



Missiology in the Digital Wave: Reflections of Church Leaders on Ministry and Evangelism at Gereja GMIM Victory Minanga Indah

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Abstract. *This article discusses how churches are adapting their missiology in the digital age by combining traditional methods and modern technology to reach younger generations. Through a mixed-method approach and interviews with leaders of the GMIM Victory Minanga Indah church, the study found that technological advances have opened up significant opportunities for spreading the Gospel through social media and digital platforms. However, the main challenge is maintaining the depth and authenticity of the Gospel message amid the rapid and diverse flow of information. Therefore, ministry strategies must be innovative, contextual, and interactive to be more effective and relevant. The role of church leaders is crucial in managing technology while upholding theological values to ensure the mission remains rooted in Christian teachings. In conclusion, missiology in the digital age must be dynamic and adaptive, blending technology with the foundation of faith to expand the reach of ministry in an inclusive and sustainable manner.*

Keywords *Missiology, Digital Age, Digital Evangelism, Church Ministry, Young Generation, Social Media, Ministry Strategy*

1. INTRODUCTION

Missiology seeks to see the world through the lens of commitment to the Christian faith. In English, German and Dutch, the word mission is used, while in church circles, the term missie is often used, but is generally better known as zending. The term mission comes from the Latin misio which means to send or to send out. Meanwhile, in English, mission is defined as "God's work" or the responsibility that God has entrusted to us. (GP. 2012)

Missiology in the context of the church is a discipline that explores the call, task, and manner of the church's mission to spread the Good News and bear witness to Christ throughout the world. Missiology gives the church an understanding of how to translate and communicate the gospel in different languages and cultures without losing the essence of the Christian message, while also adapting to social, political and economic challenges that vary in different situations. The church is regarded as an institution sent by Jesus Christ to spread the gospel and bear witness to God's saving work, with the encouragement of the Holy Spirit in carrying out this mission.

In this digital age, advances in information and communication technology have changed many aspects of human life, including social, cultural and spiritual aspects. Cyberspace allows for interaction without the limits of place and time, thus creating new opportunities as well as challenges in the expansion of religious messages. In today's digital era, it is necessary

to adapt evangelistic strategies according to the situation and conditions of the existing congregation. Missiology in the digital age does not only focus on the use of digital media as a means to spread the gospel, but must also be able to unite the core missions of the church such as *koinonia*, *diakonia*, and *marturia*.

2. METHODS

In the preparation of this article, the author applied a mixed research approach, which is a strategy that brings together two categories of methods, namely quantitative and qualitative methods. In this mixed research framework, the researcher integrated quantitative and qualitative research to collect data, conduct analysis, and apply inference techniques with a broader and more detailed purpose during the research process and writing of this article. Qualitative data was collected through in-depth interviews with two key informants from Victory Minanga Indah GMIM Church, namely Pastor David Wenas S.Th (Ministerial Pastor) and Elder Nancy Tontona S.E (Youth Elder), Deacon Ansye Tangkearung S.Th, and Elder Pierre Lontoh S.K.M (Youth Elder). This approach allows researchers to obtain a comprehensive and in-depth picture of the implementation of God's mission and evangelism in the digital era (Iskandar, et al., 2021).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Definition of missiology

Missiology is one of the fields of theology. The term missiology comes from the English word 'mission', the Latin 'missio' which means sending, and 'mittere' which means to send. The mission itself comes from the authority that sends someone to deliver a message to others. Missiology is concerned with the mission of the one true God, the triune God, and focuses on God's salvific actions to save sinful humanity around the world while demonstrating His works. Brunner states that the existence of the church is linked to a mission, which means that the church exists because the congregation has a mission. Mission is the first and most important step in formulating a theology of mission for followers. (S. 2016)

In an interview with Pastor David, he emphasized that the understanding of God's mission in the digital era is very different from the traditional model of evangelism. In the past, evangelism required face-to-face meetings and physical travel between islands, as was done by Johann Friedrich Riedel and Johann Gottlieb Schwarz to evangelize in the land of Minahasa and its surroundings. But now, technological advances allow missions to be carried out through social media such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and TikTok. This makes it

easier to spread the Good News more widely and not limited by time and space. Social media is not only used for entertainment, but also as an effective tool in evangelization.

Service Paradigm Change in the Digital Age

Digital society can be defined as a form of interaction between individuals that takes place through the help of modern technology with the support of internet networks and various digital platforms (Malik 2021). The digital society generally consists of individuals who are actively connected to the internet, with an age range between 15 and 64 years old, which includes Generation Y (born 1981-1994) to Generation Z (born 1995-2010). These two generations, specifically millennials and Gen Z, are the most dominant groups in the digital society. In addition, Generation Z is recorded as the most social media users (Maudi 2018).

As for the differences between traditional and digital missions, traditional missions are conducted directly through physical encounters between the missionary and the local community. It uses traditional approaches such as oral preaching, lectures in places of worship, distribution of printed reading materials, and involvement in social activities in the neighborhood. Activities are limited to a specific time and place, so the scope of services is generally only local or regional. Communication patterns tend to be unidirectional with little opportunity for reciprocity, such as in the form of material delivery or distribution of leaflets. Elders and pastors as spiritual leaders are faced with the urgency to not only master technology, but also reformulate money mission strategies utilizing these digital innovations, while maintaining the essence of theology and Christian values as the basis of church mission (Slamet Wiyono et al., 2025).

The integration of Young Generation digital habits into church mission strategies opens up great opportunities to expand outreach and strengthen communities in the digital age. The COVID-19 pandemic, as highlighted by Widjaja (2022), has accelerated the adoption of technology in ministry and evangelism, forcing churches to innovate and adapt to the changes taking place. The technology that has become "accustomed" to using is impossible to retreat from; instead, technology continues to accelerate and requires churches to continue to innovate utilizing social media and other digital platforms to reach a wider audience (Widjaja, 2022).

Adaptation to the culture and situation of the community is done directly through observation and field experience. The main motivations in mission service such as obedience, love, and the glory of God, as well as personal and cultural aspects, remain highly relevant in the context of today's digital society, especially for young generation. Elder Nancy Tontona explained that digital evangelism facilitates the preaching of the gospel and diaconal ministry through social media. However, there are differences in acceptance between young

congregants who adapt quickly and older congregants who take longer. Deacon Ansye Tangkearung added that the mission of the church is now greatly influenced by technological advances, such as sermons that were previously only done in person can now be delivered through social media so as to reach congregations to the ends of the place without face-to-face.

Deacon Ansye also explained the adaptive merging of traditional and digital services, such as face-to-face worship is still maintained, but in special conditions such as the COVID-19 pandemic, video call technology and live streaming are used to serve congregations who are not physically present. Then Elder Pierre Lontoh emphasized the significant changes in evangelism in the digital era with the use of YouTube, TikTok, podcasts, and other social media. At GMIM Victory, the youth plan to develop interactive spiritual content on YouTube and share the word via WhatsApp. All digital media is considered an effective means of evangelization.

In order for the ministry to truly touch the hearts of this generation, there are several important things that need to be considered. First, there needs to be a deep understanding of the characteristics of the younger generation. This generation is very familiar with the development of technology and the internet, so they are used to accessing information quickly and relying on social media in their daily lives. However, this great openness to information also makes them more susceptible to fake news or misleading information.

Secondly, ministry strategies for this generation must be innovative, contextual, and interactive. An example could be through the production of Christian-themed digital content that is interesting, communicative, and easy to digest. In addition, utilizing social media to reach them and providing an open online discussion space is also an effective step (Anjani and Irwansyah 2020) .

Third, God's love must be manifested in the form of concrete actions, for example through social activities and humanitarian assistance for those who are affected or deprived. In addition, involvement in environmental issues and the improvement of people's quality of life also demonstrate relevant testimonies of faith.

Fourth, services to young generations must take into account cultural diversity and social dynamics. This requires flexibility, adaptability, and sensitivity in responding to their needs and expectations.

Fifth, a strong foundation of faith is needed in carrying out missions in this digital era. Personal integrity and exemplary speech and action will be a living testimony. Thus, young generation can feel the presence of Christ through authentic and relevant ministry in their lives.

Pastor David and Elder Nancy agreed that digitalization is not just an additional tool, but a new paradigm that requires churches to adapt and formulate relevant and effective mission strategies in order to continue to reach the younger generation who live in a digital world. This is in line with the findings of Purnomo and Sanjaya (2024) who emphasized that churches must adopt digital technology to maintain relevance and expand mission outreach.

The Challenge of Reaching the Young Generation

The younger generation is the main group that the church's digital mission focuses on. They have grown up in a digital environment full of screens, internet, and social media so that the way they receive and process information is different from previous generations (IAKNPKY, 2023). Elders and pastors recognize that technology is often more attractive to the younger generation than conventional theological teachings. Therefore, mission strategies should be designed with appropriate language and media, such as visual content that is short, interactive, and easily accessible through popular platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube (Nggebu, 2023; van den Berg, 2021). However, this poses its own challenges, namely how to deliver a deep and authentic gospel message without losing its spiritual essence amidst fast-paced and easily distracted content.

Pastor David realizes the challenges that arise due to the phenomenon of congregants who prefer to follow sermons online rather than physically attending church. He sees this not as something negative, but rather as a challenge as well as an opportunity that the church must face in order to remain relevant to the times. Elder Nancy added that the younger generation prefers visual and digital media, so evangelism strategies must be tailored to their characteristics so that the gospel message can be received effectively and attractively. Elder Nancy and Elder Pierre observed that older people tend to be more conservative and have not fully accepted digital evangelism, so churches need to understand their cultural background without judgment.

Balance between Theological Integrity and Digital Innovation

The church leaders emphasized that it is important not to just follow technology trends. Digital innovation should always be linked to the spiritual values underlying the church's mission. The main challenge is how to maintain a balance between the adoption of modern technology and maintaining theological integrity so that the Gospel message remains authentic and clear (Hutabarat, 2023). Pastor David and Elder Nancy agree that digital innovation must remain rooted in Christian values and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19). The application of technology, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), in the mission of the church must remain in line with biblical principles, so that digital innovation does not sacrifice the essence of theology and Christian values on which the church's mission is based

(Zendrato, 2024).

This reflection shows that missiology in the digital age must be dynamic and responsive to technological developments and socio-cultural changes. The church must develop a missiological framework that not only maintains traditional values, but is also able to strategically utilize digital technology to expand the reach and impact of ministry (Simon, 2022). This approach should also take into account aspects of digital ethics, such as content moderation and freedom of speech, as well as the development of healthy faith communities online (Thacker, 2023).

Digital Mission Services as Opportunities and Obstacles

Digital missions opens up great opportunities for churches to reach previously hard to reach audiences, including remote areas and physically underserved communities (JKM, 2023). However, obstacles also arise, such as resistance from some congregants who are less tech-savvy, limited human resources capable of managing technology, and the risk of shallow and less meaningful messaging (IAKNPKY, 2023). Pastor David and Elder Nancy emphasized the need for training and capacity building of human resources in the church so that digital ministry can run effectively and sustainably. In addition, churches need to develop quality, relevant, and contextualized content so that the gospel message can be well received by the digital audience.

Ministry and Evangelism Strategies in the Digital Age

Strategic Approach to Mission Service through Communication. Communication has a very important role in human social life. This process includes two main interrelated stages, namely encoding and decoding. Encoding is the process in which an idea or idea is conveyed through certain symbols, while decoding is the process of understanding these symbols and interpreting them back as ideas (Harianto 2012) .

Elder Nancy explained the strategy of getting young people involved in digital evangelism mission with three main steps: first, ensuring personal knowledge and acceptance of the Lord Jesus as the foundation of faith; second, approaching using digital media that young people like; third, providing clear education on the importance of digital evangelism.

Pastor David added that social media should be utilized wisely, not only for entertainment, but also as a means of spreading the good news widely and easily accessible at any time. The strategy of ministry to the younger generation must be innovative, contextual, and interactive, for example by producing digital content with Christian themes that are interesting, communicative, and easy to digest. This approach should also take into account cultural diversity and social dynamics so that the ministry can authentically touch the hearts of the younger generation.

In the view of the Christian faith, communication has four main dimensions. First, a communication relationship exists between God and Christians. Second, God also conveys His message to unbelievers through the books of the Old and New Testaments. Third, believers build each other up through communication with fellow Christians in order to strengthen their faith and make self-corrections. Fourth, Christians are called to deliver the good news and truth of God's word to those who do not know Christ (Harianto 2012) . Technological advances also have a significant impact on the way humans communicate. Interactions that were once active now tend to turn into more passive (Zis, Effendi, and Roem 2021) .

As technology develops, Christian communication needs to adjust itself to remain relevant in a digital society. Some crucial things that must be considered include: integrating digital media in the delivery of the message; Christian faith communication needs to utilize digital means as a medium to convey the truth about God to the wider community. The basic principle remains firm, God is the initiator of communication with humans, salvation is only through Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit also works in the communication process. Delivering information in an efficient and accessible format; in the midst of a digital culture that prioritizes speed and practicality, spiritual messages need to be delivered in a style that is concise, attractive, and easily understood by digital audiences.

Then apply the right strategy according to the characteristics of the digital society; the digital generation has different tendencies from previous generations, such as being critical of authority and having wide access to information. Therefore, communication strategies must be adjusted so that spiritual messages can be received effectively. Maintain the integrity of Christian communication values; although the delivery method changes with the times, the basic values in Christian communication must be consistently maintained, namely God as the source of communication, salvation through Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit in the communication process.

Furthermore, involving the digital community in the ministry of God's word; in the digital era, creative people utilize technology not only to seek financial income, but also to fulfill various needs of life. Coaching in this context aims to produce capable and self-reliant individuals who are able to pass on the teachings they have received with responsibility.

In the era of digital society, the church needs to transform into a relevant and adaptive platform for mission services. Flexibility is key for Christian influencers in reaching out to the younger generation, while still maintaining the integrity of the gospel and the power of God's Word. Not only church leaders such as pastors or shepherds who are in charge of delivering the Word, but all believers also need to be given space, nurtured through Bible-

based programs, and supported by a strong system. (Gultom, J. M. P., & Sophia 2022)

Young people who have grown up in a digital world are more easily reached through social media and technology. Mission ministries can utilize digital platforms to establish communication, spread messages, and build meaningful relationships. The use of straightforward, simple, and easy-to-understand language is also an important aspect in delivering messages to be better received by this generation (Zis et al., 2021).

Creative and Trend-Responsive Ministry; digital events such as webinars, live broadcasts, and teaching videos can be an effective means of missions ministry, especially for those who are familiar with online formats. In addition, keeping up with current trends and issues among the younger generation can help deliver spiritual messages in a relevant and engaging approach.

Elder Pierre added that young people can channel their hobbies and creativity such as graphic design and short videos as part of the evangelization ministry. GMIM Victory also provides a "Youth Cafe" as a space for entertainment and social gatherings to attract young people, despite challenges from parents.

Church Leaders' Reflections on Mission in the Digital Age

In today's digital age, effective Christian leadership in the digital age requires a strong understanding of the ethical use of technology as well as good communication skills. The reflections of church leaders underscore that contemporary missiology must be dynamic and responsive to technological developments and socio-cultural changes. The church must be able to develop a missiological framework that not only maintains traditional values, but is also able to strategically utilize digital technology to expand the reach and impact of ministry (Thronos, 2024). Church leaders are required to utilize social media wisely, by ensuring that every activity or message shared can have a positive influence on the growth of the congregation's faith.

In addition, Christian leaders are also expected to display an honest and open leadership style through digital platforms. This includes matching their digital identity with the principles and values of Christianity (Peltier 2021) . Church leaders in the digital realm must still be rooted in the core principles of the Christian faith. However, a Church leader does not only fulfill a general leadership role, but shows deep responsibility in accordance with his/her faith calling (Prabowo 2020) .

Church leaders emphasized the importance of maintaining a balance between traditional missiological values and digital technological innovations. Digital missions must not sacrifice the depth of faith and discipleship at the core of the church's ministry. Instead, technology should be a tool that strengthens and expands the reach of ministry, not replace the spiritual

essence (Bolung, 2023). This approach requires the church to conduct deep theological reflection so that every digital innovation remains rooted in solid missiological principles and in accordance with the call of *Missio Dei*, namely God's inclusive and global mission (Nggebu, 2023).

In the context of this study, church leaders need to be careful not to misuse social media for personal gain or to strengthen their own position and authority. Christian leaders need to be careful in building their personal image in the digital world, ensuring that their online presence remains in line with Christian values and ethical principles. This includes presenting themselves in a wise and humble manner, in line with God's will and plan (Dwikoryanto and Arifianto 2023) .

Therefore, Christian leaders need to realize that social media activity is part of their missionary responsibilities and spiritual formation of the congregation. They are required to strike a balance between engagement in the digital world and commitment to ethical values and authenticity of faith. This includes understanding that social media does not only serve as a tool for information dissemination, but also as a platform for transforming lives, proclaiming the gospel, and shepherding people more broadly. Thus, it is important for leaders to have honest character, spiritual sensitivity, and digital savvy to manage social media appropriately.

Every piece of content shared should reinforce faith, reflect the love of Christ, and be able to reach different age groups and backgrounds with context-appropriate language. In addition, the warm, polite and responsive way of interacting in the digital space reflects a leadership style that serves, not just directs.

The church must maintain consistency in the delivery of the gospel message and ensure that any digital innovations adopted remain aligned with the larger theological mission. A personalized and contextual pastoral approach remains the main foundation in digital ministry so that the congregation does not only become consumers of content, but also actively involved in the life of faith.

4. CONCLUSION

Missiology in the digital age requires the church to adapt its ministry strategies by leveraging technology without compromising theological values. Integrating traditional and digital methods enables broader evangelism, particularly reaching young generations who are familiar with social media. The main challenge is maintaining the depth of the Gospel message amid a fast-paced information culture. Therefore, ministry strategies must be innovative, contextual, and interactive to remain relevant and effective. The role of church

leaders is crucial in managing technology while upholding theological integrity as wise examples. Thus, technology becomes a tool to strengthen the church's mission without sacrificing its spiritual essence, ensuring the mission remains rooted in the inclusive and universal call of *Missio Dei*.

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