

EMERGENT COMMUNICATION MEDIA AND THEIR  
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY  
GOSPEL MINISTER IN NIGERIA

OLUKAYODE PAUL ADEWALE OLULEYE

B.A., M.A.

(Matric No.: UJ/05/NB/0022)

NBTS  
OL-q-e  
M.DIV (R.E)

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Faculty of Education

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## ABSTRACT

World development has largely been associated with advancement of technologies, especially, electronics and information communication technologies. Almost every now and then, there are lots of new grounds broken in the innovation and launching of highly improved means of communication of all sorts. This, inevitable has opened an avenue for opportunities in mass communication in the shortest possible time, and perhaps at a cheaper rate.

Based on this premise, the study examined some of these communication media that are available for a minister of the gospel in disseminating the goodnews of Christ. The particular media considered are referred to as “emergent communication media,” including the Internet, Satellite and Cable Network. Alongside, the study also looked at how effective and efficient these media are in reaching people so as to determine the likely result if used for gospel communication.

Two questionnaires were sent out in order to arrive at a conclusion for the study. One was given to the general public so as to find out the degree of their involvement in the use of these technologies; the other to pastors, to determine their exposure, attitude and use of these technologies for any purpose whatsoever. The data collected were tabulated and later analysed; the results were then interacted with.

Many of the respondents have been influenced, directly or indirectly through these media, at one time or the other. Thee respondents also agreed that these media been found to be useful tools in inculcating and introducing new cultures, education, instructions etc, in all spheres of life.

Contrary to the notion of most respondents and pastor, these communication media are not just gateways to all forms of vices and negative influence to the society. Rather, they can be great tools to impact the world with the gospel, with the assurance of conversions to the kingdom of God. Therefore, the twenty-first century gospel minister need to wake up and explore the great advantages these technologies can offer especially towards the great commission.

## Conclusion

The church has stood aloof enough. There is a task that must be accomplished and God has given us a way out of its enormosity—through technology. The church must rise and “be willing to be in every format available to reach the world for Christ” (Crosby, 2001:54). “The newly released Oxford Companion to Christian Thought echoes the bias of untold scores who think being religious means being sceptical of media technology” (*Christianity Today* 50). This has resulted in a slow and grudging response on the part of religious institutions and churches to mass media. We are no doubt in the twenty-first century, and the gospel minister’s work is not getting easier, but each day comes with a new challenge.

Consequently, numerous thoughtful and concerned theologians are of the opinion that, “there is a desperate need for religious institution to go beyond the matters of organisation ...and address themselves to genuine human needs” (Bluem, 1969:9). Another summation said, “The church has been requiring an increasingly clear and deep realisation that evangelism is its fundamental mission; and that is

cannot possibly carry out this mission without the gospel message to today's human beings in a *dynamic, attractive and convincing* way (Lee 27).

The last three adjectives become key for today's preacher, if he would make an impact on the would-be convert to Christianity. The various media made available by technology are handy tools. These are "crucial in breaking down traditionalism and affecting 'radical changes' in the psychological qualities of the masses (Wells 84)." Despite the aforementioned apathy of sceptics and luddites, it is interesting to note that the church (especially in the civilised/developed world) is seriously accepting and making the best use of what dividend of technology is available and within reach. Evangelicals have always been quick to adopt communication technologies. These have gone a long way to influence the ministry of the church.

Balmer (2001), producer of "Back to the Bible," said the age range of their largest listeners is 55 years and above (as they evolved new technology), while the second largest is between 18 and 25. He concludes, "Reaching this audience- and keeping its attention requires new strategies and it requires vaulting into new technical territories" (Balmer 54).

Communication media, with incorporated modern technology has kept and is keeping to its promise where employed, Teich, quoting Mesthene in her article "The Role of Technology in the Society" said, "Specifically, technology can lead to value change, either by 1) bringing some previously unattainable goal within the realm of choice or 2) by making some values easier to implement than heretofore, that is, by changing the costs associated with realising them (Mesthene, 1971:69)."

Indeed, the church is reaping as the following testimonies endorse. These are testimonies included in the advert placed in *Christianity Today* by an alliance of over 300 Christian ministers:

“I just accepted Jesus, right here at a computer terminal in the campus library. Thank you so much for the most vital information I have ever received!”

“I’m giving my life to the Lord from this day forever—I have many issues to work on- and I will do them daily—I thank you for giving me this opportunity through e-mail to save my soul.”

“I have been reading the Bible on the Internet and I just want whoever reads this message to know that I have found Christ, and am born again” (*Christianity Today*)

Frankly speaking, Christian churches and indeed, the twenty-first century gospel minister cannot afford to neglect the challenge and potentials in the various modern means of communication. It is highly essential, especially, at a time like this—when all sorts of information; negative, seditious, obscene and the likes are all over, “the most important ‘information’ (that Jesus has come to earth, died and resurrected to bring man back to God) ever given to man shall not be left out” (Dillistone, 1956:131).

#### Recommendations

Seeing these great opportunities before the gospel ministers, the following recommendation are given for the furtherance of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

- Ministers of the gospel should endeavour to be ICT compliant. That is, a conscious effort should be made to have knowledge of information communication technology.
- Gospel ministers and Christians generally, should intensify efforts to fully maximize the use of these emergent media of communication; if they fail, the devil will soon take it all up. After all, virtually all the respondents believed that these media are influential in what they disseminate.

- Gospel ministers should be proactive and creative. The internet and the other media considered are so versatile and give room for dynamism in use for the minister, but if the ministers are not adventurous, they will be limited in their use.
- Churches should be enlightened on the advantages of these media of communication. Thus church budget should be prepared to make provision for subscription to them.
- Individual ministers too, should make it of priority in their personal budget to make provision for them.

The time is now to catch the vision and prepare to use his twenty first century media of communication in sharing the timeless gospel with a waiting and needy world.