p.103-116; Widjaja, 2025, p.2-10; Miller etal., 2013, p.227-253).

Conclusion

Based on the findings and analysis, several key observations can be made:

Firstly, the use of social media for ministry purposes has become widespread, diverse, and more sophisticated among churches and Christians in Indonesia as well as globally. This has led to a shift in how churches and Christian groups are defined, with boundaries becoming more flexible and dynamic. As a result, we see that Indonesian Christians are increasingly blending their religious practices, such as prayer and Bible study, with discussions about their professional lives, global events, social interactions, and other everyday activities. Religious practices like prayers, sermons, and worship songs now coexist in the same online spaces as personal updates on activities like cooking, eating, studying, and even moving houses. Motivated by their faith, Christians are engaging in online groups and discussions, strengthening social bonds supported by ministry networks. Christianity emphasizes that these interactions should be viewed through the lens of community and fellowship.

Due to the widespread influence of social media in popular culture, Indonesian Christians are using the platform to express Christian values and perspectives in ways that don't necessarily involve direct evangelism. Social media allows Christians in Indonesia to seamlessly blend discussions of their daily lives with their religious beliefs, enabling them to align their Christian concerns with broader societal issues. At the personal level, this integration of faith with everyday life often blurs the distinction between what is considered "religious" and "non-religious." While online platforms display a wealth of religious symbols and discussions that cross denominational and even interfaith boundaries, certain topics, particularly law and politics, remain largely avoided. This is due to a heightened awareness among Indonesian Christians about the delicate balance between personal beliefs, church, and the state. However, this study is limited by its reliance on secondary sources through a literature review, which may not fully capture the lived experiences of Christians in diverse digital contexts. Future research could incorporate empirical fieldwork, such as interviews or surveys, to explore how different generations of Christians engage with social media in relation to their faith and mission.

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