

AN EVALUATION OF INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY EFFECTS ON THE ANGLICAN CHURCH WORSHIP IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigates how Information Communication Technology (ICT) has impacted the Anglican Church, specifically examining its effects on communication, worship experiences, and administrative processes. The Anglican Church has progressively adopted various ICT tools, such as social media platforms, websites, and mobile applications, to enhance communication with its members and the wider community. These technologies have facilitated the Church in reaching a broader audience and connecting with individuals who might not have been accessible through conventional methods. ICT has also revolutionized the worship experience in many Anglican churches, where the use of projectors, screens, and online streaming has made services more accessible and inclusive. Nonetheless, there are concerns regarding ICT's potential to diminish the spiritual depth of the Church, emphasizing the necessity for cultural sensitivity in its implementation. Moreover, ICT has optimized administrative processes within the Anglican Church, enhancing efficiency in financial management, membership record-keeping, and activity coordination. This study also delves into how ICT has influenced various worship and administrative aspects, such as congregational engagement, outreach, and organizational efficiency. Despite the benefits, there are still challenges such as digital exclusion and ethical concerns that remain and need to be tackled. The research methodology for this study involved a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. Surveys were conducted among Anglican Church members in Nigeria to gather data on their use of ICT in worship and their perceptions of its impact. Additionally, interviews were conducted with church leaders and ICT experts to gain deeper insights into the topic. The data collected was analyzed using both statistical methods and thematic analysis to identify trends and patterns. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed: The Anglican Church in Nigeria should continue to integrate ICT into its worship practices, taking into consideration the cultural and contextual relevance of the technology and The church should establish ethical guidelines for the use of ICT in worship to ensure that it is used responsibly and in line with the church's values. In conclusion, while ICT has brought numerous benefits to the Anglican Church, it is imperative for the Church to utilize technology in a manner that enriches rather than detracts from its mission and values. Further research is warranted to delve deeper into these issues and formulate best practices for ICT usage in the Anglican Church.

Keywords: Information Communication Technology; Worship; Anglican Church

Introduction

Information Communication Technology (ICT) has revolutionized our daily lives, including how we work, interact, and communicate. The Anglican Church, like many other religious institutions, has been significantly impacted by ICT. Campbell and Vitullo (2016) assert that ICT has profoundly influenced how the Anglican Church carries out its mission and evangelism, connects with its members, and adapts to the evolving world. One area where ICT has had a notable impact is in communication, enabling the Church to reach a broader audience through social media, websites, and mobile apps, enhancing message dissemination and engagement with individuals who may have been inaccessible through traditional methods (Eilers, 2008).

Armstrong, Spiegel and Wimmer (2001) mentioned that many churches now use projectors and screens to display hymns, prayers, and scriptures, facilitating congregants' participation. Some churches even livestream their services online, allowing remote participation. ICT has also streamlined administrative processes for the Anglican Church, from financial management to membership record-keeping, freeing up resources for other areas of church experiences.

Despite its benefits, ICT poses challenges for the Anglican Church, including the risk of diminishing its spiritual depth by overly focusing on technology (Brakel and Chisenga 2003). Ensuring cultural sensitivity in ICT implementation is also crucial, as different cultures have varying attitudes towards technology. Hernandez (2017) further notes the risk of digital exclusion, where certain members may be left behind due to technology access limitations. ICT has profoundly transformed the Anglican Church, altering its communication, worship practices, and administrative processes. While challenges exist, the Church has an opportunity to utilize technology to advance its mission and reach a broader audience than ever before. The rise of ICT offers new methods to connect with people across distances and time, influencing social and religious dimensions of life significantly (Demy 1999). The church, referred to by the Greek word *Ekklesia*, denotes any assembly of believers. Osarumwense (2019) emphasizes the church as a covenant community responsible for edifying one another and setting the pace for utilizing technology for divine purposes. Effective information dissemination is crucial for fulfilling the church's mandate of propagating the gospel.

Before the 21st-century technology advancements, youth ministry relied heavily on the Pastor-Member relationship strategy. However, ICT has brought radical changes in the religious system. Tan, (2009) went further to alter that communication methods and facilitating vast transformation. In the past two decades, ICT adoption in contemporary church communication has grown, albeit with varying levels of adoption among countries

and church groups. This article examines ICT's impact on the Anglican Church, focusing on its influence on worship practices, congregational engagement, and administrative efficiency.

Concept of Information Communication Technology (ICT)

Dyikuk (2019) defines Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a range of technological tools and resources used to communicate, create, disseminate, store, and manage information. The tools to transmit information include the telephone, television, and radio. The previously dominant term, Information Technology (IT), is now increasingly being replaced by Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs). Silverstone (2013) also notes that ICT refers to the convergence of audiovisuals and telephone networks with computer networks through a single cabling or link system. There are economic incentives to merge telephone networks with the computer network system using a unified cabling, signal distribution, and management system. ICT encompasses any communication device, including radio, television, cell phones, computer and network hardware, satellite systems, as well as various services and appliances such as video conferencing and distance learning. ICT also includes analog technology, such as paper communication, and any mode that transmits communication. Wayback (2018) adds that ICT covers any product that stores, retrieves, manipulates, transmits, or receives information electronically in a digital form, such as personal computers, smartphones, digital television, email, or robots. The Skills Framework for the Information Age is one model for describing and managing competencies for ICT professionals for the 21st century (Martin and Priscila 2011).

Gillings (2016) notes that the phrase "information and communication technologies" has been used by academic researchers since the 1980s and became popular after being used in a report to the UK government by Dennis Stevenson, and then in the revised National Curriculum for England, Wales, and Northern Ireland in 2000. However, in 2012, the Royal Society recommended discontinuing the use of the term "ICT" in British schools due to negative connotations. Hilbert and Martin (2016) assert that from 2014, the National Curriculum has used the word computing, reflecting the addition of computer programming into the curriculum. Variations of the phrase have spread worldwide, and the United Nations has created a "United Nations Information and Communication Technologies Task Force" and an internal "Office of Information and Communications Technology" Stevenson (1997 p. 50).

Form of ICT used by the Church

1. *Projection Systems*: Used to display song lyrics, Bible verses, and multimedia presentations during worship services.

2. *Sound Systems*: Used for amplification and recording of sermons, music, and Digital Bibles and Bible Apps used for reading and studying the Bible, often with features such as highlighting, note-taking, and access to multiple translations.
4. *Church Management Software*: Used for managing church databases, membership records, finances, and communication with members.
5. *Online Streaming and Social Media*: Used to broadcast services, sermons, and events to a wider audience, as well as to engage with congregation members and the community, video Conferencing used for virtual meetings, conferences, and remote participation in worship services and Website and Online Portals used for sharing church information, resources, event schedules, and for online donations and registrations. E-books and Digital Publications is also used for distributing church literature, study materials, and newsletters in digital formats.

The positive implications of ICT on the Anglican Church

The positive implications of Information Communication Technology (ICT) on the Anglican Church have been significant, leading to several key findings:

Enhanced Communication: ICT has greatly improved the Church's ability to communicate with its members and the wider community. Platforms like social media, e-mail, websites, and mobile apps have enabled the Church to reach a larger audience and engage with individuals who may not have been accessible through traditional means.

Improved Worship Experience: ICT has enhanced the worship experience for congregants. The use of projectors and screens displaying hymns, prayers, and scriptures has made it easier for individuals to follow along and participate in services. Additionally, live streaming services online have allowed for greater accessibility and inclusivity.

Efficient Administration: ICT has streamlined administrative processes within the Anglican Church. Tasks such as managing finances, keeping track of membership records, and coordinating activities have become more efficient, freeing up resources for other aspects of ministry.

Improved Access to Information: ICT provides easy access to a wealth of information, including the Bible, theological resources, and educational materials. This enhances the study and understanding of the Scriptures and promotes lifelong learning among church members.

Wider Reach and Engagement: Through online platforms, live streaming, and social media, the church can reach a broader audience beyond its physical location. This allows for greater

engagement with individuals who may not attend traditional church services but are interested in spiritual content.

Innovative Mission Strategies: ICT enables the church to develop innovative mission strategies, such as online evangelism, virtual discipleship programs, and digital outreach campaigns. This allows the church to reach new audiences and engage with individuals who may not have access to traditional forms of ministry.

Negative Implications of Information Communication Technology (ICT)

Despite its benefits, the use of ICT in the Anglican Church has also brought about some negative impacts. *Distraction from Worship:* The use of ICT, such as smart phones and tablets, during worship services can be distracting and detract from the worship experience. Congregants may be tempted to check their devices for messages or updates instead of focusing on the sermon or prayers.

Dependency on Technology: There is a risk that the Anglican Church may become overly dependent on technology for its ministry. This dependency can be problematic if there are technical issues or if certain members of the congregation do not have access to technology.

Privacy and Security Concerns: The use of ICT raises concerns about privacy and security. Personal information stored electronically, such as membership records or financial data, may be vulnerable to hacking or unauthorized access.

Digital Divide: Not all members of the Anglican Church may have access to or be comfortable with technology. This can create a digital divide within the congregation, where some members are excluded from certain activities or communications due to their lack of technological literacy.

Ethical Concerns: The use of ICT raises ethical concerns, such as how to use social media responsibly and ethically, how to protect the privacy of individuals online, and how to address issues of cyber-bullying or online harassment.

Some theoretical framework like Multimedia Theory propounded Burton E.J. (2011) is a very good theory that is relevant to the issues related to ICT and its use in the church, this theory involves the use of various media platforms to achieve a mission. "The theory revolves around the questions of power, the nature of media influence, media-social relations, and the media as a public space" (Burton, 2011, p.50). Often, this has far-reaching impacts on society.

This theory is relevant to this research because it employs and encourages the use of different multimedia approaches—namely, print, electronic, and new media platforms—to further the mission of Christ on earth in the Nigerian pastoral context.

McLuhan (1962) founded Technological Determinism Theory (TDT) and it contends that "changes in communication technology inevitably produce profound changes in both culture and social order" (McLuhan, 1962, p.57). McLuhan maintained that the new technological age is unprecedented and that communication technology shapes the way individuals think, feel, act, and how societies organize and operate. The emergence of new media into our communication ecology is revolutionizing the way people interact in society. This means that new media, such as social media platforms, influence their users' patterns of exchanging information, opinions, and messages.

The implication of this theory is that new media technologies are setting the pace for social interaction. It increases the debate on the information society, revealing that the world is moving into an information age. People have become news-conscious, data-minded, and entertainment-focused, leading to information overload.

This theory is relevant to the issues of ICT because information overload on individuals and society may progressively become informative, inforamatory, and hyper-informed. Teleconferencing and telecommuting are just windows into the information society phenomenon. Social media sites, a form of new media, are shaping communication and social interactions, even in religious circles.

The research methodologies used in this work were both primary and secondary. Descriptive and missiological methods were also used for data analysis and to interpret people's experiences and thoughts on church worship and to understand the impact of ICT on the Anglican Church members in Nigeria and how to manage it.

Empirically, Stellen. B (2015) highlights the "Social media and the new struggles of young people against marginalization: a challenge to missional ecclesiology in Southern Africa," states that social media is becoming a prominent feature of militant groups in their public appearances and actions, as well as in the personal lives of young people. Wobodo (2020) authored a book on the Church's utility of ICTs in Nigeria amid the Covid-19 global pandemic. He raises an alarm about the issues of the coronavirus worldwide and expresses great concern for institutions and organizations globally on how to manage their businesses to suppress and mitigate the virus. The Church and other institutions responded quickly amid Covid-19 by using ICT devices and applications as a remedy to control the pandemic. Before the upsurge of Covid-19, the church had responded to innovations in various ways.

Effects of Information Communication Technology on Church Worship in the Anglican Church

Bob (2008) defines "worship experience" as the time church members spend together giving praise to God with songs, words, and actions, as well as contributing time, talent,

and treasure. ICT has significantly impacted worship experiences in the Anglican Church, enhancing the quality and accessibility of services. For example, the use of projectors and screens has enabled congregations to follow along with hymns, prayers, and scripture readings, enhancing their participation. Additionally, live streaming and recording technologies have allowed people to engage in worship remotely, expanding the reach of the church beyond its physical walls. Ezeabata (2024) observed the impact of some Anglican churches and their effect on worship experiences and the attitude of the Anglican Church in embracing ICT. This was evident on July 24, 2022, when some Anglican faithful gathered in worship at C. J Paterson International Auditorium in Onitsha for a Church program tagged Quarry Site Comp Meeting 2023. The researcher entered the well-lit building and walked into the auditorium, which was filled with rows of stadium seats occupied by people conversing with each other. The researcher and his wife were ushered to empty seats by a well-dressed woman. In front of them was a stage with media crews operating and running a live streaming on different social media handles, with more than 900,000,000 internet viewers online. Seated on the stage was a fifty-piece orchestra. Next to the stage, on either side and up high on the walls, were two large projection screens displaying messages and pictures about the church's upcoming events. The orchestra launched into a rendition of a hymn, signaling the start of the service. There was a time of welcome, distribution of printed flyers, and announcements made by one of the ministers. The lights dimmed, and the screens showed a video of a young woman giving her testimony, followed by a live camera feed showing her being prayed for by the lead curate. The worshippers clapped, some cried, and loud exclamations could be heard throughout the congregation. The screens went dark, and hymns and praise songs were sung, with the Minister of Music backed by the orchestra and a 500-person choir leading in song. After the congregational singing, a small group of singers provided special music, with each of them projected on the screens. The sound system delivered crisp, digital quality, and the vicar delivered the sermon, with his image projected fifteen feet tall from several different angles as he spoke.

The service ended with an invitation for those who wished to join the church or make a decision for Christ, resulting in many youths giving their lives to Christ and becoming members. This demonstrates the impact of ICT in Anglican worship and the need for the church to utilize ICT for effective mission and evangelism or face the danger of delegation. This study emphasizes that churches should make use of the abundant resources ICT presents to remain relevant and dynamic participants in the information revolution in our world today. Moreover, ICT has facilitated the incorporation of multimedia elements into worship, such as videos, slideshows, and interactive presentations, making services more engaging and relevant to contemporary audiences. These technologies have also enabled

Anglican churches to incorporate various styles of worship, catering to the diverse preferences of their congregations.

In Anglican worship there is an emphasis on maintaining a balance between the main aspects of worship, including Praise, Thanksgiving, Confession, Intercession, and Petition, derived from the Bible and implemented contextually. It is the Anglican view that the corporate and individual nature of worship should be handled with a proper balance and tension to comprehend the place of the individual in the community and the place of the community for the individual in the salvation history of God (Davies, 2021).

Low Spirituality amongst Christians

The impact of Information Communication Technology (ICT) on spirituality is a complex and multifaceted issue. While ICT has brought many benefits to the Christian community, such as access to religious resources, online communities, and global connectivity, there are concerns that it may also contribute to a decline in spirituality. ICT devices, such as smart phones and computers, can be sources of distraction and Fragmentation, pulling individuals away from moments of reflection, prayer, and spiritual practice. Constant connectivity can lead to fragmented attention and a lack of depth in spiritual engagement. The abundance of religious content available online can lead to superficial engagement with Religious Content, where individuals consume religious material without deep reflection or understanding. This can result in a shallow spirituality that lacks depth and meaning. ICT has conditioned people to expect instant gratification and Impatience, which can conflict with the patient and contemplative nature of spiritual practices. The pursuit of quick and easy spiritual experiences may lead to a lack of perseverance in the face of challenges or spiritual dryness.

It is important to note that the impact of ICT on spirituality is not inherently negative, and many individuals find value in using technology to enhance their spiritual lives. However, it is essential to approach ICT use mindfully, balancing its benefits with the need for personal reflection, connection with others, and adherence to spiritual values and principles.

The ICT and the Youth Worship Experience in Church

The Primate of the Church of Nigeria, The Most Rev. Dr. Henry Ndukuba in an interview on worship experience of the youth in the Anglican church, affirmed that Joshua Generation is a Youth Mission Initiative of the Church of Nigeria [Anglican Communion] using the social media to catch the youths young for Christ. It is aimed at empowering the Youth through the faithful Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, engendering pure faith, hope and love in Christ Jesus in every young person through modern technology and the traditional means of mission and evangelism.” The Primate further illuminated that Joshua

Generation International Youth Conference (JGIYC) aims at engaging the youths in an Intentional Discipleship and empowering them to unleash their great potential and creativity, natural talents and spiritual gifts in order to impact on their areas of God's call upon their lives, thereby impacting on this Generation positively. He posited that if the Church will maximize her Mission and Ministry and if our Nation will rise to her leadership role in Africa, the Young People must be mobilized unto Mission and Nation Building. Paul, E. (Personal communication 2024)

The Anglican Church's Threefold Order of Worship

Peck (1958) asserts that the Anglican Church worship experience is central to its life. Anglicans view their tradition as a broad form of public prayer, aiming to encompass diverse Christian styles within a traditional context. While The Book of Common Prayer is a significant mark of Anglican identity, it has undergone many revisions and exists in national variations. The 1662 prayer book represents the official version in the Church of England, but a 1928 version is also commonly used. In 2000, the church introduced Common Worship as a modernized collection of services and prayers, serving as an official alternative to the 1662 prayer book. Outside England, some Anglicans still use the English prayer book of 1662, but most have their own versions, increasingly in languages other than English. All forms maintain the essential, historic elements of the prayer book while incorporating local idioms. In recent years, there has been a revival of ancient liturgical styles and vestments, as well as an increased emphasis on the Eucharist as the central act of Christian worship. Experimental rites have appeared in various parts of the Anglican world. Changes in Anglican worship have led to increased variety, new roles for the laity, and a tendency toward freedom of expression while retaining the essence of the church's traditional forms (Williams, 1947). Thomas, Philip H. E. (1982) opines that the Lambeth conference states the essential beliefs of Anglicanism, naming four elements essential to the Anglican conception of Christian identity—the Bible, the Nicene Creed, Apostles' Creed, baptism and Holy Communion, and the episcopate. Wilson, W. Gilbert (1980) in a work "*the Faith of an Anglican: a companion to the Revised Catechism*" affirms that the Anglican Communion holds to the faith as expounded by the Scriptures and by the early Church Fathers. The Anglican holds close to the spirit of the Thirty-nine Articles, a doctrinal statement drawn up by the clergy of Canterbury in the mid-16th century and approved by Elizabeth I in 1571.

ICT in Church Administration

Bolu (2004) Talks In terms of church administration, that ICT has revolutionized the way Anglican churches manage their operations. Administrative tasks such as record-keeping,

communication, and financial management have been streamlined through the use of database systems, email, and accounting software. This has led to increased efficiency and accuracy in managing church resources and operations. "ICT has also facilitated better communication and collaboration among church members and leaders (Bolu 2011 p. 45)". Platforms such as social media, messaging apps, and video conferencing have enabled church communities to stay connected and engaged, fostering a sense of unity and belonging.

The Church's interest in ICT is a particular expression of church longstanding interest in the media of social communication. Uwaje (2010) Sees the media as an outcome of the historical scientific process by which humankind advances further in the discovery of the resources and values contained in the whole of creation, the Anglican Church according to Swanston, Hamish (1974) Ideas of Order in Anglicans and the renewal of theological method, often has declared her conviction that the advancement in the technological inventions in this 21st-century society has met human needs and may do more in the nearest future. ICT has been found by nowadays preachers to be a sure and reliable way of getting messages across to millions of people with a view of propagating the gospel in line with the great commission of evangelism and ministry of the Church. The Apostle Paul relied on Roman trade routes to spread the gospel through personal visits and letters. The printing press provided the average person access to the scriptures, facilitating both the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. Technologies such as radio and television have provided greater reach for evangelists (some good, some not-so-good) to spread the word of the Gospel to a greater number of people than ever before possible (Stephenson, Anthony 1956).

ICT makes communication easier by sending e-mail also made it possible for the members to receive prayer support from the ministers anywhere around the world. Martini (1994) avers that information and communication technology have been a tremendous boon to Anglican families. Some of the impacts of ICT on church administration are:

Church Data Storage: In every gathering of people, keeping records is essential. The traditional methods of using file folders, indexes, and storage units are gradually fading away. To avoid loss of membership data, the Diocese now stores every detail electronically, emphasizing the importance of technology in enhancing data storage in church ministry. This practice is implemented across all circuits in the Diocese. Companies like Hewlett Packard (HP), Pillar Data Systems, Samsung Storage Technology, and Oracle Incorporated have invested heavily in research to build complex and highly secure Cloud Data Storage facilities for multinational companies, governments, and religious institutions worldwide. Storing membership data electronically can help church leaders become more connected with their members, allowing for customized messages such as birthday/anniversary wishes, event notifications, prophetic prayers, job offers, and more, to be sent to members

and non-members alike with just a click. Data storage has been observed to aid members, including the Anglican Worship, in providing help to those in need, such as jobs, financial assistance, marital advice, educational support, housing/accommodation, and relationship guidance, by easily identifying those in need through accurate data provided by members.

Social Interactions: The impact of ICT on Church social interactions has been profound, as digital communication increasingly replaces traditional forms of interaction. ICT provides youth with autonomy from families and access to vast virtual social networks, offering more instantly gratifying but less personal interactions. All nine Circuits in the Diocese engage in social interactions with other Dioceses in the conference area and ecumenical world.

Education and Empowerment: ICT offers opportunities for youth empowerment and education, particularly in societies with limited resources. Church members in various locations can use ICT to maintain cultures, gain knowledge, develop skills, and generate income for the church administrations in the Anglican Dioceses. ICT is increasingly used to improve access to education and employment opportunities, supporting efforts to eradicate poverty within the Diocese.

Vocational Opportunities in ICT: Various vocational opportunities exist in ICT, including networking, programming, repair and maintenance, computer and phone sales, parts and accessory sales, document processing, phone calls, etc.

Recommendations

To effectively leverage ICT in worship experiences and church administration, the Anglican Church and Christendom should consider the following recommendations:

1. Church members should embrace technological advancements and explore new ways to use ICT for mission and evangelism, including social media, websites, and mobile apps.
2. Church leaders should ensure that ICT enhances, rather than detracts from, the spiritual depth of worship and ministry.
3. The policy makers who are the ICT initiatives should be culturally appropriate and respectful of local customs and traditions.
4. Pastors and elders of the church should take bold Steps to ensure that all members have access to and are comfortable with technology.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Information Communication Technology (ICT) has brought significant transformation to the Anglican Church, impacting its mission, worship practices, and administrative efficiency. ICT has enabled the Church to communicate with a broader

audience through various platforms like social media, websites, and mobile apps, enhancing engagement and dissemination of messages. Additionally, ICT has streamlined administrative processes, such as financial management and membership record-keeping.

The Anglican Church has embraced a wide range of Information Communication Technology (ICT) tools and platforms to enhance its worship practices, communication, and administrative efficiency. These include projection systems, sound systems, digital Bibles, church management software, online streaming, social media, video conferencing, websites, mobile apps, podcasts, and more. To maximize the benefits of ICT, the Anglican Church should focus on maintaining spiritual depth in worship, promoting cultural sensitivity, addressing digital exclusion, and ensuring continued monitoring and evaluation of ICT initiatives. Church leaders should also strive to balance tradition and innovation, provide training and support for ICT use, and ensure accessibility and inclusivity for all members.

By following these recommendations, the Anglican Church can harness the power of ICT to strengthen its ministry, connect with members and communities, and adapt to the changing needs of the modern world while staying true to its core values and teachings.

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