

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**Online self-presentation of religious organisations- A study of two selected
Pentecostal Churches in Ghana**



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MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

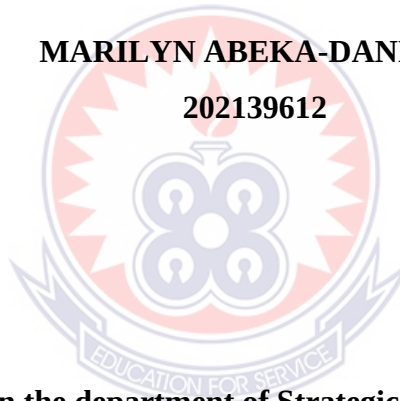
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**ONLINE SELF-PRESENTATION OF RELIGIOUS ORGANISATIONS: A
STUDY OF SELECTED PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES IN GHANA**

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**A thesis in the department of Strategic Communication,
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**in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of degree of
Master of Philosophy
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in the University of Education, Winneba**

OCTOBER, 2024

DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, **Marilyn Abeka-Daniels**, declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my original work and has not been submitted, either in part or whole for another degree elsewhere.

SIGNATURE:.....

DATE:.....

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

NAME OF SUPERVISOR: Prof. Mavis Amo-Mensah

SIGNATURE:.....

DATE:.....

DEDICATION

The work is dedicated to my ever-supportive husband, Rev. Dr. Ebo Abeka-Daniels and my Children: Michael, Awura Abena and Joojo Abeka-Daniels. Thank you for cheering me on when the going got tough. God richly bless you all!



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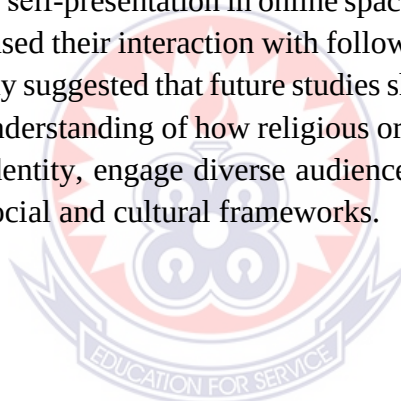
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ABSTRACT

This study investigates self-presentation strategies of two prominent Pentecostal churches in Ghana, The Church of Pentecost (COP) and The Assemblies of God Church (AG) on Facebook. Employing self-presentation theory, the research sought to uncover how these churches used social media to project their religious identity and the motivations behind their online portrayals. Through qualitative content analysis and interviews with social media administrators, the research identified key themes such as evangelism, leadership, altruism, and social influence, as underpinnings of the selected churches' self-presentation strategies. The findings also revealed that both churches actively engage in promoting themselves as evangelistic consortia, leadership-centric entities, and socially influential organisations. By exploring these churches' strategic use of social media to enhance visibility, manage reputation, and establish thought leadership, this research contributes to the discourse on religious identity management and public relations in the digital era. The findings highlighted that these churches use Facebook to reinforce their organisational values, engage audiences, and adapt to contemporary communication trends, thereby filling a gap in literature on African religious organisations' self-presentation in online spaces. The study recommended that the two churches increased their interaction with followers as well as refine their use of visual content. The study suggested that future studies should include other social media platforms to broaden understanding of how religious organisations in Ghana use digital platforms to manage identity, engage diverse audiences, and reinforce their influence within contemporary social and cultural frameworks.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The significance and acceptance of social media have seen tremendous growth over recent years, providing capacity for the masses in sharing information and enhancing the way organisations structure their dealings around target audiences (Dawson, 2018; Parveen, Jafar & Ainin, 2017; Rasmussen, 2017). According to Schlagwein and Hu (2017), human institutions have become fully aware of the diverse impact of social media and are strategically incorporating its use into their communication to remain relevant in contemporary society (Faroudi, 2015). According to Al-Mansoury and Sandén (2021), the user-generated content and the participatory networking nature of social media have relatively triggered the widespread acceptance of these media across the globe.

In some jurisdictions, governmental agencies and public service utility companies have been mandated to create social media accounts and maintain an active online presence (Parveen et al., 2017). This clearly suggests that the incorporation of social media into organisational communication has become crucial in fostering organisational contemporariness, building relationships with relevant or target audiences and consequently communicating the organisation's identity.

From the foregoing scholarly positions, it is obvious that social media as a communication tool have invariably affected every fabric of human endeavour and have impacted the different dimensions of organisational communication. For instance, Al-Mansoury and Sandén (2021) opined that social media have influenced organisations' internal communication, working relationships, organisations' relationships with

external audiences, business models, conversations with consumers, and organisational reputation among others.

According to Kimmons (2020), religious organisations like churches also rely on the significant impact of social media to remain in constant connection with their audiences on one hand, and win new converts on the other hand. Although some scholars suggest that the advent of social media could pose adversarial implications to religion (Kgatle, 2018; Zviadadze, 2014), others have also indicated that the positive impact of technology on religion outweighs the negative impact (Matobobo & Bankole, 2021; Nwachukwu, 2019). Kgatle (2018), also asserts that “technology can enhance religious practices through the expansion and creation of religious communities” (p.1). Matobobo and Bankole (2021) corroborate Kgatle’s (2018) assertion and points out that the traditional form of expressing religiosity through church attendance and the performance of rituals has also been extended to the new media world through preaching and posting scriptural texts on social media platforms.

In recent years, several church ministries, worship groups, religious non-profit organisations, clergies, and churches have characteristically maintained active social media presence on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter among others (Ogunsola & Oluyemi, 2019; Kgatle, 2018). These religious groups routinely update their pages with verses, sermons and other scriptural literature in order to represent what they stand for as an organisation (Campbell, 2017; Nwachukwu, 2019). For instance, Campbell (2017) advanced the argument that the advent of the internet and its popularity has come to boost the objective of Christianity, which is the proclamation of the gospel.

According to scholars, social media particularly offers the church a huge opportunity to remain significant and grow in this age (Kgatle, 2018; Nwachukwu, 2019).

Arguably, the use of social media by individuals and entities is a way of constructing, expressing and legitimising an identity or set of identities through strategic self-presentation (Candrasari, 2021; Hernández-Serrano, Jones, Renés-Arellano, & Ortuño, 2022). According to Di Lauro, Tursunbayeva, Antonelli, and Martinez (2021) social media users creatively present images and text on their sites that align with the desired identities they want to be associated with.

The concept of self-presentation on social media, both for individuals and organisations, has been widely discussed in scholarly literature (Mahmud & Wong, 2021; Russmann & Svensson, 2016). It is argued that individuals and organisations aim to shape others' perceptions of them in social settings, including online environments such as social media (Fullwood, 2018). Additionally, it has been acknowledged that social media offers organisations an opportunity to present themselves and showcase characteristics and traits they believe their audiences will resonate with (Terrell & Kwok, 2011). While much research has focused on individuals' self-presentation, there is a growing body of literature exploring how organisations engage in self-presentation on social media (Giplin, 2010; Greer & Ferguson, 2017). However, the scholarly investigation of organisational online self-presentation is still an area that requires further exploration.

Flowing from the foregoing discussions and arguments, this study investigates the ways in which some selected Pentecostal denominations in Ghana, specifically the Church of Pentecost and the Assemblies of God Church, engage in self-presentation on social media, particularly, Facebook. The selected denominations are identified as the foremost Pentecostal Churches to be established in the country (Omenyo, 2006; White,

2019), with others suggesting that since the first half to the 20th century, The Church of Pentecost and the Assemblies of God Church have remained the two most dominant Pentecostal denominations in Ghana (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2019).

1.2 Overview of the Assemblies of God Church, Ghana

The Assemblies of God Church Ghana is one of the earliest and most influential Pentecostal denominations in the country, playing a significant role in the development of Pentecostalism in Ghana (Ayikwei, 2020; Kachim, 2023). The Assemblies of God movement formally began in the United States in the late 1800s in Kansas, originally as a Bible School with the main objectives of evangelism, missions, and church planting (Frimpong-Manso, 2014). The movement made its way to Ghana in 1931, during the era of the Gold Coast, through the efforts of American missionaries Reverend Lloyd and Margaret Shirer. These missionaries were part of the Assemblies of God World Missions and laid the foundation for what would become a rapidly expanding Christian denomination in Ghana (Frimpong-Manso, 2014).

Since its establishment in Ghana, the Assemblies of God Church has remained committed to its founding objectives of evangelism, missions, and church planting. The church's proactive approach to spreading Pentecostalism in Ghana has included significant contributions to the socio-economic development of the country, such as the establishment of schools, hospitals, and other social services that benefit Ghanaians (Anim, 2020).

The Assemblies of God Church Ghana was also among the first Pentecostal denominations in the country to leverage media for outreach. Wilson-Marfo (2001) noted that the church started a radio show called 'Bible Time' on the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (G.B.C.), marking one of the earliest examples of media

outreach by a religious organization in Ghana. Additionally, the church published the first version of its magazine, 'Ghana Evangel,' in 1959 (Frimpong-Manso, 2014; Wilson-Marfo, 2001).

Today, the Assemblies of God Church Ghana boasts a large and diverse membership, with hundreds of congregations across the country. As part of the worldwide Assemblies of God fellowship, the church maintains strong ties with global Pentecostal movements while contextualising its ministry to meet the unique needs of Ghanaian society (Kachim, 2023). Known for its vibrant worship services, extensive missionary activities, and commitment to education and social welfare, the church continues to be a significant force in Ghana's religious landscape, influencing both the spiritual life of its members and contributing to the broader socio-cultural and economic fabric of the nation (Kachim, 2023). The leadership of the church, headed by a General Superintendent, ensures that the denomination remains true to its founding principles while adapting to contemporary challenges and opportunities (Frimpong-Manso, 2014).

1.3 Overview of the Church of Pentecost

The Church of Pentecost is one of the most prominent and influential Pentecostal denominations in Ghana and across the globe (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2015; Daswani, 2015). The Church of Pentecost, however, broke out from the Apostolic Church due to doctrinal differences that arose between its founder, James McKeown, and the Apostolic Church of the United Kingdom (Onyinah, 2020). James McKeown, a British missionary sent by the Apostolic Church, arrived in the Gold Coast (now Ghana) in 1937 to lead the Apostolic mission. However, by 1953, McKeown had encountered significant doctrinal disagreements with the Apostolic Church leadership in the United Kingdom, particularly regarding issues such as faith healing and the use of medicine

(Onyinah, 2020). These differences led to a schism, with McKeown and his followers breaking away to form what would later become the Church of Pentecost (Onyinah, 2020). Despite its turbulent beginnings, the Church of Pentecost has thrived and expanded, becoming a major force in the global Pentecostal movement.

The Church of Pentecost is often regarded by scholars as one of the most influential African Initiated Churches (AIC) in the world (Markin, 2019; Onyinah, 2020). Its influence extends beyond Ghana's borders, with a presence in over 100 countries, making it a significant player in the global Christian community. The church is recognised for its strong organisational structure, vibrant worship, and emphasis on the power of the Holy Spirit, which are key elements of Pentecostalism (Onyinah, 2020).

Throughout its history, the Church of Pentecost has been a torchbearer of Pentecostalism in Ghana, playing a pivotal role in the growth and development of the Pentecostal movement in the country (Anim, 2020). The church's commitment to evangelism, discipleship, and social outreach has made it a central part of the religious and social landscape in Ghana. It is also known for its innovative approaches to ministry, which include the establishment of various educational and healthcare institutions, as well as numerous social welfare programs.

The Church of Pentecost operates under a centralised leadership structure, headed by a chairman, who oversees the spiritual and administrative functions of the church. This strong leadership has contributed to the church's stability and growth over the decades, allowing it to maintain its doctrinal integrity while expanding its influence both locally and internationally (Markin, 2019; Onyinah, 2020; Anim, 2020).

1.4 Statement of Problem

In scholarly literature, majority of research conducted on self-presentation have focused on how humans, as social actors, endeavour to carve and maintain convenient impressions of themselves based on self-selected goals (Ingold, Kleinmann, König & Melchers, 2015; Tyler, 2012; Whillans, Yoon & Donnelly, 2022). Although self-presentation was conceptualised by Goffman (1959), there is a vast and increasing body of knowledge interrogating this phenomenon in variety of social contexts (Mahmud & Wong, 2021; Pratiwi & Otoluwa, 2018; Smeding, et al., 2015). Smeding et al. (2015), for instance, discussed how motivation to excel academically becomes a self-presentation tool for Swiss high school students. Ingold et al. (2015) investigated self-presentation by prospective job-seekers during interviews and their performance after being hired. Kang, DeCelles, Tilcsik and Jun (2016) also examined race as a self-presentation tool for developing résumés. Sezer, Gino and Norton (2018), discussed how individuals employ humblebragging as a self-presentation strategy. Pratiwi and Otoluwa (2018) researched into self-presentation and compulsive buying. On their part, Dupree and Fiske (2018) conducted a study in America to interrogate self-presentation by politicians in interracial settings; Whillans et al. (2022) examined self-presentation in light of adjusting to meet deadlines in a workplace setting.

Within the Ghanaian context, there have been numerous studies on self-presentation. Bonsu (2007) interrogated how the people of Kumasi rely on obituaries of their dead relatives to project the image of the dead, and promote family image. Sandal et al. (2014) also studied self-presentation tactics employed in job interviews; Hammond (2021) employed self-presentation to interrogate how political figures concede defeat in their concessionary speeches.

Arguments have been made that, organisations are also social actors who engage in strategic self-presentation in order to carve favourable images of themselves (Gilpin, 2008; Highhouse, 2009). A review of literature on self-presentation also indicate that evidential scholarly attention has been given to organisations' employment of self-presentation. Gilpin (2008), for instance, explored how public relations professionals rely on press releases as a tool for organisational self-presentation. Highhouse et al. (2009) discussed the impact of organisational self-presentation on the reputation of organisations. Pletikosa and Michaleles (2013) also looked at how business brands employ self-presentation for marketing purposes; Stratulat (2019) focused on how self-presentation is employed by organisations during period of crisis.

Scholarly examination of self-presentation has also been extended to the social media space, owing to the fact that these media platforms have become an inhabitant for many individuals and entities (Nayaran, 2013). Research has established social media platforms as environments that have similarities or semblance with physical places and easily accommodate any activity that takes place in the physical world (Shen, 2021; Yang, 2022). Although self-presentation has initially been interrogated from the face-to-face perspective, growing body of research has indicated that this phenomenon has become more and more deliberate and tactical on social media than in the physical world (Chambers, 2013; Stanculescu, 2011).

Essentially, majority of the extant research on self-presentation has explored this phenomenon within the social media sphere. For instance, Ranzini, Lutz and Gouderjaan (2016) examined self-presentation by match seekers on dating sites like tinder; Kayne and Lee-McFadden (2017) explored inconsistencies between online and offline self-presentation. Amaral (2018) studied the discrepancies in self-presentation

across different social media platforms. Kalalo (2018) looked at how online self-presentation by university students could trigger addiction to social media usage. Strimbu and O'Connell (2019) interrogated the relationship between online self-presentation and the self-concept of adults.

Steains (2019) examined how self-presentation largely influence the creation of Instagram posts; Bij de Vaate et al. (2020), however, discussed the impact of online self-presentation on well-being and body image. Mahmud and Wong (2021) examined how self-presentation efforts are made to establish and manage online identities; Yorisa et al. (2021) investigated how university students relied on Instagram for self-presentation purposes. Yang and Yin (2021) explored self-presentation strategies employed online by Chinese travellers in the United States of America. Veliz (2022) studied how social media users engage in strategic self-presentation whilst enforcing privacy whereas Kondakciu, Veletsianos and Woodward (2022) discussed the moderating role of self-presentation in forming gender identities among millennials on Facebook and Instagram. Tian et al. (2022) investigated how self-presentation on social media contribute to life satisfaction among college students.

In recent times, organisations are increasingly relying on social media tools to connect with target publics and to consequently project their self-selected identities (Cudjoe & Amo-Mensah, 2021). This has attracted quite a considerable volume of scholarly attention as researchers seek to understand the role and relationship between social media and the realisation of organisational objectives (Al-Mansoury et al. 2021; Parveen et al. 2015; Tajudeen, Jafaar & Ainin, 2018).

As indicated earlier, self-presentational tendencies are also exhibited by organisations. Available studies have suggested that contemporary organisations are actively engaged

in self-presentation in the online space, particularly on social media platforms. Gilpin (2010) examined the reliance of varied online tools for organisational self-presentation purposes. Terrell and Kwok (2011) looked at the impression management tactics employed by hospitality companies in presenting themselves on Facebook; Russmann and Svensson (2016) sought to understand motives behind self-presentational post on social media by some selected non-profit organisations; Esen and Caliskan (2018) interrogated sustainability disclosures on social media from a self-presentation perspective. Greer and Ferguson (2017) also studied the backstage and frontstage self-presentation postures among local television stations on Instagram. In a recent study, Cudjoe and Amo-Mensah (2021) examined how the Freemason fraternal organisation engages in self-presentation and motive behind the organisation's online self-presentation.

Meanwhile, Al-Mansoury and Sanden (2021) indicated that most studies conducted around social media use by organisations have largely focused on understanding the use of social media, the benefits and risks involved in using social media and the impact of these media on organisations. The aforementioned scholars report that the study of organisational identity in view of social media is still in its emerging stage and encourage further studies that will fully understand how diverse organisations build and manage their self-identities on social media.

The nexus between religious organisations and social media has been examined by a number of researchers ever since it became obvious that these organisations have been relying on these platforms for peculiar communication purposes (Badmos, 2014; Rainer 2015). Hesse (2019) looked at the implication of social media on church management and suggested that social media can be used by church management to effectively

coordinate groups and ministries within the church. Rainer (2015) also investigated how churches use social media and found that the Christian body largely used social media to communicate with members, to evangelise as well as grow membership, to raise funds and to also update members and target audiences about church activities.

A study conducted by Badmos (2014), on the impact of social media on selected churches in Nigeria discovered Facebook as the most popular social media platform among Nigerian churches, and that, churches aggressively maintained an active online presence through group accounts, and portrayal of messages of enlightenment. Lewis (2016) discussed how social media use is impacting the church; Faimu and Behrens (2016) looked at how religious groups employed peculiar linguistic strategies and religious discourses on Facebook as a tool of persuasion. Brubaker and Haigh (2017) sought to understand why Christians used Facebook for religious purposes. Kgatele (2018) studied the role of Facebook on the growth of prophetic churches in South Africa; Lee (2018) explored how and why Christian congregations in the United States use Facebook; Sircar (2020) looked how church organisations in the United Kingdom engaged with their followers on social media; On their part, Dyikuk, Egere and Maimako (2021) examined the acceptability of social media by the Catholic church of Nigeria. Hodol (2021) investigated the use of social media by churches in Norway.

In the Ghanaian context, however, varied studies have predominantly looked at how church leaders employ the use of social media (Darko-Adjei & Zewu, 2021; White, Tella & Ampofo, 2016). Whereas Darko-Adjei and Zewu (2021) examined social media usage by some selected charismatic church leaders in Ghana. White, Tella and Ampofo (2016) looked at how some preachers of Pentecostal churches in Ghana used social media.

From the foregoing, most of the studies conducted by researchers and scholars on church organisations and social media largely concentrate on the impact of social media on the church (Badmos, 2014; Lewis, 2016), the acceptability of social media by the church (Brubaker & Haigh, 2017; Kgatle, 2018) as well as the use of social media by the church (Badmos, 2014; Dyikuk, Egere & Maimako 2021).

The review of literature revealed that church organisations' social media usage has not been mostly examined from the angle of identity, image and self-presentation (Kimmons 2020; Kokkonen, 2022). In a quantitative study around religious self-identification, expression and civility by the members of Latter Days Saints on Twitter, Kimmons (2020) pointed out the scarcity of literature on identity expression by church organisations on social media. Kokkonen (2022) also revealed this in a recent study conducted on the use of social media by Finnish churches.

The present study qualitatively investigates how social media, specifically Facebook is employed by two of the earliest Pentecostal Churches in Ghana (The Church of Pentecost and The Assemblies of God Church, Ghana) for self-presentation purposes.

1.5 Research Objectives

The following objectives guide the study;

1. To explore how the selected Pentecostal churches present themselves on Facebook.
2. To examine the rationale behind the online self-presentation of the selected Pentecostal churches.

1.6 Research Questions

1. How do the selected Pentecostal churches present themselves on Facebook?

2. What are the rationales behind the online self-presentation of the selected Pentecostal churches?

1.7 Significance of Study

Scholars have largely pointed out that religion and the concept of communication are inseparable elements of human culture which ought to be given critical attention (Kgatlé, 2018; Lövheim & Campbell, 2017). Badmos (2014) indicated that the church has been seen as a phenomenon of social influence. Based on these arguments, it is crucial to understand how the church presents itself as a social actor.

This study is also a significant contribution to literature on organisational communication. While there are a multitude of studies on how organisations use social media (Di Lauro et al., 2021; Faroudi, 2015; Parveen, et al., 2017; Tajudeen, et al., 2018), the investigation of organisational identity on social media is still in its emerging stages (Al-Mansoury & Sandén, 2021). Al-Mansoury and Sandén (2021) pointed out that a lot needs to be done to understand how diverse organisations employ social media for identity expression, presentation or construction purposes. This study therefore is designed to be a significant contribution to the recent works on organisational identity and self-presentation on social media. Essentially, the literature has revealed that self-presentation has not been extended enough to capture religious groups and how they present themselves on social media. The present research critically addresses that lacuna in scholarly literature.

The present study is also a relevant addition to the rather growing discussion on the church's use of social media. Although, researchers are increasingly interrogating the church's use of social media, a lot more needs to be done from the self-presentation perspective in order to critically understand the issue. Recommendations from this

study will be found useful to the selected churches and other church organisations that are using social media to reach out to target audiences.

Meanwhile, based on Saxton and Guo's (2014) argument that public relations practitioners, and researchers concern themselves with organisations' use of social media, this study will therefore be a relevant contribution to public relations literature. Gilpin (2010) also indicated that organisational communication with external publics and stakeholders ought to be managed by the public relations outfit of the organisation through the presentation of organisational image and message. Gilpin's (2010) argument therefore makes this study and its outcome a relevant literature for the public relations industry owing to the fact that the present study examines how religious organisations engage in self-presentation in a social setting. Correspondingly, since Gilpin (2010) asserted that the preservation and expression of organisational self, especially on social media is a PR duty, findings and recommendations from this study will largely be found relevant by the PR discipline in managing organisational image and reputation through digital media.

Future researchers who wish to conduct studies around religious organisations, particularly, the church's usage of social media for identity presentation purposes will clearly find this study as an instructive literature and a good foundation for their studies.

1.8 Delimitation of Study

This study is set to understand how churches employ social media for self-presentation purposes. Particularly, the study focuses on the Assemblies of God Church Ghana and The Pentecost Church representing the oldest Pentecostal missions in the country (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2019, Omenyo & Atiemo, 2006). The study also paid particular attention to Facebook considering the fact that this platform remains the largest and

most populated social media websites (Kemp, 2023). Additionally, the selection of Facebook is justified on the basis that the two selected churches have larger following and audience-base on Facebook than any other social media. While the Church of Pentecost has approximately 803,000 followers on their official Facebook page (The Church of Pentecost, 2022), the Assemblies of God Church has over 47,000 (The Assemblies of God, 2022).

1.9 Organisation of the Study

This study has been put together into five chapters. The first chapter presents the introduction and background to the study. It discusses the groundwork for the study, the statement of the problem, the objectives of the study and the research questions. The scope, significance of the study, and contributions of the study are also captured in this chapter.

Chapter two discusses literature and scholarly publications that are relevant to the study. Theoretical knowledge that guides this study are also mentioned in this chapter. The third chapter which is the methodology outlines the research philosophy, research approach, the research design, study setting, sample size, sampling techniques, data collection, data analysis and ethical considerations. Chapter four presents and analyses the data gathered. The final chapter, which is chapter five, provides the summary, conclusions of the study and recommendations. This chapter also covers the limitations of the study and suggestions for further research.

1.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided an opening to the entire thesis as it sought to give background information on the study. Aside the background, the main problem that the research seeks to solve was also discussed. It also provided justification for the research by

enumerating the aims and objectives, key research questions that the study seeks to answer, the significance of the study, as well as the scope of the entire study.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews previous studies that are related and relevant to the present study. The review particularly focuses on self-presentation and social media, self-presentation of religious organisations, motivations for self-presentation, as well as studies on self-presentation and identity construction in Africa. In addition, the chapter discusses the theory underpinning the study and subsequently shows the relevance of these theories to the study.

2.1 Self-Presentation and Social Media

Self-presentation is an essential component of human behaviour because it primarily deals with how people portray themselves to others and manage their image in various social contexts (Fullwood, 2018). Others also refer to self-presentation as the performance of deliberate and intentional actions before specific audiences in order to shape the audiences' view and perception of the individual performer (Whillan et al., 2021). Self-presentation encapsulates both verbal and nonverbal demeanour (Leary, 2019). Essentially, self-presentation is evident through speech (spoken and written expressions) and non-speech actions.

The importance of self-presentation stems from the fact that how others see and perceive us affects our social life and the chances we have (Shen, 2021; Yang, 2022). According to Attrill-Smith (2018), the opportunities and connections we may have can be significantly impacted by how we present ourselves to others. The foregoing author also indicates that effective and strategic presenters are more likely to attain their objectives and build satisfying relationships because they are able to align their

presentations to the needs and interest of their audiences. Fullwood (2018) additionally suggested that self-presentation can invariably have an impact on our mental health and self-esteem, as the feedback of others could significantly affect how we view ourselves. Research however suggests that while some self-presentational behaviours are pre-set and purposive (and occasionally even dishonest), others happen naturally and with little to no effort (Leary, 2019).

Although self-presentation is evident in variety of social contexts and practiced by variety of social entities like organisations, initial studies around this concept concentrated on how individuals portray themselves and manage others' impressions of them in various social contexts (Goffman, 1959; Leary, 1996). That notwithstanding, studies have flourished around self-presentation from so many perspectives in contemporary times. For instance, Ingold et al. (2014) examined self-presentation based on employee interviews and their actual job performance in Switzerland. Participants were selected from banking and insurance, media and communication, health services, as well as sales and distribution. Relying on an analysis of interviews and job performance inventories, it was found that employees who employ a lot of fake self-presentation during interviews are more likely to portray some level of fake self-presentation during job performance and on their personal inventories. This finding clearly reflects the scholarly position that self-presentation and self-presenters could be deliberate and sometimes phony in some social contexts (Leary, 2019).

Another study was conducted by Pratiwi and Otoluwa (2018) to understand how self-presentation is connected to compulsive buying. The study employed the survey method and recruited 250 respondents. Multiple regression was employed as an analytical method in an effort to measure the relationship between obsessive shopping

and how shoppers present themselves. Pratiwi and Otoluwa (2018) relied on the protective and acquisitive styles of self-presentation by Arkin (1989) to examine whether actual selves or polished personas were presented during shopping. The analysis of data and findings however demonstrate that although the protective style has no discernible impact on compulsive shopping, the acquisitive style largely does. In essence, shoppers employed some level of acquisitive style of self-presentation by presenting polished identities during shopping. From the study, it could be suggested that self-presentation could relate to material possessions and that is why shoppers would portray acquisitive style of self-presentation.

Kang et al., (2016) studied how job seekers belonging to racial minority groups strategically concealed their race as a self-presentation mechanism to bypass employment discrimination. Fifty-nine (59) participants consisting of 29 blacks and 30 Asian university students who were actively searching for jobs and intern positions in a North American city were sampled for the study. Data was gathered through interviews and resume audit, and examined in view of Goffman's (1963) racial stigma and self-presentation concept. The study found that these job seekers engaged in "resume whitening" through presentation of names, presentation of experiences to get shortlisted. In essence, these racial minorities tend to use names that are typically American as well as, share experiences characteristic of white people for their applications to be considered. In some social contexts, fitting-in becomes a major concern to self-presenters, therefore they employ viable strategies to ensure that they are accepted (Leary, 2019). This situation is consistent with arguments that self-presentation could be engineered to facilitate social acceptability (Hollenbaugh, 2021).

Using the quantitative approach, Whillans et al. (2022) also conducted a regression analysis to understand the inability of employees to request for deadline extensions based on self-presentation concerns. Supported by a sample size of 901 respondents who were tasked to perform duties for a fictional publishing company, the study showed that people are less likely to request for adjustments in deadlines for fear of being regarded as incompetent. The study indicates that, employees in the quest to maintain a favourable impression, tend to work under herculean time lines which affects the quality of work output instead negotiating for a more convenient schedule which could lead to better results. This finding clearly suggests that people commonly neglect the idea of seeking for assistance especially when they feel their request could be denied or onerous on the one, they are seeking the assistance from (Bohns & Flynn, 2015). Similarly, researchers have made postulations that people may be unwilling to request for assistance because they wish to appear knowledgeable and competent in the face of pressure (Bohns, 2016; Bohns & Flynn, 2015).

As suggested earlier, self-presentation is no longer the preserve of individuals because organisations are equally involved in managing their impressions through tactful self-presentation (Cudjoe & Amo-Mensah, 2021; Greer & Ferguson, 2017). Organisational self-presentation primarily involves the way organisations portray themselves to their stakeholders, such as existing and prospective customers, investors, as well as existing and prospective employees. Self-presentation by organisations also includes the portrayal and promotion of organisational products and services, organisational values, as well images and identities (Jaworski & Buciuous, 2017). This implies that, to attain organisational goals, growth and sustainability, firms largely endeavour to present themselves in ways that align with the expectation of stakeholders and the general

public. Some studies have been conducted to interrogate organisational self-presentation in several contexts.

Jaworska and Bucious (2017) studied how some Polish organisations employed self-presentation to manage organisational image through financial reports. Based on a content analysis of selected reports, the study established that the organisations use rhetoric and choice of words that depict that the firm is being successful. The study also indicates that complex languages are also used to make readability difficult especially in situations where performance has not been favourable- this a strategy to make obscure the true representation of affairs. Essentially, business and financial reports have been identified to be a filament of strategic or positive self-presentation for highlighting organisations' success and concealing shortfalls in order to position the organisation in the best possible light. The study suggested that organisations relied on business reports as part of the strategies, they employed in building organisational credibility, image and reputation as well as increasing trust among its publics and stakeholders.

Oliveira, Azevedo and Borges (2016) drew on the impressions of management theory to interrogate how chairpersons of selected Portuguese non-financial companies manage the reputation of their organisations through 'chairman's statements'. 45 statements of chairpersons were examined based on qualitative content analysis and findings show that there was an increased level of verbosity in these statements. According to the study, glamorous grammar, technical languages and circumlocutory devices were adopted in these statements to present the firms in favourable ways. The implication of this is that language could be employed as a tactical self-presentation tool. This study's finding somewhat resonate with Jaworska and Bucious' (2017) study

where strategic wordings and language were used in business reports to project the achievements of organisations, and at the same time to conceal failures and shortcomings. These studies show that language styles, such as formal or informal, spoken communication, can convey different levels of professionalism, education, or social status. Substantially, by choosing to use particular language styles, individuals can present themselves in a particular way and create a peculiar impression on others (Gil-Lopez et al., 2021). For example, an individual who frequently uses technical jargon or specialised vocabulary may be perceived as more knowledgeable or authoritative in their field. It is therefore safe to suggest that these studies particularly give off the idea that choice of vocabulary can also reflect a self-presentation posture.

Emerging literature has also examined how organisations engage in self-presentation and identity construction from the online perspective. For instance, DePaula, Dincelli and Harrison (2018) looked at how local government institution in the United States present themselves through communication on social media. The study particularly coded 2893 Facebook posts of selected government agencies and established that majority of posts were symbolic and self-presentational exchanges. The study suggested that government agencies do not use social media solely for citizen participation and democratic transparency but also for strategic organisational self-presentation for the purposes of creating favourable image and political positioning.

Korzynski, Haenlein and Rautiainen (2021) examined how crowd-funding outfits and entrepreneurs rely on video contents for self-presentation and eliciting support. The study gathered data from a crowd funding site 'Kickstarter' and employed an artificial intelligence 'Valossa AI' in analysing the videos. Results indicated that although self-presentation strategies such as self-promotion, intimidation and self-exemplification

were prevailing aspects of crowd-funding videos, exemplification and self-promotion engendered immense crowd-funding success whereas intimidation significantly reduced the success of crowd-funding. Findings from this study support earlier research, particularly Roulin, Bangerter and Levashina (2014) asserting that self-promotion and exemplification most likely enhances one's chances of receiving funding since it allows start-up firms to demonstrate their skills and competencies.

Another study was conducted by Yang and Liu (2017) to explore how firms engaged in self-presentation based on the disclosure of their financial earnings on social media. Data for the study were drawn from the Twitter handles of the 100 companies on the Financial Times Stock Exchange (FTSE). Based on content analysis, the study showed that more positive words such as *strong*, *good*, *achieve*, and *growth* were used in the Twitter posts. It was also found that majority of the selected firms disclosed actual fiscal percentages and monetary figures that suggested that they had attained success. Visual contents such as audios and videos were also posted to highlight financial breakthroughs. The authors indicate that uploading visual content on Twitter was an accentuation technique to draw the attention of readers. The study as well indicate that the use of hashtags was an evident self-presentation technique to draw traction to posts.

Again, findings reveal that firms deliberately exclude information characteristic of low earnings in their Twitter engagements. Yang and Liu (2017) concludes that although organisations employ both assertive and defensive self-presentation strategies, the assertive position was more dominant than the defensive. Essentially, defensive self-presentation is employed to defend one's identity especially when that identity has been doubted or questioned, whereas assertive self-presentation is employed to carve and entrench an identity in the eyes of selected audiences (Yang & Liu, 2017).

In a related study, Esen and Caliskan (2018) attempted to understand sustainability disclosures of companies on social media via the lens of the self-presentation and impression management theory. Corporate social media accounts of selected Turkish companies were analysed. The study established that in order to be perceived as successful, and consequently remain active in business, the selected firms employ heightened levels of assertive and defensive self-presentation techniques. According to Esen and Calistan (2018), these firms engage in strategic self-presentation by tactically regulating the favourable and unfavourable messages and contents they offer their publics. Evidence gathered from this study show that some organisations have the viewpoint that for sustainability disclosure to be successful, it must be hinged on some level of strategic self-presentation.

Stratulat (2019) in his study examined how self-presentation is employed during crisis communication in the organisational context. The study employed the qualitative content analysis to examine the reports of the Volkswagen Company in light of their emission scandal. Particularly, the study analysed the firm's reports before the emission scandal (2014) to understand how the organisation was projected, and how reports were again used to negotiate the firm's reputation after the scandal in 2015-2016. Findings show that the organisation's reputation was negatively affected owing to the scandal and in order for it to re-position itself in the car manufacturing market, self-presentation strategies and tactics were consciously deployed. Stratulat (2019) indicated that Volkswagen's reports after the scandal, encapsulated considerable level of self-presentation strategies such as apology, redefinition of events, ingratiation, competence enhancements and exemplification. From the study, it could be suggested that these self-presentational approaches were adopted to salvage the firm's dwindling reputation and manage public impression. The sustainability of an organisation is contingent

largely on its credibility therefore it is crucial to ensure that measures are taken to repair issues that threaten the reputation and growth of the organisation.

Greer and Ferguson (2017) studied the front stage and back stage self-presentation posturing of selected television networks in their engagement on Instagram. The study particularly drew data from Instagram pages of selected English-language local television stations in the United States who were affiliated to ABC, CBS, NBC and Fox channels to examine how corporate image is crafted based on organisational self-presentation. Relying on Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical approach of self-presentation, the study defined and coded frontstage as Instagram posts that reflected news and community, and backstage as behind-the-scene, station promotion, lifestyle and entertainment-related posts. The study further analysed engagements such as likes and comments of audiences of the page to understand which aspect of the organisations was more appealing to them. Findings show that the selected organisations projected their frontstage more than the backstage. It was also revealed that audiences formed and demonstrated greater affinity towards their frontstage presentation. In essence, although the organisations projected some level of idealised selves, their audiences preferred the real selves of these news outlets. From this study, it is somewhat clear that in spite of the organisations' attempt to balance their self-presentation between the real-self and ideal-self, they paid much attention to their news personality. This is so because based on the analysed 4390 post, the news aspect of their presentation was dominant. From the findings, 60% of posts were on news whereas the lifestyle aspect was 40%.

Relying on the qualitative content analysis and Goffman's (1959) self-presentation theory, Cudjoe and Amo-Mensah (2021) examined how the Freemason fraternal organisation engages in self-presentation on Facebook. Data was gathered from the

United Grand Lodge of England's (UGLE) Facebook page. Findings show that despite the popular perception of the organisation as a clandestine group (Snoek & Bogdan, 2014), the organisation relied on photos and written texts to portray itself as an altruistic society made up of good men who are focused on making positive impacts on their societies. It was also found that the organisation presented itself as a philosophical institution made up of prominent members of the society. From Cudjoe and Amo-Mensah's (2021) study, it is evident that strategic self-presentation is being used by the UGLE to rewrite the long-standing negative perceptions that a lot of people have held about Freemasonry.

The review of empirical literature so far gives credence to the fact that self-presentation occurs in a variety of milieus and social contexts. The review suggests although individuals are actively engaging in self-presentation in both offline spaces and online environments, there is a heightened level of self-presentation from individuals in professional and organisational settings. In effect, individuals rely on variety of strategies to ensure that their self-presentation is in consonance with the demands of a job they are seeking (Kang et al., 2016), or the professional requirements of the position they have occupied (Whillans et al., 2022).

The review also points out that different types of organisations, regardless of their missions and objectives, engage in deliberate and strategic self-presentation. Based on the review of previous studies, it can be suggested that self-presentation is not limited to profit-oriented organisations. In essence, non-profits and media institutions also engage in self-presentation (Cudjoe & Amo-Mensah, 2021; Greer & Ferguson, 2017). The empirical pieces of evidence additionally make it obvious that new media platforms such as social media and corporate websites are the new-sprung avenues that

organisations are actively relying on for their self-presentation propensities (Yang & Liu, 2017). To conclude, in organisational self-presentation, a variety of social and personal identities are invoked based on the organisation's desired social, financial and sustainability goals.

2.2 Self-Presentation of Religious Organisation

As discussed in the previous section, the concept of self-presentation traverses every aspect of human and organisational communication. Research has suggested that organisations invariably put in efforts to maintain favourable impressions on existing and target audiences in order to attain appreciable levels of sustainability and growth (Yang & Liu, 2017). Aside secular for-profit and non-profit organisations, religious groups are also actors in the self-presentation discourse. According to EI Damanhoury and Winkler (2018), religious organisations actively employ various media to project their identities, especially when they wish to promote their movement. For instance, Macnair and Frank (2017) postulated that the Islamic State, a militant Islamic organisation could be listed as an organisation that engages in self-presentation relying on various media tools.

Nanninga (2018) suggested that although many religious jihadi organisations are tactical in the use of media networks for the purposes of recruiting, presenting their identities and values, the Islamic State's approach to media use is unparalleled considering how wide-reaching and strategic their presentation has been in respect of their media use. Churches have also been tactical in their media use (Badmos, 2014). Essentially, churches are particularly concerned about their reputation, and are constantly looking for ways to expand their reach and numerical strengths hence the active and strategic presentation evident in their media use (Muchuki & Kiriri, 2019).

Using Goffman's (1959) theory of self-presentation, González-Justiniano (2019) explored how Christian prayer groups present themselves during public prayers. Based on the qualitative approach, and relying on interviews and observations, the study suggested that there were inconsistencies between prayers that were done in private and those done in public. According to the study, public prayers were more beautified than the private ones which clearly suggest that prayer performance could be tactical based on the context. Findings from this study show that religious practices could be a deliberate and calculated performance by some individuals, especially when they are before audiences.

Belanova, Grishaeva and Shumkova (2022) also studied how religious and faith-based organisations in the Czech Republic present Christianity to a rather apathetic groups of people in the country. 14 religious organisations were sampled for the study and the qualitative content analysis was adopted to examine the names, logos, mission statements, fliers and other documents of the sampled organisation. Based on the analysis of data, Belanova et al., (2022) established that these organisations presented Christianity as a form of social movement which steered by people of a humble background. Findings also show that self-presentation was also employed in portraying Christianity as a pro-social organisation concerned about making positive impacts in the society through philanthropy, acts of kindness and community service. Regardless of these portrayals, the researchers also pointed out there were some ambiguities about the expression of Christian and Biblical topics from these religious groups.

Grishaeva and Shumkova (2021) explored how Orthodox churches employ social media for religious self-presentation purposes. Data was drawn from social media pages of two Orthodox churches in Russia and was analysed in light of qualitative content

analysis. The study found that while one of the parishes (Temple of St. Prince Vladimir) employed an amateur for managing and publishing self-presentational posts on social media, the other parish (Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary) engaged a professional for that purpose. Grishaeva and Shumkova (2021) however indicated that there was assertive self-presentation of religious selves (views and values) on these social media pages by both parishes. For self-presentation to be effective, the researchers indicated that the churches did not upload lengthy text to bore readers. Instead, texts and captions were shorter while visuals such as photos and videos serve as dominant tools for the self-presentation. The implication of this is that these religious organisations found visual contents as a more effective communication tool for self-presentation. The study also established that self-presentational posts were largely impersonal and focused on primarily on the organisation. From this study, it is evident that self-presentation could be effective when visual portrayals are optimised on social media than relying primarily on texts, particularly when an organisation wishes to project its image. It is also clear that these religious organisations hold the view that because it the organisation that is being projected, individual members must not be given excessive attention on the organisation's page.

Another study was conducted by Fereday (2017) to examine the online self-presentation of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) based on their website, Mormon.org. The research particularly employed content analysis to examine the various self-presentation tactics employed on this site. This was done through the lens of self-presentation strategies by Jones (1990). The study found that ingratiation and self-promotion were the most dominant self-presentation styles in asserting religious identities. Exemplification was also significantly recorded based on the content

analysis. According to Fereday (2017), these self-presentation styles were largely used to present Mormons as a morally oriented, devout and admirable religious group.

Wozniak et al. (2020) qualitatively researched how the Islamic State relied on a change of name from Dabiq to Rumiya for the purposes of negotiating their self-presentation. Data was gathered from the organisation's website and the unit of analysis were photos and articles published on the site. Findings from the study indicate that the Islamic State primarily use this medium to disseminate its ideologies and convert people into their worldview. Secondly, it was also found that the organisation presents itself as a highly structured religious body concerned about promoting civilisation, providing social amenities and influencing policies. According to Wozniak et al. (2020), although this organisation also doubles as a militant movement, they are adept at managing their self-presentation as a religious body that is committed to facilitating societal development. This finding resonates with the general understanding of self-presentation as a deliberate and strategic attempt to have multiple selves and portraying these selves based on context and audiences (Fullwood, 2018).

Almdni (2021) in a mixed method research approach conducted a study to explore how Muslim clerics use social media to influence young people and their religious perception of online Islamic doctrine discourse in Saudi Arabia. The study sampled 273 respondents as study participants and used questionnaires and content analysis as data collection instruments. The study revealed that although some young individuals have a negative perception of clerics who seek to engage in social media controversy, other young people are gratified by the acquaintance and sense of familiarity that emanates from the two-way communication offered by social media as the young followers of the clerics are able to probe religious discourses of the clerics. The study concluded

that, through the use of social media, moderate clerics can get a better insight into how to disseminate religious teachings from the perspectives of young individuals' responses with the aim of reducing the stereotypical terrorism identity associated with Islam.

Van Tubergen, Cinjee, Menshikova and Veldkamp (2021) conducted a qualitative study that investigated the online visibility and activity of mosques and Muslims in the Netherlands. The study, through content analysis and interview, collected data from the personal websites of mosques as well as social media handles of both the mosques and selected Muslim participants. Purposively, the study selected Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube as well as all the 478 mosques in the Netherlands. The study revealed that majority of mosques (52%) in the Netherlands have a website and a Facebook presence of 52% and 61% respectively. Twitter, Instagram and YouTube were the less often used social media tools by Muslims and mosques in the Netherlands. The study revealed that, on the selected social media platforms, mosques vary in their activity and number of followers as Salafist Muslims, with their strict ideology are more active on Twitter and YouTube and attract a larger share of social media followers on Facebook than non-Salafist Muslims. The study again, revealed that, the Salafist Muslim mosques make up a community of social media users who are mainly linked to each other as a group (in-group), as opposed to their connection with other users who are not Salafist (out-group).

With a focus on how some selected Nigerian religious organisations make use of social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube in sending messages about themselves, and their activities to members and others, Enweani and Eke (2019) conducted a qualitative descriptive study that, in a purposive manner, selected some

Nigerian Pentecostal churches. Enweani and Eke's (2019) study revealed that Christian religious organisations in Nigeria make use of different social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube in advertising to their members and other followers alike their leadership development programs, past crusades and miracle outreach, daily devotion write-ups, and information about up-coming events and activities. The study concluded that the use of social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube by Christian religious organisations in Nigeria in promoting and propagating their activities has increased their membership, particularly their virtual members as social media is cost effective in comparison to traditional media like TV.

In a study that sought to bring out the experiences of young people in Nigeria regarding how the church and youth ministry in the church engage the youth by using social media platforms such as Facebook, Snap chat and Instagram, Ononogbu and Chiroma (2018) conducted a qualitative documentary study that focused on the impact of church youth ministry on the youth. The study revealed that 51% of the 20 million social media users in Nigeria, were youth within the age bracket of 35 years. However, the study indicated that as the churches, particularly youth ministry in the churches were not well equipped to deal effectively with young people and some of the issues they face on social media; the youth are bullied, abused or recruited online by unscrupulous persons to engage in social vices that is detrimental to the progress of these youths and the churches. The study concluded that churches should develop effective strategies that will enable them harness the immeasurable potential of social media in reaching out to the youth with the gospel.

Similarly, Muchuki and Kiriri (2019), conducted a quantitative cross-sectional descriptive study with a focus on how churches in Kenya market and present themselves

on social media. The study used a multistage sampling method and administered questionnaire to a population of 875 comprising of church members, non-church members and parish staff at a Pentecostal church in Kenya. Muchuki and Kiriri's (2019) study revealed that marketing through the use of social media, influences the growth of churches as social media provided the church members a platform to voice out their views regarding church matters, promoted and fostered a good learning environment, and enhanced and facilitated the achievement of the objectives of the church. The study further revealed that churches in Kenya use social media tools such as Facebook for winning souls for the churches, creating prayer bands, post church sermons to be read at the expediency of their members, and create a sense of social belonging through formation of support groups like single parents' group, widows' group, and senior or youth groups. The study concluded that the benefits churches get from social media usage outweighs the risk posed by social media and as such churches and other organisations who have not yet embrace the use of social media tools like Facebook stand to miss a big chance of ministering to both new and old members.

The review of empirical literature in this section reveals that religious organisations across the world are using various media to present their identities to existing, prospective or target followers (Belanova et al., 2022; Grishaeva & Shumkova, 2021). From the review, it is clear that because religious organisations are people-oriented and tend to tailor the presentations to have impact on people, they rely on media that the masses use. In effect, religious groups have become aware that the bulk of their existing and target audiences are on social media so organisations are also moving to social media and making their presentations pronounced on these media platforms. For this reason, majority of recent literature examining religious communication have focused on how organisations engage with the new media, particularly social media.

2.3 Motivations for Self-Presentation

According to Leary (1996), although self-presentation could be unconscious and nonstrategic in some situations, presentation behaviours in most contexts could be deliberate and calculated attempts to influence the perceptions of other people about oneself. Fullwood (2018) however indicates that self-presentation is primarily a way of compelling or persuading your audiences to think about you in a particular way in order for you to attain some personal, professional, and market goals.

Making reference to earlier scholars such as Leary, (1996), Cudjoe and Amo-Mensah (2021) also postulate that self-presentation is the act and process of taking cognizance of others, while being one's self. Cudjoe and Amo-Mensah (2021) for instance indicated that online self-presentation behaviours are largely "goal-driven" (p.40). The implication of the aforementioned scholarly positions is that there are and could be motivations and drivers for self-presentation in various contexts.

Peng (2020) examines why individual subscribers of online dating sites engage in strategic self-presentation. Relying on data drawn from surveys, as well as content analysis, the study established that people engage in self-presentation in order to attain their personal goals. This suggests that humans, as well as organisations have personal goals and majority of these goals can be attained when self-presentation is optimised.

Peng's (2020) assertion that self-presentation is influenced by the desire to attain personal goals, largely suggests that every social unit or individual has a unique identity and their goals are largely based on their exposure, current situation, and their background.

Swani and Labreque (2020) explored the self-presentational motivations behind social media engagement choices. The study surveyed and sampled 185 respondents to

understand the relationship between their online self-presentation and engagement with brand contents on social media using likes, comments and shares. Based on content analysis, it was found that individuals comment and share brand contents online in order to present themselves as associates of the brand or as people who are knowledgeable about the brand. Per the study, comments are also used for relationship building. This study therefore suggests that people can be motivated to engage in self-presentation because they wish to be seen as knowledgeable and belonging to a particular social class. Also, presentation can be a conscious attempt to let others know about your preferences. Additionally, the study found that self-presentation can be a strategic approach for establishing social connections.

In a systematic review by Hollenbaugh (2021) to examine some available literature on self-presentation in the online context, it was established that one of the motivators or drivers for self-presentation is visibility. According to self-presentation which is motivated by visibility involves an intentional portrayal of oneself in a particular fashion in order to increase salience or exposure to others. The study indicates that visibility can have consequential effects and be particularly important for personal branding or career advancement, as increased visibility can lead to more opportunities and connections. This assertion is in tandem with Cudjoe and Amo-Mensah's (2021) position that one of the goals of self-presentation on social media is to keep up with contemporary trends in communication for the purposes of getting noticed by target audiences. Essentially, people who wish to maintain visibility, put in the effort to create polished profiles, comment on topical issues, and share contents that shows the presenter's expertise and experience (Hollenbaugh, 2021).

Hollenbaugh (2021) also mentions gender identity, cultural identity, individual traits and group membership as motivations for engaging in self-presentation. The author indicates that some individuals engage in self-presentation, particularly on social media to project their gender orientations. For instance, some people could use self-presentation approaches to promote feminism, masculinity, queerness or transgenderism. Additionally, some people are driven to engage in self-presentation to let others know that they belong to particular cultural group or are from a particular cultural environment. For example, someone from a particular cultural background may choose to wear traditional clothing or speak in their native language as a way of expressing their cultural identity (Huang & Fiske, 2021). Similarly, someone who identifies strongly with a particular cultural group may adopt certain behaviours or attitudes associated with that group as a way of reinforcing their cultural identity (Huang & Fiske, 2021). Additionally, some people wish that others identify them as members of particular social groups. They therefore rely on self-presentation to achieve that objective by touting their membership through dressing, speeches, the use of symbols and fliers and general behaviour (Qi, Bai & Li, 2022).

The foregoing assertions intelligibly pointed out that motivations for self-presentation could be identity construction and management. In Cudjoe and Amo-Mensah's (2021) study on self-presentation of fraternal organisations on social media, it was found that one of the motivations for self-presentation by the Freemason fraternal organisation was to project and manage its identity and image. Cudjoe and Amo-Mensah's (2021) study, also established that the organisation employs self-presentation in order to induce the interest of others to join the fraternity for the purposes of increasing membership. This clearly suggests that self-presentation could be driven by the concept of social

acceptability. It is therefore evident that the organisation has been strategic in their self-presentation in order to be accepted by its society.

In a study conducted by Smith (2023) to examine the relation between social media use and self-presentation in view of particular character traits, it was established that people are driven to engage in strategic self-presentation for the purposes of portraying their creative identities. This suggests that self-presentation underlies the portrayal of creativity.

This finding reflects earlier assertions by Harris and Bardey (2019) that people engage in self-presentation in order to be seen as creative. As indicated earlier, Harris and Bardey (2019) also mentioned that self-presentation to be perceived as creative could also be motivated by the desire to elicit acceptance from friends and relatives. From the foregoing, it could be suggested that identity management and social acceptability are sometimes interwoven motivators for self-presentation.

Based on literature reviewed, it can be suggested that motivations or drivers for self-presentation are unique based on the self-presenter and the context of self-presentation. However, majority of evidence point to the fact that identity construction is the most predominant driver of self-presentation. In effect, most people engage in self-presentation in order to establish identities that will make them appealing to others. Inasmuch as, motivations for self-presentation can be unique, self-presentational attitudes are largely driven by the desire to be identified with particular character traits that will eventually influence acceptability in the immediate and larger society.

2.4 Self-Presentation and Identity Management in the African Context

Studies have also been conducted in the African context to contribute to the discussion on self-presentation. Taking cognisance of the present study which is being conducted

in Ghana, it is pertinent to review and examine previous related literature that are Africa-specific.

In line with how individuals construct identities on social media, Agboada and Ofori-Birikorang (2018), in a qualitative study examined the social media posts of some selected Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) in Ghana with the objective of analysing how the CEOs self-branded themselves in constructing their identities. Hinged on identity construction theory and Goffman's presentation of self, the study made use of a content analysis and purposively selected five (5) CEOs in Ghana. This study revealed that the CEOs, through their active engagement on social media, positively presented themselves as leaders of organisations, corporate spokespersons, social commentators and influencers, religious affiliates and advocates for gender issues. The study concluded that, in a conscious and elusive manner, CEOs engaged in the construction, modification, maintenance and promotion of their personal identities by employing several, varied and vivacious methods of branding on social media.

Few studies were also conducted in the African context to understand organisational self-presentation or impression management. Omoankhanlen and Issa (2022) studied how organisational citizenship behaviours of employees are relied on to manage organisational impression. The study focused on 20 hotels in Rivers State, Nigeria and gathered data through a cross sectional survey from 181 employees of these hotels. Findings revealed that organisational citizenship behaviour was evident through altruism and conscientiousness in an attempt to engage in self-promotion of the hotels. For all intents and purposes, selflessness and conscientiousness were self-presentation approaches in projecting the image of the selected institutions. The significant relationship between altruism and self-presentation in this study reflects assertions by

Cudjoe and Amo-Mensah (2021) who indicated that altruism could largely be a self-presentation move to present an organisation in the best possible light.

Hammond (2021) also explored self-presentation strategies and tactics used by political figures when conceding defeat in elections. Using qualitative content analysis, the study examined the 2016 concession speech of John Dramani Mahama after he lost the presidential contest to Nana Addo Danquah Akuffo-Addo. Findings from the analysis established that through the speech, John Dramani Mahama constructed dual self-presentations - the real self (backstage) and the ideal self (front stage). According to Hammond (2021), in the presentation of the real self, the speaker was blunt, adversarial, blame-riddled and face-threatening. However, in the presentation of the ideal self, he was excessively polite, apologetic, and willing to accept responsibility for his actions and inactions.

Enyinnaya (2022) examined how Nigerian Igbo fashion designers engaged in self-presentation on Instagram. Data were gathered from the Instagram pages of 10 female fashion designers and analysed using discourse analysis. Enyinnaya (2022) found that the selected participants significantly relied on photos and short videos to accentuate their cultural identity through the clothes they designed. According to the study, self-presentation was also employed to build and maintain professionalism with existing and prospective clients. The study's findings reverberate extant arguments that self-presentation is a relevant approach to forming and managing identities (Kang et al., 2016). Similarly, Enyinnaya's (2022) study also reflected arguments that self-presentation was crucial in building and sustaining professional relationships and social connections in work situations (Swani & Labreque, 2020).

From the review, it can be suggested that bulk of available literature in Africa on the concept of self-presentation and identity construction have concentrated on the individual perspective. That notwithstanding, literature reviewed in this section points out that self-presentation and identity construction are both important aspects of social interaction and can have a significant impact on how individuals are perceived by others, as well as how they perceive themselves.

2.5 Implications of the Review

The review of related studies on self-presentation largely point to the fact that self-presentation is more deliberate and strategic than it being unconscious and unplanned (Oliveira et al., 2016; Stratulat, 2019; Whillains et al., 2022). In essence, almost all the studies reviewed indicate that self-presenters were fully aware of their self-presentational behaviours and rely on viable media avenues to project these self-presentational postures. Although this study is not taking an entrenched position to suggest that self-presentation cannot be unconscious, the extant studies on individual and organisational self-presentation suggest that self-presentation is for the most part a deliberate and conscious attempt to influence the perception of others.

The review also reveals that there are several factors that influence self-presentation, including the social context, culture, and individual differences. The social context refers to the specific social situation and the audience one is interacting with. For example, a person may present themselves differently in a job interview than they would in a casual setting with friends (Ingold et al., 2015). Culture also plays a role in self-presentation, as cultural norms and values shape what is considered appropriate behaviour in different social contexts (Hu, Kumar, Huang, & Ratnavelu, 2021). Additionally, individual differences, such as personality and personal beliefs, can

influence how a person presents themselves in different situations (Swani & Labreque, 2020).

The review of literature on organisational self-presentation points out that organisations today operate in an era where online presence is crucial for business success (Yang & Liu, 2017). With the widespread use of social media and other digital platforms, organisations have numerous opportunities to present themselves to the world in a positive light. Self-presentation is the way in which organisations choose to portray themselves to their stakeholders, including customers, employees, and investors, and it has a significant impact on how they are perceived (Jaworska & Bucious, 2017).

From the review, it is clear that organisations acknowledge the fact that self-presentation on online platforms can directly influence their reputation. Online environments can be incredibly powerful tools for marketing, communication, and brand-building.

Although it is evident that organisations are increasingly engaging in self-presentation through engagement with their publics on social media, available literature has largely focused on the informational one-way communication (from the organisation to audiences), rather than from the dialogic perspective (Greer & Ferguson, 2017; Jaworska & Bucious, 2017; Cudjoe & Amo-Mensah, 2021). In effect, self-presentation has not been mostly examined from the interactional perspective. This finding gathered from the review reflects arguments by Saxton and Waters (2014) that organisations largely share informational messages in their online engagements.

Evidence from literature points to the fact that majority of the studies on organisational self-presentation are conducted in the context of Western world (Greer & Ferguson, 2017; Yang & Liu, 2017) with an emerging few from Africa (Cudjoe & Amo-Mensah,

2021). It is therefore imperative for more studies to be conducted from the African perspective in order to broaden the discussion on organisational self-presentation.

Studying self-presentation by religious organisations on social media is important because it provides insight into how these organisations are using technology to connect and engage their clientele and the wider community. It can also reveal the values and beliefs that a church wishes to communicate and how effectively they are able to convey these messages through digital media. Christian organisations, for instance, are aware that online self-presentation could have implications on the church's reputation and success in attracting new members and supporters (Belanova et al., 2022; Grishaeva & Shumkova, 2021). The review of literature has brought to the fore the minimal amount of literature on self-presentation of Christian organisations in the online context. For instance, extant literature has not widely explored the phenomenon of online self-presentation by religious organisations such as churches from the African perspective.

From the review, it can be suggested self-presentation is a complex and dynamic process that involves the intentional efforts people and organisations make to influence others' perceptions of them. It is an important aspect of human behaviour that can have a significant impact on social lives, opportunities, and development. Understanding the factors that influence self-presentation, and how self-presentation plays out in light of social units and organisations can help individuals better understand themselves and others, and improve their own self-presentation skills.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

2.6.1 Introduction

This section of the chapter delves into the theory that underpins the study. In order to thoroughly examine the data on the self-presentation of the selected Christian

organisations, the self-presentation theory is used. Particularly, the study relied on Erving Goffman's lens of self-presentation.

2.6.2 Goffman's Self-Presentation Theory

Erving Goffman was a Canadian sociologist who propounded the theory of self-presentation, which is also known as impression management. Although the theory is grounded in sociology, it has been used in communication research since its development in 1959 (Attrill-Smith, 2018). The theory of self-presentation is primarily founded on the idea that individuals actively work and put in efforts to create and maintain a certain image of themselves to others (Goffman, 1959).

Goffman's self-presentation theory is grounded on a number of basic assumptions. First of all, it assumes that individuals are constantly engaged in social interactions and communication behaviours with others. According to Goffman (1959), humans are largely caught up in communication phenomena and are sometimes required to be active partakers in these contexts. Fullwood (2018) indicates that communication begins from birth and as we grow, we begin to successfully interact with people and show tendencies and behaviours that reflect our society. Interacting and communicating with people usually involves a wide range of verbal and nonverbal cues to express our thoughts, emotions, and intentions. Communication is not just about exchanging information; it is also about establishing relationships, building trust, and creating shared meaning (Leary, 2019). Communication can take many forms, including verbal communication, nonverbal communication, written communication, and digital communication (Leary, 2019). Verbal communication involves the use of words and language to convey meaning. This can include spoken communication, such as

conversations and speeches, as well as written communication, such as emails and text messages (Leary, 2019).

Secondly, the theory assumes that individuals are motivated to manage the impressions they make on others. According to Goffman (1959), humans invariably have a need or reason for engaging in interactions with other people. One of the fundamental reasons for communicating is the need to have positive impressions on others. The theory also establishes that people are motivated to manage their impressions to gain social acceptance. By presenting a certain image or impression of themselves, they hope to be liked, respected, and admired by others. People also want to be perceived as attractive, intelligent, competent, and likeable in social interactions. Others wish to establish social status which can elicit respect and admiration from other people. Goffman (1959) also suggested that creating a sense of identity and enhancing self-esteem could also be reasons why people are motivated to manage the impression they make on others.

Thirdly, the theory assumes that self-presentation is a strategic process that involves a variety of techniques and tactics. According to Goffman (1959), there are various communication approaches used by individuals in communicative or interactive situations as a way of successfully managing impressions. Leary (1996) also makes argument that in communication phenomena, self-presenters could deliberately or unintentionally employ tactics that will make their audiences create impressions about them. According to Leary, people could rely on self-description, attitude statement, non-verbal behaviours, social associations, compliance, aggression, and risk taking as strategies to present themselves. According to Leary (1996), people present themselves through the use of words to describe themselves either through written or spoken communication. Leary indicated that they could also talk about their likes and dislikes,

show appearances such as dressing, the people they associate with, compromises they make, through the use of force or hostility and by engaging in risky ventures.

Another key concept in Goffman's theory of self-presentation is the idea of a "front stage" and a "back stage." This is what Goffman termed as the dramaturgical perspective. According to Goffman, society is like a theatre stage, and humans are the performers. Whatever we do in communication situations are referred to as performance.

The front stage, also known as ideal self, refers to the public arena where individuals are visible to others and are actively engaged in social interactions. In this setting, individuals are careful to manage their behaviour and presentation in order to create a favourable impression on others. According to the theory, people have multiple selves which play out based on the types of frontstage they are on. In essence, people present themselves differently to various audiences. The back stage, also referred to as the real self, on the other hand, refers to the private arena where individuals are not visible to others and are free to be themselves. In this setting, individuals may let down their guard and behave in ways that are not consistent with their front stage persona.

Goffman's theory of self-presentation has important implications for a wide range of social situations, including job interviews, romantic relationships, and online interactions. It suggests that individuals are constantly engaged in a strategic process of impression management, and that success in social interactions depends on the ability to effectively navigate the complex social cues and behaviours that are used to convey meaning and establish relationships.

In conclusion, Erving Goffman's theory of self-presentation is a useful framework for understanding the complex social interactions that occur in a wide range of settings. By

recognizing the strategic nature of self-presentation, individuals can gain insights into the social dynamics of their interactions with others and develop effective strategies for managing their impressions and preserving their social standing.

2.6.3 Relevance of the Theory to the Study

This theory is applicable to a wide range of social situations, from face-to-face interactions to online communication platforms (Greer & Ferguson, 2017). Since this study is designed to examine the self-presentation patterns of particular religious organisations on social media, it will be convenient to underpin it with a theory that deals with communication in social situation and how people wish to be perceived by others.

Goffman's self-presentation theory has been found pertinent by authors who conduct studies into organisational self-presentation in both offline and online contexts based on the fact it provides tenets that could be used to interrogate the ways organisations create impressions about themselves in the eyes of their target audience or publics (Jaworski & Bucious; Stratulat, 2019). Jaworski and Bucious (2017) relied on the self-presentation theory to examine how organisations in Poland self-present themselves to their publics using business reports and found that flowery languages were used to create favourable images about the selected organisations. Stratulat (2019) also focused on how a car manufacturing company, Volkswagen tried to manage its reputation after a crisis event. Relying on Goffman's self-presentation theory, Stratulat (2019) found that apology, redefinition of events, ingratiation, competence enhancements and exemplification were self-presentational approaches adopted by the firm to salvage its marred reputation. Using the same theory, Omoankhanlen and Issa (2022) looked how behaviours of employees are relied on to manage organisational impression and found

that employees' portrayal of altruism and conscientiousness reflected on the organisations' image.

Goffman's theory of self-presentation has also been used to examine organisations' presentations on online platforms like social media and organisational websites (Cudjoe & Amo-Mensah, 2021; Esen & Caliskan, 2018; Greer & Ferguson, 2017; Korzynski et al., 2021). For instance, Cudjoe and Amo-Mensah (2021) relied on the self-presentation theory to explore how the Freemason organisation portrayed itself on social media and found that the organisation was presented as a highly structured philosophical club made of influential men who are concerned about promoting altruism. Esen and Caliskan (2018) also interrogated how sustainability disclosures are done on corporate social media websites by some Turkish firms and found that assertive and defensive self-presentational strategies were employed in balancing favourable and unfavourable images. Similarly, Greer and Ferguson (2017) using Goffman's dramaturgical perspective examined the front and backstage presentation of selected local television networks on Instagram and found that though the backstage presentation was promoted, their audiences expressed more affinity towards the frontstage presentation.

Though Goffman's self-presentation theory was initially examined from the individual perspective, all the foregoing scholars (Cudjoe & Amo-Mensah, 2021; Greer & Ferguson, 2017; Stratulat, 2019) have registered the relevance of the theory in examining organisational behaviour, particularly from the identity and reputation perspective. This, therefore, makes the theory relevant to the study of how some Pentecostal religious organisations present themselves on social media.

The theory is relevant in examining the two objectives of the study; firstly, to explore how the selected Pentecostal churches present themselves on Facebook and secondly,

to examine the rationale behind the online self-presentation of the selected Pentecostal churches. In exploring how the selected churches present themselves on Facebook, the tenets of the theory that suggest that humans are always engaged in interaction (communication) and adopt ways of creating impressions about themselves, are applicable in this case. From this perspective, the study tries to understand how interaction is done by these organisations and the strategies they use in facilitating their self-presentation (Leary, 1996). For the second research objective, the study relies on the tenets of the theory which suggests that self-presentation is largely goal-oriented. According to Goffman (1959), there are motivations and reasons that influence people to engage in self-presentation. This argument will therefore be examined based on the context of the study. Following Cudjoe and Amo-Mensah (2021), it is clarifying to suggest that these two objectives are crucial in studying organisational self-presentation, and the theory of self-presentation is also relevant to exploring the present phenomenon.

2.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter of the study reviewed literature relevant to the study. Since the study is set to explore online self-presentation of selected Pentecostal religious organisations in Ghana, the chapter particularly reviewed literature on self-presentation on social media, organisational self-presentation, self-presentation of religious organisations and motivations for self-presentation.

These reviews were done to establish the gap in literature and consequently ascertain relevant designs and approaches that were adopted in conducting these related studies. This is a way to determine how these approaches can serve the needs of the present study. The chapter also discussed the theory underpinning the study- Goffman's self-

presentation theory, and accordingly established the relevance of the theory to the study.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter of the study deals with the methods and procedures adopted to obtain and analyse data in relation to identity expression by selected Pentecostal Churches in Ghana. Also, the chapter focuses on rationalising the choice of these individual methods and procedures. The research paradigm, approach, design, sampling, data collection and analysis methods are all discussed in this section.

3.1 Research Paradigm

This study investigates the phenomenon of self-presentation by four selected Pentecostal Churches in Ghana; Christ Apostolic Church, Apostolic Church Ghana, The Church of Pentecost and The Assemblies of God Church. As such, it is essential to situate the study in a paradigm that will allow the researcher to rigorously unearth the state of the issue. Research paradigm has been described by Lincoln, Lynham and Guba (2011) as the philosophical perspectives that guide the worldview of the researcher in relation to the phenomenon of the study. Additionally, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) describe paradigm as the relationship between human constructions, background of the researcher and how she or he is able to exhaustively construct meanings that are embedded in the data corpus. The relevance of research paradigms cannot be disputed because they offer researchers guidelines with regard to “what should be studied, how it should be studied and how the result should be interpreted” (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017, p. 26).

Owing to the fact that this study examines the communication patterns that selected social units employ in presenting themselves to others, the social constructivism

paradigm has been adopted to guide the methodological positioning of the research. Although there are other paradigms (positivist, post-positivist, and critical theory among others), the constructivist paradigm is suitable for the present study based on the fact that it allows the researcher to delve profoundly into the issue of self-presentation on social media by the selected churches in order for informed understandings to be made. Social constructivists argue that reality or meaning is not fixed or an objective entity but socially constructed (Creswell, 2021). This implies that knowledge is produced through interactions between individuals and their social and cultural contexts. The social constructivists emphasise the importance of studying the social and cultural contexts in which knowledge is produced, as well as the processes through which knowledge is shared, negotiated, and contested (Creswell, 2014, 2021). Therefore, in situating a study in this paradigm, the researcher will discover exhaustive information by interacting with the social and cultural milieu of the research.

For methodology, social constructivism relies on qualitative research methods such as interviews, focus groups, and ethnographic observation (Creswell, 2021; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2014). These methods allow researchers to gain insights into the subjective experiences of individuals and to understand how social and cultural factors shape their perspectives. Adom, Yeboah and Ankrah (2016) assert that constructivism provides the yardstick for the researcher to use their subjective opinion in analysing the data in order for latent meanings to be discovered.

From a constructivist perspective, self-presentation is not simply a matter of individuals choosing to present themselves in a certain way. Rather, it is a complex process that involves the negotiation of multiple identities, the interpretation of social and cultural

cues, and the construction of a sense of self that is both individual and socially situated (Cox & Lyddon 1997; Goffman, 1959).

By using a constructivist framework, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of how self-presenters construct their sense of self in relation to the social and cultural contexts in which they exist. This can involve examining the ways in which individuals negotiate multiple identities, the ways in which they interpret social and cultural cues, and the ways in which they manage their self-presentation in different social situations (Leary, 1996).

These arguments essentially inform the adoption of the constructivist paradigm so that the researcher can actively be involved in the data collection and analysis process in order for constructive meanings to be made.

3.2 Research Approach

The research approach is basically the overall plan and procedure adopted to guide the methodologies and methods involved in the collection of data, through to the analysis and interpretation of data (Creswell, 2014). According to Creswell (2014), the nature of the research problem essentially determines the approach that should be adopted for the study. Scholars have suggested that the research approach is one of the foremost factors to consider in undertaking a research study since it is the approach that influences and determines all the methods that will be appropriated in the collection and analysis of the data (Creswell, 2014; Patel & Patel, 2019; Sileyew, 2019).

Based on the focus of this study, qualitative research approach was employed. Researchers who seek to attain comprehensive knowledge of a phenomenon or explore people's views and experiences pertaining to certain issues often employ the qualitative research approach. Fundamentally, the qualitative research approach allows researchers

to critically observe and study texts, written documents, human behaviours, actions, and societal events in order to make proper interpretations of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2021). In view of this argument, the present study which sought to investigate the self-presentation on social media by some selected Christian organisations, sees it pertinent to employ the qualitative approach in order for the researcher to critically observe and study the communication behaviour of these social units.

According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is employed in order to explore and interpret meanings that individuals or groups of people attach to a human or social phenomenon. Some qualitative research scholars such as Braun & Clarke (2013) similarly emphasise that qualitative approach predominantly deals with meanings. Braun and Clarke (2013) indicated that the qualitative research approach is focused on probing and understanding the subjective experiences, perspectives, and meanings that individuals and social groups attach to their experiences. Essentially, this style of doing research helps in analysing the meanings rooted in human behaviour, as well as texts such as photos, videos, audios, written materials and audio-visual contents that encapsulates or illustrate the personality of people (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Creswell, 2014). Drawing on the abovementioned scholarly arguments, the qualitative approach serves as an effective approach to interrogate and examine the meanings that the church organisations embed in their Facebook posts and to what end they craft these posts. This primarily suggests that exploring the meanings attached to self-presentational behaviours can be effectively achieved through the qualitative approach because this approach allows for every kind of data on several self-presentational postures to be examined.

Again, according to Braun and Clarke (2013), the qualitative approach to research requires the researcher to do relevant related interpretations rather than subjecting data to computational and mathematical analysis in the case of quantitative research. Because qualitative research primarily deals with the exploration meanings and making interpretations, it does not need to rely on statistical analyses. In this study, data collection and analysis were not done based on any mathematical, or statistical approach; rather it required the direct involvement of the researcher in the gathering, interpretation and analysis of the data. The method of collecting data for this research is largely qualitative in nature therefore this approach is the most appropriate for the study.

Dupree and Fiske (2019) suggested that because self-presentation is an on-going communication phenomenon it is more expedient to study this phenomenon in its natural state and environment. The present study relied on the qualitative research because, one of the tenets of this approach is the fact that it allows for data to be collected in the naturalistic setting of the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Collecting data in a naturalistic setting refers to the process of collecting data in a real-life context, where the behaviour being observed is occurring naturally, without manipulation or intervention by the researcher. This also means that the research is conducted in an environment that is familiar and natural to the participants. For this study, data needed to be collected on Facebook, particularly the official Facebook pages of the selected organisation where the phenomenon of self-presentation was actively ongoing. This therefore requires the need for this approach.

Another justification for employing the qualitative approach is based on Fathallah's (2017) argument that conducting online study of communications on internet platforms

would require the researcher to use qualitative data collection tools such as cyber-observation or cyber ethnography and interviews in order to examine issues into detail. Since the present study was set to gather data online, it was necessary for the researcher to use the above-mentioned data collection tools, hence making the qualitative approach indispensable.

Following previous studies on organisational self-presentation on social media (Greer & Ferguson, 2017; Cudjoe & Amo-Mensah, 2021; Yang & Liu, 2017), the present study finds it convenient to rely on qualitative approach considering the fact that these studies found it practicable. According to Hollenbaugh (2021), majority of studies conducted on online self-presentation employ the qualitative approach because it has methods that help in unearthing the realities constructed on social media.

3.3 Research Design

In order for a study to come with logical and reliable findings or results, it is relevant to adopt a design that aligns with the focus of the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Research designs are basically the framework and strategies that direct the gathering of the data through to the analysis and subsequent statement of the findings (Patel & Patel, 2019). This therefore suggests that in order for credible data to be generated, there is the need for researchers to adopt suitable research designs. The choice of research design also has a huge impact on the outcome of the study. Research design refers to the overall plan or strategy that a researcher develops in order to answer a research question or test a hypothesis (Pavan & Kulkarni, 2014). It outlines the methods, techniques, and procedures that will be used to collect and analyse data, as well as the strategies for addressing potential limitations or sources of bias (Sileyew, 2019).

A good research design is critical to the success of a study because it ensures that the data collected is relevant, reliable, and valid. Owing to these reasons, the present study adopted the cyberethnography design.

3.3.1 Cyberethnography

The present study examines self-presentation on a social media platform by selected Pentecostal Christian organisations in Ghana. Based on the focus of the study, cyberethnography was employed to adequately examine and analyse data drawn from the organisation's Facebook page.

Following the tradition and convention of the ethnographic design, cyberethnography aligns with the constructivist paradigm and the qualitative approach of research (Hine, 2008). Cyberethnography primarily describes the phenomenon of conducting an ethnographic inquiry in the cyberspace or virtual environments (Kozinets, 2015). Creswell (2014) describes ethnography as a research methodology that involves the study of people and their culture in a naturalistic setting. It typically involves the observation and active participation of the researcher in the community being studied. Ethnography can provide a detailed and nuanced understanding of the social, cultural, and historical context of a community or group (Hine, 2008).

In cyberethnography, researchers enter online communities to observe and analyse social interactions, cultural practices, and beliefs. This methodology has gained popularity in recent years, especially in the study of online communities and social media platforms (Burdette, 2021; Jenkins et al., 2021; Smith, 2023). Scholars have argued that online environments, particularly interactive media platforms, have progressively become habitations for a lot of people globally who live and spend significant amount of their time engaging in the online world (Hine, 2015; Kozinets,

2019). For some individuals, the online world has become a primary source of social interaction and a place where they feel a sense of belonging and identity (Smith, 2023). The connection and sense of community formed and exhibited in the internet space informed the argument that cultural interaction goes on in that space as well, and the internet has largely become synonymous to the offline space which allows it to be studied ethnographically (Kozinets, 2019). In view of this, the present study found the cyberethnographic design as a relevant research design in understanding the online behaviour of the selected Christian organisations on social media, particularly how they engage in self-presentation on Facebook.

In online communities, user behaviour is largely revealed through photos, videos, written texts, shared documents and even audios which then suggests that social behaviours can be examined through these media (Kozinets, 2019). Other scholars also stressed that cyberethnographic tools are primarily the aforementioned media objects because users of social media rely on these media texts to form their realities and present themselves to their target audiences (Mahmud & Wong, 2021; Jenkins et al., 2021).

Consistent with the aforementioned arguments, the cyberethnography was the most appropriate design to adopt because the goal of the present study required the perusal of these media texts (photos, written texts, videos, etc.) which consequently aligned with the tenets of this design.

3.4 Sampling

This study utilizes the purposive sampling technique. It has been suggested by Lindlorf and Taylor (2017) that the ideal choice of a sampling technique enables the researcher to have a close connection with the communicative phenomenon without any wasteful

effort. Lindlorf and Taylor (2017), further stated that sampling techniques influence and guide the researcher to know the exact places, situations and people to draw information from for the study. Similarly, Williamson, Given, and Scifleet, (2018) posit that the sampling technique should be selected as a result of the research objectives. Drawing on these scholarly arguments, and the focus of this work, purposive sampling was employed. As the name infers, purposive sampling involves intentionally or purposely selecting an item, data or participant to be studied based on the point that the selected samples possess merits that place them above the other population and that information or data drawn from studying them would be an ample illustration of the phenomenon under study (Merriam, 2009; Lindlorf & Taylor, 2017).

Purposive sampling is also based on the idea that the researcher wishes to gather rich and detailed data which therefore suggests that data must be drawn from those with extensive knowledge about the issue and willing to volunteer the required or sought-after information (Lindlorf & Taylor, 2017). In line with this, Creswell (2014) suggested that the goal of purposive sampling is to sample research cases and participants in a tactical way in order for the researcher to obtain pertinent events and people who are key to answering the research questions.

This study purposely selected two major Pentecostal Churches in Ghana- The Church of Pentecost and The Assemblies of God Church owing to the fact that they have the largest following on Facebook and are the representation of the Pentecostal movement in the country (Omenyo, 2006; White, 2019). The Church of Pentecost and The Assemblies of God, constitute the leadership of the Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council (GPCC). Purposive sampling, also known as judgmental sampling, is a non-probability sampling technique in which the researcher selects a sample based on a

specific purpose or objective. This type of sampling is often used where the goal is to select participants who have specific characteristics or experiences that are relevant to the research question. Because the goal of the study was to examine how Pentecostal churches in Ghana engage in self-presentation, it was pertinent and expedient to select these Pentecostal organisations in Ghana (White, 2019).

Because the goal of the study is to examine social media presentation, Facebook was selected. Facebook was purposively sampled based on arguments from scholars such as Kemp (2022) and the Pew Research Center (2023) that it is the most prominent and widespread social media platform. The researcher also relied on Facebook because it is the social media platform that the selected churches predominantly use based on initial perusal of their various social media handles. On Facebook, posts are uploaded more frequently, and Facebook pages had more likes and followership than the other social media handles. Sampling or selecting Facebook also reflects the tenets of purposive sampling in view of the fact that it is representative of the population being studied and can provide rich and meaningful data for analysis.

In order to obtain rich data and examine the phenomenon adequately, it was relevant to acquire data from individuals in the communication units of the selected churches who manage the social media accounts of the church organisations. Two individuals, one from each of the churches, were sampled for the research based on the fact that they are responsible for tactically creating and uploading texts on the organisations' Facebook pages with the aim of portraying the churches' identity. Daymon and Holloway (2011) indicated that the suitable number of participants selected for qualitative research is contingent mainly on the type of research question and the focus of the research, time and material resources available to the researcher. Bryman and Cramer (2012) also

maintained that qualitative sampling is usually made of small sampling units studied in-depth. In purposive sampling, the researcher selects participants based on their knowledge, expertise, experience, or other characteristics that make them suitable for the research study and because these are the people manning the Facebook page, they were considered knowledgeable enough to provide information about the church's online presentation.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

3.5.1 Interviews (Semi-Structured)

Brennen (2017) defined interview as a purposefully focused conversation between an interviewer and an interviewee with the aim of unravelling participants' perspectives, opinions, and important aspects of their experiences. In qualitative research, interviews are a commonly used method of data collection in which the researcher asks questions of an individual or a group of individuals to gather information about their experiences, opinions, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours in relation to the goal of the study (Lindlof & Taylor, 2017; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). According to Braun and Clarke (2013), interviews in qualitative research can be structured or semi-structured. While structured interviews are more formal and follow a set of pre-determined questions for eliciting specific and consistent responses, semi-structured interviews are more flexible and allow for a naturalistic flow of conversation between the researcher and participants (Braun and Clarke, 2013). For the semi-structured interview, the researcher has a list of topics to cover but can ask follow-up questions based on participants' responses. This study relied on the semi-structured interview because it allowed the researcher to strike an alternating balance in using a set of pre-determined questions or topics which ensured that important areas of inquiry were covered, while also allowing participants the freedom to elaborate on their responses or introduce new ideas. Braun and Clarke

(2013) indicated that this type of interview is sometimes relevant in qualitative research because it allows for more open-ended responses and unpredictable information, thereby making the data richer.

Additionally, Braun and Clarke (2013) suggested that qualitative interviews are no longer limited to face-to-face contexts, and that interviews can be conducted over the phone, or in online environments based on the convenience of both the researcher and participants. Owing to this argument, the present study combined both the in-person and telephone interviews. Essentially, the goal of interviews in qualitative research is to gather rich and detailed data about participants' experiences and perspectives, and to uncover insights that may not be apparent through other data collection methods (Lindlof & Taylor, 2017). Based on the direction of this study, interview was employed to sufficiently capture the experiences and views of the social media managers of the selected Pentecostal Churches. According to Lindlof and Taylor (2017), interviews afford in-depth meanings into social situations through personal accounts and stories usually told by people with the essential knowledge that helps in answering key research questions.

Two of the social media managers were met in person for a face-to-face interview session which lasted for about 45 minutes to 60 minutes. These interviews were spurred by an unstructured interview guide and responses from participants were recorded in a field note.

3.5.2 Cyber Observation

The emergence and rise in communication over the internet, simply referred to as computer mediated communication in technological circles has influenced social scientists and media researchers to explore and understand the ways various classes of

individuals and organisations portray themselves in the cyber world or virtual communities (Brennen, 2017; Sade-Beck, 2004). The research process of observing and gathering information on people's behavioural and attitudinal patterns within virtual spaces is referred to as cyber observation. According to Kozinets (2015), cyber observation deals with a thorough examination of text, language, interactions, comments and people's general actions and inactions online.

This data collection technique becomes convenient as the focus and aspirations of this research are targeted at understanding the organisational communication behaviours on Facebook by religious institutions. Because the study is situated on Facebook, it is in place to rely a data collection tool that will ensure that thorough attention is paid to online behaviour (Brennen, 2017). The cyber observation technique is an extension of how observation is done traditionally to gather data or study human and social behaviour (Kozinets, 2015). For this study, this technique is employed to critically observe posts, interactions and engagements on the Facebook page of the selected churches. According to Merunkova & Slerva (2019), cyber observation of self-presentation on Facebook can provide insights into the ways in which individuals use the platform to create and maintain their sense of self and identity. The aforementioned scholars suggested that researchers can analyse the language used in posts, the types of images shared, the frequency and timing of posts, and the patterns of interaction with others on the platform when conducting cyber observation of user behaviour. Based on the fact that the features of cyber observation align with the focus of this study, coupled with evidence of its use in other studies on online self-presentation (Cudjoe & Amo-Mensah, 2021; Merunkova & Slerva, 2019), the present study also adopts this design. The research employed an in-depth analysis of the way the profile page of the churches were set-up and how identity is being expressed through posts.

3.6 Data Collection Procedures

3.6.1 Interview

Due to the nature of the study and for the purpose of obtaining detailed and rich data in relation to the phenomenon being studied, it was relevant to have a one-on-one interaction with the administrators of the selected Facebook pages. Before the interviews were conducted, the researcher made contacts with the administrators by making phone calls to contact numbers displayed on the Facebook profile pages of the organisations. In these initial phone calls, the researcher expressed to the administrators her desire for wanting to conduct such a study on their Facebook page and sought ethical approval based on the suggestion of Hesse-Biber (2016). Some of the administrators indicated that they could not give consent until approval is given by their supervisors. The researcher then had to request for the number of these supervisors and called them to request for consent. After they all accepted to be part of the study, the researcher scheduled time periods with them individually for the interview.

According to Braun and Clarke (2013), in order to establish trust and rapport, the researcher could provide avenues where the participants could confirm the verity of their identity. Against this backdrop, I sent links to my social media pages to the administrators so they confirm my identity and feel at ease communicating with me. This was done immediately after I made initial contact with them via phone call.

During the scheduled periods, the researcher relied on a semi-structured interview guide developed to facilitate the goal-oriented conversation (Brennen, 2017). Based on Brennen's (2017) suggestion that interviews are goal-oriented conversations for eliciting viewpoints crucial to the study, the researcher relied on notepads for jotting down responses of the interviewees. Braun & Clarke (2013) suggested that notepads

can be a useful tool for recording qualitative interviews as they allow the interviewer to take notes of important points raised by the participant during the conversation. Because qualitative interviews often involve open-ended questions that allow participants to provide detailed responses, notepads can be used to record specific details, such as quotes, examples and anecdotes (Brennen, 2017). Notepads allow the interviewer to record information immediately during the interview, providing a quick reference for follow-up questions and ensuring (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

3.6.2 Cyber Observation

Because the study's focus was on self-presentation on Facebook, it was essential to rely on the cyber observation data collection technique to generate rich and detailed data. The cyber observation began by identifying the official Facebook pages of the selected Pentecostal churches. Actually, because all the churches have multiple Facebook pages, the researcher had to painstakingly comb through Facebook to identify the pages that had the highest followers, that were open to the public, and that belonged to the national arm of the church. Essentially, branches of the churches and member groups in these churches all had pages created on Facebook. However, most of these pages were closed, and a new member needed to make a request to be added.

After the researcher had identified the official pages, she liked them in order to become a virtual member of the churches' online community. According to Hine (2015), in conducting cyber observation, the researcher must ensure that she or he identify the exact online communities that align with the research objectives. Because this study was examining the self-presentation of the entire church, it was unmerited to pay attention to branch churches or membership groups. In essence, the researcher looked for and relied on the official national pages of the selected churches for the study.

Being a virtual member allows you to receive updates that were initiated on these pages. After joining these pages, I would spend about 3 to 6 hours on daily basis paying attention to previous posts and new updates in order to understand messages and visual texts being used to present the selected churches. Some screenshots of posts such as written texts and images were also taken with the researcher's phone for analysis. Detailed field notes were taken throughout the data collection process to document things that were observed, and meanings that the researcher made of those things.

3.6.3 Data Collection Period

The data collection period spanned July 2022, to July 2023. The rationale for this was to gather data covering one full year. This helps to improve data reliability and validity as argued out by Madichie and Hinson (2014) who assert that the longer the period, the more likely it is to have a reliable and valid data for analysis.

3.7 Method of Data Analysis – Qualitative Content Analysis

Data analysis is the most crucial part of any research. Data analysis summarises collected data. It involves the interpretation of data gathered through the use of analytical and logical reasoning to determine patterns, relationships or trends (Braun & Clarke, 2013). With regard to this study, content analysis was employed to analyse the interview data as well as data drawn from the online observation.

According to Braun and Clarke (2013), though there are a number of methods of data analysis, qualitative content analysis presents a unique opportunity for researchers since it is a method of analysis that does not prescribe methods of data collection. In this sense, this approach of analysis is flexible due to the fact that it can be used with any method of data collection and can be used to answer any type of research question. Content analysis is a research method used to systematically and objectively analyse

and interpret the content of textual, visual, or auditory data. It is often employed in the social sciences to study communications, documents, and media, allowing researchers to understand and categorise the presence, meanings, and relationships of specific words, themes, or concepts within the data.

Braun and Clarke (2013) also argue that content analysis is a qualitative data analysis method that provides the avenue for researchers to identify, analyse and report patterns or themes within a data corpus. The aforementioned scholars also suggested that this form of analysis is used by researchers to generally analyse themes and patterns that are related to the gathered data which consequently helps in the in-depth description, interpretation and understanding of the findings of the research. The present study used this method in analysing the individual posts on the churches' official Facebook page. This approach was selected due to its effectiveness in enabling a systematic and objective interpretation of the textual data gathered from the Facebook posts of these churches and the transcripts from interviews with social media managers of both churches. The primary goal of the analysis was to identify, categorise, and interpret the themes that emerged from the data, ultimately providing a deeper understanding of how these churches present themselves in the digital space.

The qualitative content analysis process involves systematically examining and interpreting textual or visual data to identify patterns, themes, or meanings. It begins with data collection, followed by a close reading and open coding of the material, where data is broken down into smaller units, such as words, phrases, or sentences, that represent key concepts. These codes are then grouped into categories or themes based on their underlying meanings and relationships. The analysis is iterative, with codes and themes being refined as the researcher revisits the data. The final step involves

synthesising these themes to draw meaningful insights and conclusions about the content, focusing on understanding the depth and context of the material rather than quantifying it. (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Based on these arguments, the researcher began the analysis by immersing herself in the data, engaging in multiple readings of the entire data set to gain a deep understanding and identify potential patterns and meanings within both the interview data and the online observations. Following this, qualitative coding was initiated, where segments of text or images that shared common ideas were systematically identified and categorised into codes. Thematic coding, as described by Gibbs (2010), involves grouping these coded segments into broader categories to create a framework of thematic ideas, allowing for a more structured analysis of the data.

The next phase involved a critical examination of the generated codes to identify relationships and patterns among them, leading to the development of overarching themes. As Braun and Clarke (2013) explain, themes are typically broader than individual codes and may encompass multiple related codes. During this stage, the researcher merged or split codes as necessary to form cohesive themes. The themes were then rigorously reviewed to ensure they accurately represented the data. This involved revisiting the original data to validate the themes, leading to adjustments such as merging, splitting, or discarding certain themes, and refining their terminology to better reflect the underlying data.

Finally, the researcher defined and named the themes. Defining themes involved clearly articulating the meaning and significance of each theme in the context of the study, ensuring that they effectively captured the essence of the data. Naming themes required creating concise and easily understandable labels for each theme, facilitating their use

in describing and discussing the study's findings. These well-defined themes then served as the foundation for interpreting and presenting the research results.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are an important aspect of any research project. They are a set of guidelines that researchers must adhere to when conducting their research, to ensure that their work is conducted in a way that is ethical, respectful, and responsible (Croucher & Cronn-Mills, 2021). Many scholars have espoused that every academic study requires the researcher to be ethical (Halai, 2006; MacDonald, 2008) therefore ethics was not misplaced in this study. According to Halai (2006), an ethical and sound research is one which is focused on ensuring that participants of the study are not emotionally or physically abused and are not made vulnerable as a result of the study. Creswell (2013) and others such as Croucher and Cronn-Mills (2021) have all emphasised some significant ethical needs which this study has appropriated. According to Croucher and Cronn-Mills (2014), in undertaking ethical research, one must consider relevant principles such as informed consent, participant's privacy and debriefing.

The researcher ensured that this study is conducted within the ambit of the necessary ethical guidelines. In terms of seeking consent and giving information, I informed the participants about the purpose of the research and what could be expected of them. The participants were then given the opportunity to either accept to be interviewed or decline. All participants gave their consent and agreed to part take in the interview sessions and allowed that the organisation's Facebook page to be analysed for the study. Following Davis (2017) that informed consent requires that the researcher debriefs the study participant about the entire study and explain technical terminologies to them, I

ensured that we discussed the concepts underlying this work to the participants for them to thoroughly understand the study and its purpose.

The ethical principle of "non-maleficence" or "not causing harm" is a fundamental consideration in this research. This ethical principle asserts that researchers must not cause harm to participants and must minimise the risk of harm as much as possible (Davis, 2017). In research, harm can take many forms, such as physical harm, emotional harm, psychological harm, social harm, and economic harm. This study is also not meant to cause harm to the organisation or draw the organisation's image into disrepute. The researcher has taken steps to ensure that there would not be any social, emotional, psychological or economic harm to the study participants and the organisation as a whole.

In order to protect the identities of the participants, the researcher also assured them of anonymity before the interview session commenced. However, some of them were not really bothered about being anonymous or not.

3.9 Ensuring the Trustworthiness of the Research

Moon et al. (2016) indicated that it is crucial for researchers to provide sufficient information on the methodologies they have used in collecting, organising and analysing the data so that readers can determine the quality of the study. The quality of the study according Moon et al. (2016) deals with the study's trustworthiness, credibility, confirmability and transferability.

To ensure trustworthiness, the present study painstakingly discussed the various methodology it has adopted in order to guarantee the readers efforts that went into the research process. The study also analysed the data in view of a practical theory, the self-presentation theory, and earlier scholarly works in to assure readers that the principles

used in conducting the study are not solely that of the researcher. Scholarly postulations were also employed to explain the study to better inform credibility and conformability of the work.

The themes developed were thoroughly explained to reflect the gathered data, and excerpts were drawn from the organisation's Facebook page to corroborate the themes and assertions made by the researcher.

3.10 Chapter Summary

This section of the study discusses the methodological philosophies that were relied on in conducting the study. Being an online oriented study aimed to examine social and human attitudes, the study relies of the social constructivist paradigm and employs the qualitative approach, the content analysis design, purposive sampling and thematic analysis in the gathering and analysis of data. These approaches were employed because they provide ideal mechanisms for dealing with data extracted from the official Facebook pages of the Christ Apostolic Church, Apostolic Church Ghana, The Church of Pentecost and the Assemblies of God Church. In effect, this chapter critically rationalises the selection of the individual methodologies with respect to the study. The ethical principles that were considered in conducting the study were also discussed in this chapter. Additionally, the chapter concisely discussed the trustworthiness of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter delves into a comprehensive analysis and discussion of the data obtained during the course of the study. The primary objective of this research is to interrogate the online self-presentation strategies and postures adopted by two selected Pentecostal churches in Ghana. The study is also designed to interrogate reasons underlying the self-presentational postures of the selected churches. To accomplish the overall goal of the study, the qualitative content analysis and critical cyber observation were conducted to explore how these selected churches portrayed themselves on the social media platform, Facebook. The data acquired from these sources underwent a meticulous examination, aligning them with relevant existing literature and applicable theoretical standpoints. One pivotal theoretical framework that guided this analysis was Erving Goffman's self-presentation theory, often referred to as the Dramaturgical approach. This method of analysis is in consonance with Brennen's (2017) suggestion that qualitative research approach presents the researcher the avenue to interpret and discuss the data in an exhaustive manner in order for meaning to be thoroughly constructed.

The data collection process focused on two distinct Pentecostal churches: The Church of Pentecost, and the Assemblies of God Church. The data from the cyber observation, which were basically Facebook posts by the churches, were critically examined and assigned codes, and later developed into thematic categories. In addition to content analysis and cyber observation, the researcher engaged in interviews with the administrators responsible for managing the churches' Facebook pages. The interview data were meticulously transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis to address the research questions. It is also essential to note that, in adherence to ethical considerations

and the need for anonymity, pseudonymous codes were assigned to the interview participants. Meanwhile, to avoid redundancy and over-repetition of the names of the churches during the course of the discussion, their abbreviated nomenclatures were relied on. The Church of Pentecost and the Assemblies of God Church are referred to as COP and AG respectively. This multi-faceted approach to data collection and analysis provides a robust foundation for understanding the motives and intricacies of the online self-presentation strategies employed by these religious organisations. By integrating content analysis, cyber observation, and interviews with administrators, this research aims to offer a holistic and nuanced perspective on the ways in which these churches construct their online identities on social media platforms, particularly Facebook.

4.1. Data Analysis Procedure

The entire study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do the selected Pentecostal churches present themselves on Facebook?
2. What are the rationales behind the online self-presentation of the selected Pentecostal churches?

In order to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the analysis and discussions, it is essential to provide a concise overview of the numerical aspects of the collected data, particularly the data derived from online observations. The researcher conducted a thorough cyber-observation spanning from 14th July 2022 to 14th July 2023. During this period, a total of 750 Facebook posts were meticulously extracted from the pages of the selected churches. More particularly, 338 posts were drawn from the AG's official Facebook page whilst 412 posts were realised from the COP's page. It was observed that these two churches update their Facebook pages at least 2 to 4 times a day with the

COP having relatively more updates. These posts were subjected to a critical examination as part of the research process. The analysis brought to the fore that the content shared by the page administrators predominantly comprised of various forms of media, such as images, videos, and web links. These multimedia elements were accompanied by complementary captions, enhancing the overall engagement and impact of the posts.

To ensure a systematic approach of the analysis, the issues identified and topics extracted from the posts were thoughtfully organised into distinct thematic categories. This categorisation facilitates a structured and coherent discussion of the findings, enabling a deeper exploration and comprehension of the underlying trends and patterns within the collected data.

The first part of the discussion primarily revolved around addressing the first research question:

4.2 Research Question 1

How do the Selected Pentecostal Churches present themselves on Facebook?

The first research question sought to explore the various ways the selected churches projected themselves on Facebook. For this research question, the researcher familiarised and critically examined individual posts that were on the organisations' official Facebook pages within the study period. Based on close examination of these posts, codes were generated to represent the data. Upon further perusal of the data set and the derived codes, it was identified that there were related patterns among the derived codes. This necessitated the melding of these codes into cogent thematic categories, shedding light on the churches' self-presentation on Facebook. Initially, the study identified 10 thematic categories. Upon closer examination, it became apparent

that certain categories were interconnected, necessitating their consolidation. As a result, five (5) distinct thematic categories were identified to effectively capture the data and address the identified issues. These categories include the Evangelistic Consortia, Philanthropy, Well-Resourced Incorporations, Leadership-Driven Entities and Socially Influential.

These themes are illustrated in the table presented below:

Table 1: Occurrence Rates and Percentages of Themes Based on Posts by the Church of Pentecost (COP) and Assemblies of God (AG)

Theme	COP Posts (n)	% of COP Posts	AG Posts (n)	% of AG Posts	Total Posts (N)	Cumulative %
Evangelistic Consortia	118	15.7%	101	13.5%	219	29.2%
Enterprise - Driven	110	14.6%	80	10.6%	190	25.3%
Leadership - Centric	82	10.9%	90	12.0%	172	22.9%
Philanthropy	70	9.4%	36	4.8%	106	14.2%
Socially Aligned	30	4.0%	33	4.5%	63	8.4%
TOTAL	410	54.6	340	45.4	750	100%

4.2.1 Evangelistic Consortia

From the 750 posts reviewed, a substantial number of 219 (29.2%) revolved around the evangelistic disposition of the churches. Their consistency in providing spiritual contents such as Bible verses, devotional messages, and Christian teachings establish their identity as evangelistic entities and encourage spiritual growth among their followers. The theme of evangelistic consortia encompasses portrayals of spreading religious teachings or beliefs in a rather structured way. In this study, Evangelistic consortia refers to the active engagement of religious organisations in promoting their

faith and religious practices with the primary goal of converting individuals and expanding their follower base. This collective effort is characterised by coordinated activities and strategies aimed at outreach, mission work, and the dissemination of religious messages. Based on data drawn from the Facebook pages of the selected Pentecostal denominations, it is evident that these churches are leveraging social media to effectively project their value of evangelism. A number of scholars have indicated that social media platforms are predominantly used by institutions to communicate their core values to wider audiences and targeted stakeholders (DePaula et al., 2021; Diez et al., 2020). This disposition has become peculiar with churches as well (Lee, 2018).

Through photos and videos, the selected Pentecostal Churches highlight their active engagement in promoting the word of God, which is popularly referred to as the Gospel (Féliz de Astacio, 2019). They capture moments of passionate preaching, vibrant worship, and outreach events, effectively conveying their commitment to spreading the Gospel. These posts serve as a window into the church's evangelistic activities and invite viewers to join in the journey. Also, these Pentecostal churches share compelling testimonies and stories of individuals who have experienced life-changing encounters through their evangelistic efforts. These narratives depict personal transformations, spiritual awakenings, and the power of God's love.

It was also observed that Facebook serves as a platform for these churches to showcase their involvement in community outreach programs centred around evangelism. They share posts events such as street evangelism, community rallies, and public speaking engagements. By actively promoting the Gospel outside the church walls, these churches demonstrate their dedication to reaching out to people who do not align with their faith as well as empower dormant members of the church. Additionally, it has

been found that the churches effectively utilise Facebook to promote upcoming evangelistic events and initiatives. They create event pages, share event details, and encourage followers to invite others. These posts generate excitement and anticipation among their Facebook community, inviting them to participate in evangelistic gatherings such as crusades, revivals, and special services.

One-hundred and eighteen (118) consisting of 15.7% of the evangelism-related posts were drawn from the COP official Facebook page. The COP employs a diversified content strategy to present itself in alignment with the theme of evangelistic consortia. There were regular postings of sermons, biblical teachings, and inspirational quotes aim to provide spiritual nourishment and guidance to followers. These posts often include video recordings of church services, featuring charismatic and engaging preaching that resonates with a global audience. Additionally, the church frequently announces upcoming events, such as prayer meetings, crusades, and conferences. Live streaming of these events allows for real-time participation, extending the reach of their evangelistic efforts beyond physical boundaries. Also, personal testimonies of faith and divine intervention by members and pastors of the church were shared to inspire and encourage both believers and non-believers. These stories highlight the transforming power of faith and the church's role in fostering spiritual growth. For the COP, they have a motto for evangelism that encapsulates their mission: "Possessing The Nations." This catchphrase consistently accompanies every evangelistic Facebook post, serving as a prominent element designed to project their dedication to evangelism.

The figures below are some of the evangelistic-related posts upload on the COP's official Facebook page.

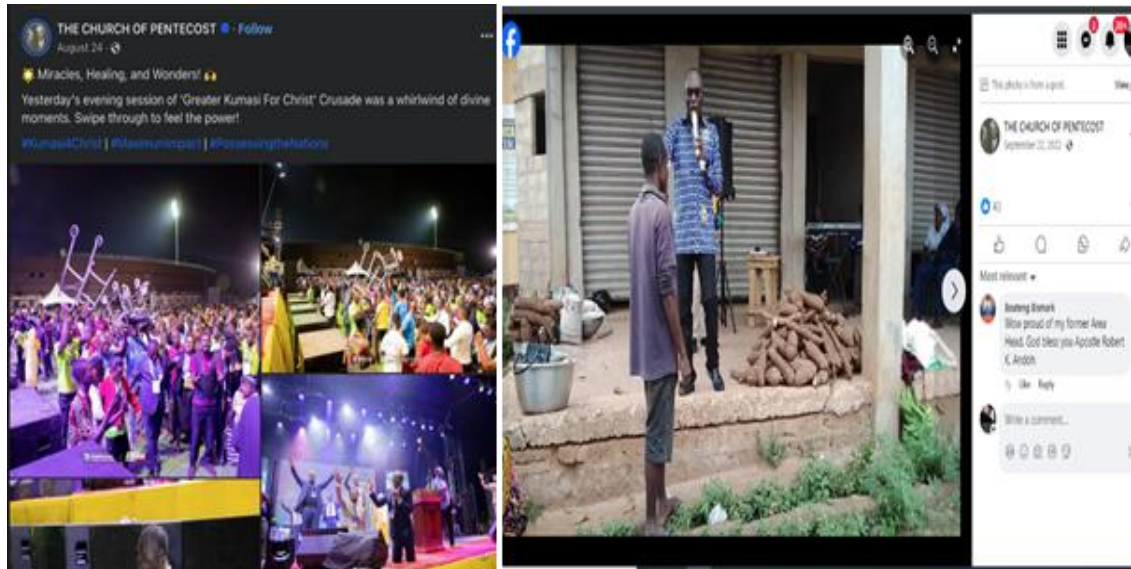


Figure 1: Posts Reflecting the Church as an Evangelistic Consortium

Another intriguing finding from the COP's Facebook page is the significant financial commitment that is channelled towards enhancing the church's evangelistic efforts. There are posts, predominantly photos, on the church's page that depicts the procurement of sophisticated and trendsetting facilities for evangelistic purposes. The figures below expatiate these findings:

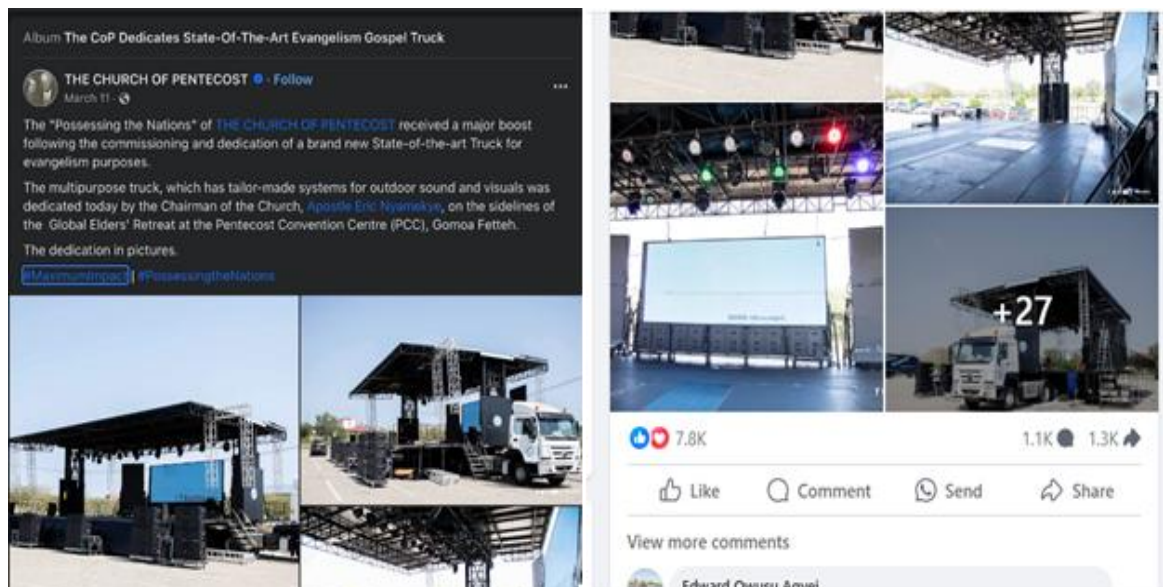


Figure 2: A Post by the COP Page Showing Newly Procured Equipment for Evangelism

Figure 2 shows a post of an ultramodern and multifunctional mobile truck that has been procured by the Church of Pentecost to boost the church's evangelism efforts. This finding aligns with suggestions made by scholars such as Dunaetz (2021), Kelly (2023) as well as Spann (2023) that churches are increasingly relying on cutting edge tools and equipment to enhance their evangelism agenda. Some authors also indicated that the target audiences of Pentecostal and charismatic churches are getting more eclectic, global-minded and inconstant imposing a necessity for churches to be more innovative in reaching out to them (Anderson, 2004; Jenkins, 2011). Therefore, it could be suggested that this portrayal by the COP is an attempt to align the church's image with the needs, demands or expectations of their target groups which is clearly self-presentational.



The Assemblies of God Church recorded 101 posts that is 13.5% indicating that, the church is also actively involved in evangelism on Facebook. Just like the COP, AG also seeks to present itself as an evangelistic consortium by putting out posts that primarily reflect the church's goal and desire of disseminating the Gospel. The Assemblies of God (AG), for instance, actively engages its congregation and wider audience through a daily devotional teaching known as 'The Daily Rhema.' This initiative features a video sermon delivered by their General Superintendent (GS), which is shared on the church's official Facebook page. These daily messages are designed to provide spiritual guidance, inspiration, and biblical insights to viewers, reinforcing the AG's commitment to nurturing faith and promoting continuous spiritual growth. Through the convenience and reach of Facebook, 'The Daily Rhema' helps to maintain a consistent connection with the church community, catering to the needs of modern, tech-savvy believers who seek accessible and regular religious content. Also, some notable

messages delivered through the Daily Rhema were on soul winning and the need for Christians to live exemplary lives so as to draw non-believers to the faith.

A typical example of such posts is provided below to corroborate the discussion:

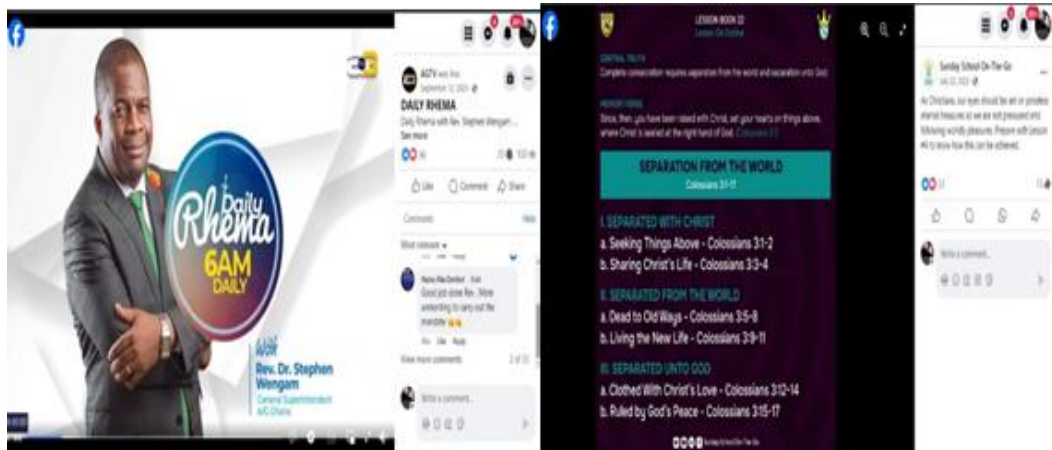


Figure 3: Posts Showing Evangelistic Activities on the AG's Facebook Page

AG also makes significant posts showcasing crusades, community outreaches and street evangelisms. The AG's Facebook posts suggest a well-crafted agenda to boost the church's growth and enhance its reach. By showcasing their evangelistic efforts, sharing transformative stories, engaging in community outreach, promoting events, and emphasizing Gospel-centred content, this religious organisation effectively communicates their mission and values to a larger audience. Essentially, AG capitalises on Facebook to extend its reach, inspire faith, invite individuals to encounter the life-changing message of the Gospel and largely present the church as a paragon of evangelism in Ghana.

The figures below expatiate the findings:

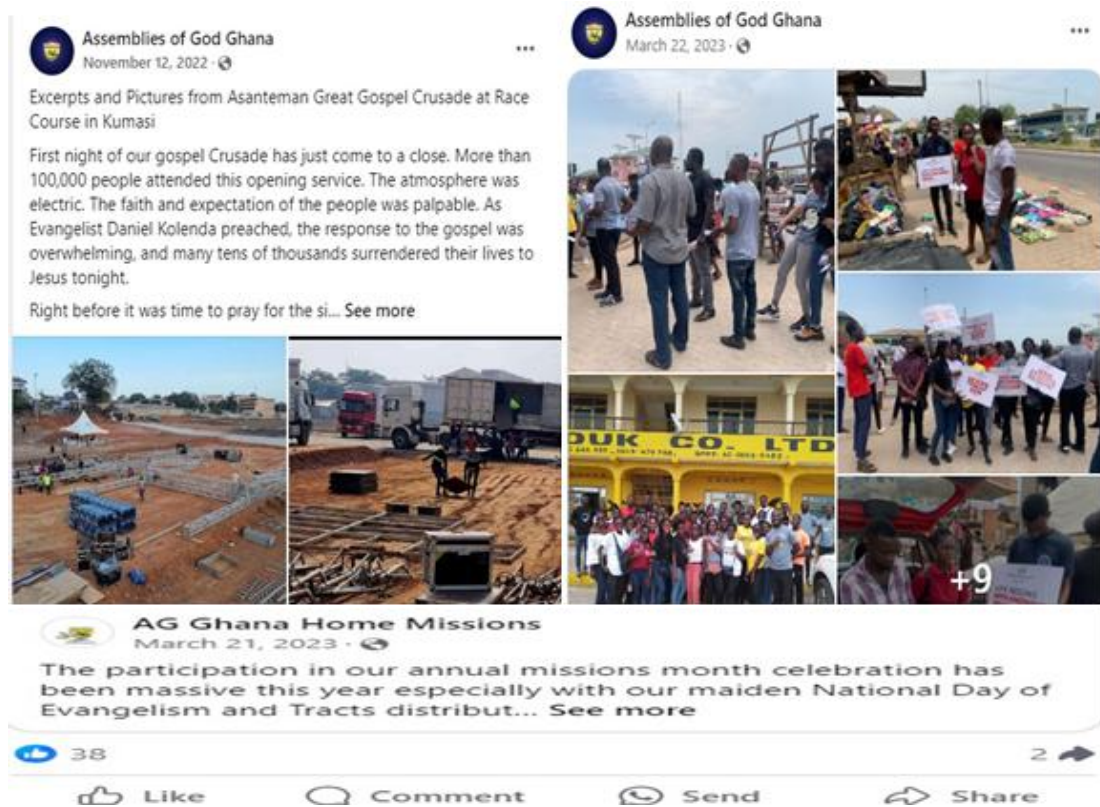


Figure 4: Posts Showing Some Evangelistic Activities of Members of the AG

The posts above are purposive attempts by the AG to portray itself as a religious organisation that is not relenting on its mandate of reaching out to people who need to be aligned with the work and word of God. Posts such as memory verses, scripture lessons and Congregational activities demonstrate an evangelistic organisation.

Based on data drawn from the Facebook pages of the COP and AG, there is an evident similitude in how they both project themselves in light of evangelism. Largely, these two religious denominations employ similar contents in presenting themselves as Pentecostal churches. Although this is the case, the COP gives off the idea that they make huge financial investments in obtaining facilities for their evangelism projects than AG. Another obvious gulf between the two churches in view of the evangelistic self-presentation is the fact that whereas the AG has a daily devotional content uploaded

on its page, the COP does not. The COP rather uploads several posts of their offline evangelistic activities. Additionally, while the COP tends to give much prominence to large crusades the church has organised to capture souls, the AG gives significant attention to projecting their one-on-one street evangelism efforts.

Meanwhile, there is a clear affinity between the theme of evangelistic consortia and previous evidence in scholarly literature (Belanova et al., 2022; Fereday, 2017). In their study to explore self-presentational postures by religious groups in Nigeria, Enweani and Eke (2019) similarly revealed that churches are increasingly adopting different social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to promote their devotional contents, past crusades and upcoming religious revivals to target online audiences. According to Enweani and Eke (2019), this presentation is a direct strategy to position the churches as evangelism oriented. Based on data derived from the website of The Church of Christ, Fereday (2017) also posits that the upload of religious contents in the digital space is a compelling self-presentation style adopted by the church to present itself as ‘evangelicalism’ and a devout promoter of the Word of God.

The orderliness and methodical nature of the evangelistic posts on the Facebook pages of the COP and AG somewhat aligns with Gonzalez’ (2019) assertion. Utilising Goffman's (1959) theory of self-presentation to examine how Christian prayer groups present themselves during public prayers, Gonzalez (2019) indicated that public prayers were embellished and performed in a more polished manner compared to private prayers, suggesting that Christian religious practices can be strategically influenced by the context, particularly when individuals are in the presence of an audience. Evaluating findings from this study vis-a-vis the theory of self-presentation and Gonzalez’ (2019) position, it can be suggested that Facebook is being used as a context for projecting a

carefully manufactured evangelistic identity. Goffman (1959) indicated that putting prominence on a particular behaviour before a set of audiences shows that the presenter is deliberately ensuring that the audience take notice and align with them. Goffman calls this the front stage presentation, suggesting that the presenter is performing a rehearsed act in front of their target audiences. In light of this research, the selected churches could be likened to performers using Facebook as a stage to capture the interest of netizens.

Using Leary's (1996) lens of self-presentation, it can also be argued that the selected churches strategically engage in self-description and attitude statement to project the trait of being an evangelistic consortium. According to Leary (1996), self-presentation involves individuals or organisations managing the impressions they convey to others, often to achieve specific goals. In the context of these churches, self-presentation is evident in how they curate their social media content.

In some of their posts, these churches directly state their engagement in evangelism, clearly communicating their mission and activities. This direct communication aligns with the concept of self-description, where the churches describe their activities and identity explicitly to their audience (Leary, 1996). For instance, posts that highlight upcoming crusades, outreach programs, or testimonials from converts serve to reinforce the churches' evangelistic identity and objectives.



Figure 5: Posts Depicting the Evangelistic Identities of AG and the COP

Conversely, the Facebook posts that do not explicitly mention evangelism but focus on activities aimed at winning souls align with the notion of attitude statements. Attitude statements, as described by Leary (1996), are implicit expressions of an individual's or organisation's stance or values. These posts might include community service activities, motivational messages, or spiritual encouragement, all of which subtly convey the churches' commitment to evangelistic goals without directly stating it. This approach allows the churches to maintain a broader appeal while still promoting their core mission of evangelism. Additionally, Schlenker (1980) expanded on the idea of self-presentation by emphasising the importance of aligning public behaviours with desired impressions. In this light, the selected churches' consistent portrayal of their evangelistic efforts through various types of posts reinforces their identity and bolsters their credibility as evangelistic consortia. By consistently aligning their online behaviour with their evangelistic goals, the COP and AG seek to strengthen their public image and foster a sense of trust and authenticity among their followers.

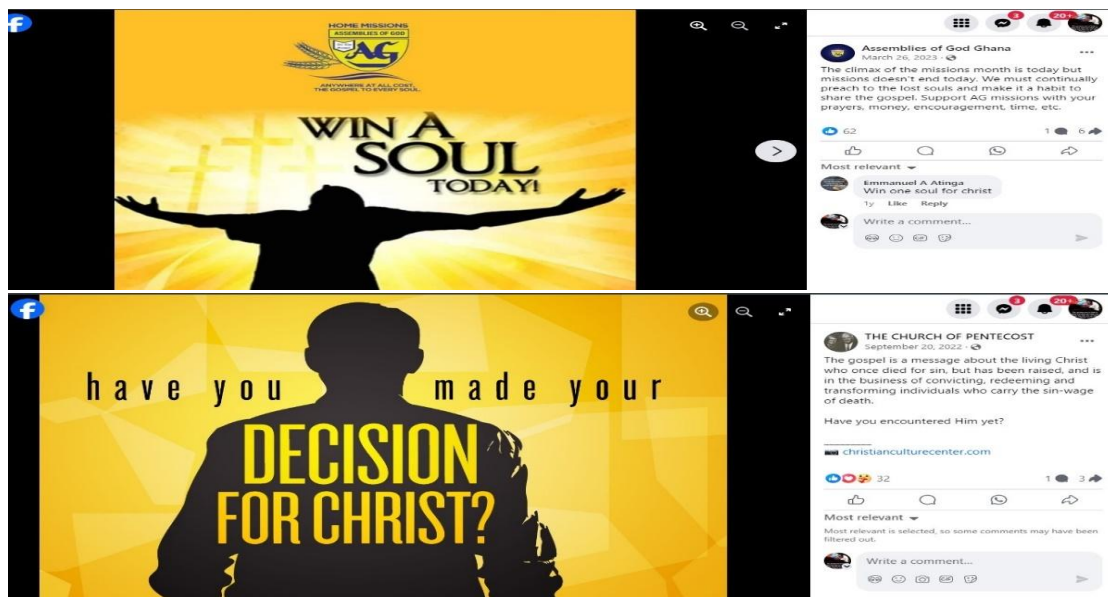


Figure 6: Posts Reinforcing the AG (above) and COP (below) their Evangelistic Orientation

4.2.2 Enterprise-Driven

“Enterprise-driven,” in this context, refers to the strategic emphasis on showcasing church’s business ventures, economic activities, and entrepreneurial initiatives through its Facebook platform. This theme captures how the AG and COP present themselves not only as a spiritual institution but also as owners of and active participants in various commercial and social enterprises, aiming to generate resources, support community development, and expand their missions. Based on data gathered from the official Facebook pages of both churches, it was evident that they both starkly project their business dexterity. Although, these two churches have similar contents that reflect this theme, the COP, on one hand, recorded a lot of contents of this nature than the AG. While the COP had 110 posts (14.6%) showing that the church was enterprise-driven and socially entrepreneurial, the AG has 80 (10.6%) posts for this theme. Altogether, there were 190 posts making up 25.3% derived from the data depicted the churches’ entrepreneurial activities.

Enterprise-driven Facebook posts generally highlight business ventures, such as schools, hospitals, media outlets, bookstores, or other enterprises, demonstrating how these initiatives align with the church's mission. Additionally, these churches make use of entrepreneurial language, branding, and marketing strategies in their posts to present the church as a dynamic, resourceful, and economically active entity within the Ghanaian socio-economic landscape.

In addition to the churches' enterprises, the COP and AG also present their institutionalised committees responsible for overseeing specific aspects of their ministries. Some of these committees include building and construction committees, entrusted with managing construction projects and maintaining church facilities. These churches also have education committees that oversee the operation of schools, colleges, or training programs affiliated with the churches. Furthermore, community advocacy committees are presented, demonstrating the church's active involvement in social justice initiatives, outreach programs, and community development projects. By showcasing these committees, the churches communicate their holistic approach to ministry, encompassing not only spiritual matters but also practical and social endeavours.

Essentially, Facebook serves as a platform for the churches to promote and showcase the various organisations created and operating under their supervision. They share photos or visuals of their affiliated schools, universities, hospitals, orphanages, and media houses and other charitable institutions. By featuring these organisations, the churches demonstrate their commitment to a holistic ministry, addressing the physical, emotional, and social needs of individuals and communities. These posts also serve as

a testament to the churches' impact beyond their immediate congregations, establishing their presence as influential entities within society.

Typically, there are posts on the AG's official Facebook page that regularly feature updates, advertisements, or success stories related to the church's businesses or economic projects, demonstrating the church's commitment to sustainable financial practices. Moreover, the church emphasises how these enterprises align with its spiritual mission, using language that connects business activities with broader goals such as community development, social justice, or evangelism. This aspect of their presentation concurs with earlier research findings by Lineman (2021) that churches are planting profit-oriented and socially entrepreneurial enterprises to advance their spiritual missions and core objectives.

In their portrayal of being enterprise-driven, the AG also demonstrate some attributes of corporate governance, financial transparency and stewardship through their posts. Some of these include reports or testimonials that underscore the responsible management of resources and how the proceeds from these enterprises are reinvested into the church's mission and community work. The church also uploads photos to announce the inauguration of Boards for a number of its affiliate businesses. Some of these Boards were set up to direct the activities of the printing press, book shops, education unit, pension scheme and television (AGTV). The church also presented posts of their hospitals in the Northern Region of Ghana and pastoral training school in the Central Region.



Figure 7: Posts Describing the Inauguration of Boards of Directors of Enterprises Owned by the AG

Similarly, the COP has posts of this nature on their Facebook page. There are a number of posts on the Facebook page of the COP projecting their University, the Pentecost University, their ultra-modern Pentecost Convention Centre, the Pent Television Network and other businesses that the church operates. The COP also use Facebook to communicate to their audiences the persons or members of the church who are manning these businesses.

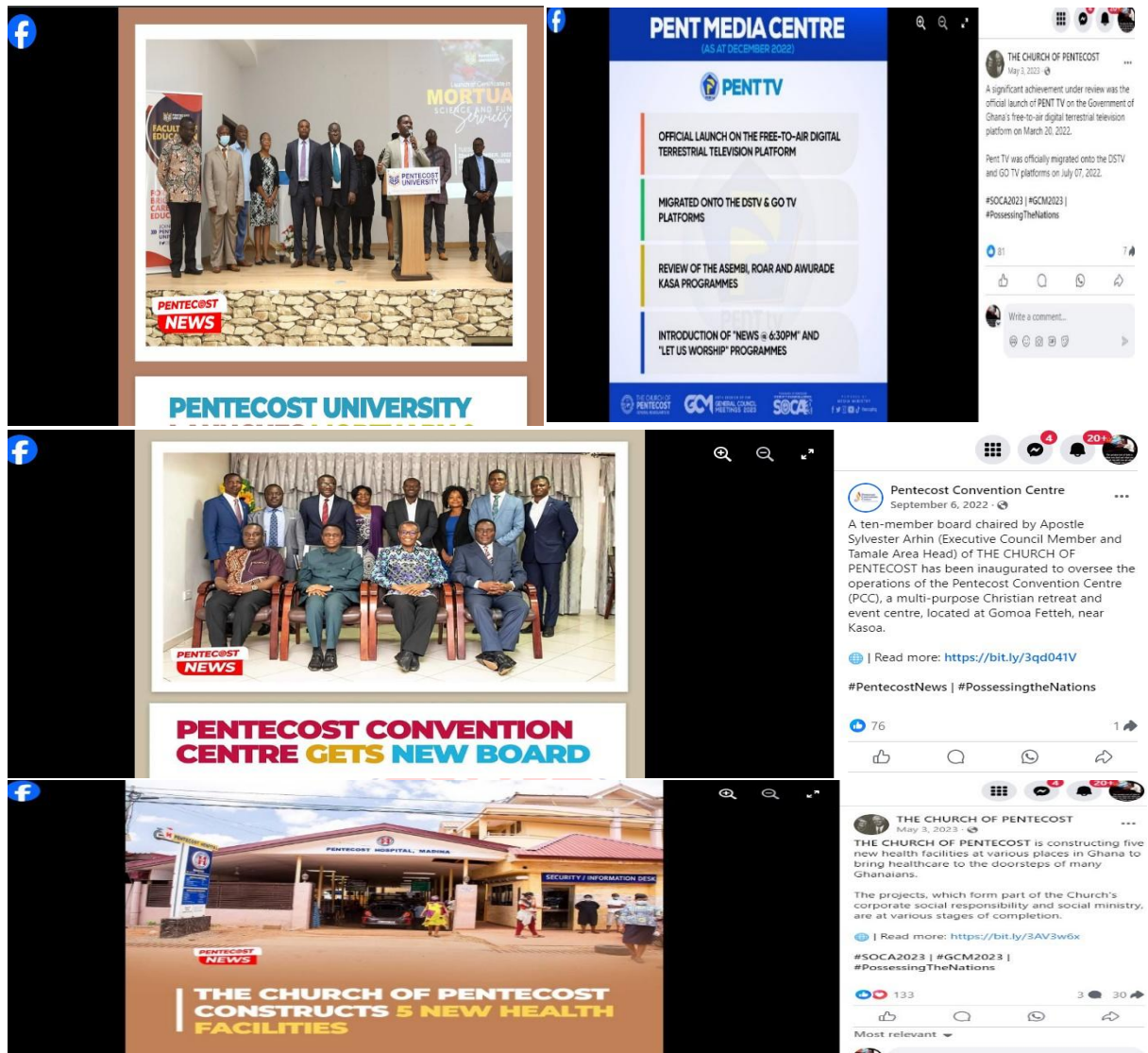


Figure 8: Posts Showing Some Business Enterprises of the COP

Ultimately, by showcasing affiliated organisations and institutions, they underscore their commitment to holistic ministry and a sense of resourcefulness a sense of growth, vitality, and purpose as earlier indicated by Lineham (2021). Overall, the COP and AG portray themselves as successful and well-resourced organisations, evident through the photos and videos they share on their Facebook pages. This presentation is especially notable in the grandeur of their buildings, the attire worn by preachers and church leaders, the nature of events they host, and the meticulous event setups. Furthermore, their commitment to managing various ventures is demonstrated through the establishment of dedicated Boards and Committees (See figs. 8&9). The presence of

professionally edited and polished visuals and content on their pages suggests a significant investment of financial resources and attention to detail.

This self-presentational posture aligns with a growing body of literature and research that explores the involvement of religious organisations, including churches, in non-denominational business ventures and broader socio-economic activities (Sawy, 2022; Moon, 2020). For instance, Moon (2020) noted that churches are increasingly monetising existing church resources, incubating new businesses, and establishing hosts of non-profit ventures in order to be self-sufficient and not overly rely on offerings and tithes. Similarly, other scholars observed that this attitude and impression positions such churches as reputable institutions as well as financially capable to fund their operations (Sawy, 2022; Lineham, 2021; Munyoro & Ncube, 2020).

Observations by previous scholars (Esen & Calistan, 2018; Jaworski & Bucious, 2017) which posit that organisations generally wish to be perceived as well-resourced and successful, is instructively compatible with this finding. Although these researchers made this assertion based on data drawn from profit-oriented organisations (Esen & Calistan, 2018; Jaworski & Bucious, 2017), the dynamics does not appear to be so different from religious organisations. Fulton (2022), for instance, hinted that there are so many similarities between the way for-profit organisations and faith-based organisations portray themselves. The evidenced portrayals of acclaimed successful ventures of these churches suggest a deliberate self-presentational posture to project these religious organisations as a carefully managed entities that have the potentials of giving birth to other establishments. This self-presentational posture by the churches also reflects Cudjoe and Amo-Mensah's (2021) position that organisations could rely on their possessions to project themselves as well-resourced and prominent.

Meanwhile, in a paper by Kitawi and Irungu (2015), it was suggested that projecting church-owned businesses is a way of communicating the sustainability and self-reliance of the church.

Based on these scholarly positions, this study makes the argument that the portrayal of businesses owned by the AG and COP is a strategic move to make these Pentecostal churches and their businesses attractive to all manner of target stakeholders. This self-presentational posture also reflects the concept of sustainability disclosure (Esen & Calistan, 2018). According to Esen and Calistan (2018), sustainability disclosure refers to the practice of transparently communicating the environmental, financial, social, and governance performance or initiatives of an organisation to its stakeholders and the public. The scholars indicate that this could be a self-presentational move to appear successful, well-resourced and well-managed to attract investors and target markets.

Based on the data drawn from this study, the aforementioned scholarly positions and making arguments from the perspective of Goffman's (1959) self-presentation theory, it can be inferred and suggested that the churches' portrayal of their involvement in variety of businesses is a well-thought-out posture to appear significant. The fact that they were silent on their challenges but significantly highlighted their achievements makes this presentation largely assertive (Jones, 1990), and also fits into Leary's (1996) argument that self-presentation is manifested through attitude statement. In the context of self-presentation, an attitude statement refers to implicit expressions that convey an organisation's or individual's values, beliefs, or stance without explicitly stating them (Leary, 1996, Zargooni, 2007). By consistently showcasing business ventures and economic initiatives, the COP and AG indirectly communicate their values of innovation, sustainability, and resourcefulness. This conveys a message that the church

is progressive and committed to supporting its community beyond traditional spiritual roles.

At its essence, these churches Facebook posts did not explicitly state, "We are entrepreneurial," but by regularly featuring stories about its enterprises and economic impact, they implicitly signal an entrepreneurial mindset. This aligns with Leary's (1996) notion of attitude statements, where the church's values and priorities are conveyed through the nature of their posts rather than direct claims.

4.2.3 Leadership-Centric

A critical perusal of the Facebook pages of the COP and AG convey the impression that Facebook serves as a strategic platform for the churches to project themselves as leadership-driven organisations. This theme encapsulates posts that were made to communicate the idea of leadership. Based on data drawn from online observation and analysis of data, 172 posts constituting 23% were captured under this data category. Out of these 172 posts, 82 (10.9%) were obtained from the COP's page while 90 (12%) of them were from the AG's page. Essentially, these two churches highlight the importance of leadership and prominently feature their overseers and key leaders through a deliberate update of their pages with visuals and audio-visuals. Basically, the theme "Leadership-centric" refers to the strategic emphasis placed on showcasing the authority, guidance, and influence of church leaders in the churches' self-presentation on Facebook. This theme is characterised by the prominent visibility of the leaders of the AG and COP in social media content, where their roles, teachings, and decisions are consistently highlighted as central to the church's identity and mission.

On their Facebook pages, the churches upload various posts that showcase their leaders in different contexts. These posts often include photos of the overseers during

conferences, church events, birthdays, travels, and the commissioning of projects. By sharing these images, the churches provide a visual representation of their leaders' active involvement and engagement within the organisation. These posts create an immediate recognition of the leaders and their roles within the churches, establishing a sense of authority and prominence.

Although there is a clear similitude in how these two Pentecostal churches project leadership on Facebook, the COP tends to employ this self-presentational posture relatively more than the AG. The COP features their leader, through images, videos, and quotes from sermons, teachings, and public appearances, positioning him as the face and voice of the church. The church's online presence, including its visual branding and communication style, revolves around the identity, and personality of its leader, making him the focal point of the church's public image.

The AG, on the other hand, also accentuate programs, events, and initiatives directly associated with or led by the leader of the church, thereby reinforcing his authority and central role in the church's activities. Similarly, the church's official Facebook page has posts that convey messages, guidance, or directives directly from the church leader, often addressing the congregation and followers in a personal and authentic manner. Below are some leadership-related posts drawn from the AG's Facebook page:



Figure 9: Posts Indicating a Directive from the General Superintendent of AG

It is also worth mentioning that the churches use specific titles to refer to their leaders on Facebook. For instance, the AG refers to their overseer as the ‘General Superintendent or GS’, while the COP uses the term ‘Chairman’ to designate their head. By employing these titles consistently in their posts, the churches reinforce the leadership positions held by their overseers and convey a sense of organisational structure and hierarchy.

In addition to highlighting the overseers, the churches also give prominence to the spouses of these leaders on their Facebook pages. They upload posts featuring the leaders' spouses during church events, conferences, and other significant occasions. By doing so, the churches emphasise the importance of partnership and unity within their leadership structure, showcasing the support and involvement of the leaders' spouses in the ministry.

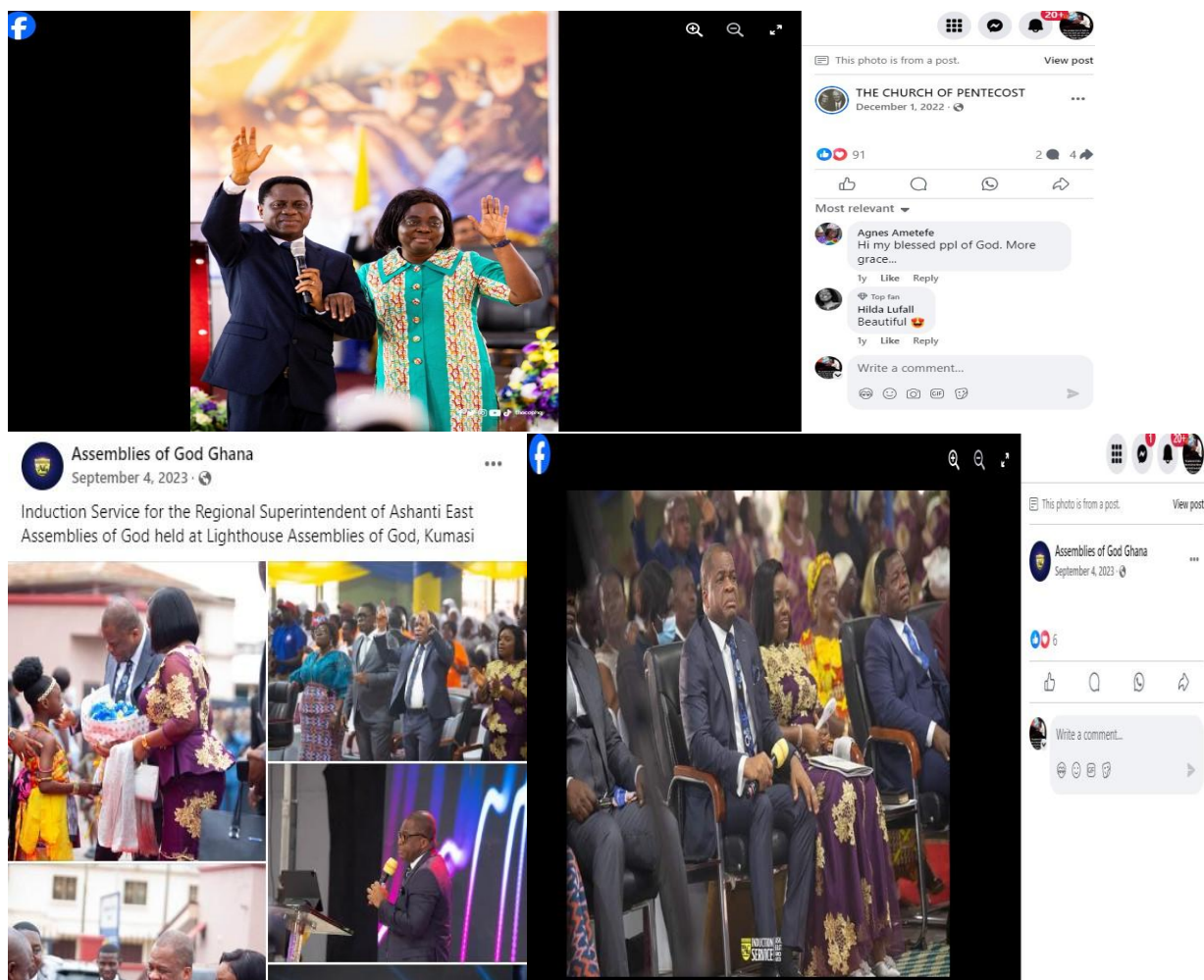


Figure 10: Posts Showing the Chairman and Spouse of the COP and GS and Spouse of AG Respectively

Meanwhile, the study extends the theme of leadership-centeredness beyond the individual leaders and encompasses posts related to leadership conferences and summits organised for pastors and other church leaders. The churches utilise Facebook to share photos and captions that suggest their expertise and thought leadership in training leaders. By highlighting these events, the churches position themselves as institutions that prioritise leadership development and are positioned to equip their pastors and leaders with the necessary skills and knowledge to lead effectively.

The COP, for instance regularly posts updates about Pastors' and Church Leaders Conferences, emphasising the value they place on equipping their leaders with the tools

for effective ministry. Similarly, the AG shares posts about their ‘Transformational Leadership Conference’, which brings together leaders from various branches of the church. These posts reflect the churches' commitment to fostering leadership excellence and positioning themselves as authorities in leadership training and development.

Additionally, these two Pentecostal Churches update their Facebook pages with scriptural and philosophical quotes on leadership. It is also worth-noting that there are posts on the individual pages of both churches that suggest that they were engaged in joint leadership summits. Some of the posts that highlight the churches’ leadership-centredness are highlighted below.



Figure 11: Posts Highlighting a Leadership Conference Organised by the COP and AG Respectively

By strategically curating posts that feature their leaders, highlighting their titles, and emphasising leadership conferences and trainings, these Pentecostal churches project themselves as leadership-centric organisations on Facebook. These posts create a clear

and recognisable image of the church's leadership structure and emphasise their commitment to developing and empowering leaders within their community.

This finding aligns with Enweani and Eke's (2019) observation that Christian organisations are likely to rely on social media to market themselves as leadership-oriented institutions.

In their study to explore how some Nigerian churches use social media, Enweani and Eke (2019) indicated that their sampled churches post leadership contents in the form of quotes on being an effective leader and photos of leadership development programs that the churches organise. Since this presentation is also peculiar to the selected Ghanaian Pentecostal Churches, it is safe to say that Christian organisations deliberately position themselves as leadership-focused entities.

Although the concept of leadership-centric self-presentation, especially in the context of social media, is not extensively covered as a specific term in the extant literature, there are a number related areas of study that touch on how churches emphasise leadership in communication strategies (Olsin & Esplin, 2021; Watkins, 2021; Zijderveld, 2023). These studies often explore broader themes such as religious branding, the role of charismatic leadership, and the use of digital media for church outreach. For instance, Zijderveld (2023) noted that social media could be an avenue for legitimising the authority of church leaders, projecting them as authentic and charismatic authorities of the Christian faith. This is evident in how both the AG and the COP use Facebook to highlight their leaders. Through regular posts, videos, and quotes, these churches project their leaders as not just organisational heads but as spiritual authorities whose guidance is divinely inspired. For instance, the AG and COP both share daily devotional content, such as "The Daily Rhema," and "Daily Bread"

delivered by their General Superintendent and Chairman respectfully. This does not only reinforce the leaders' role as spiritual guides but also builds a consistent image of the leader as a daily, reliable source of spiritual nourishment.



Figure 12: Posts of the AG's 'Daily Rhema' (above), A Daily Devotional and COP's 'Daily Bread' (below) on Facebook

Findings from the study also align with Asamoah-Gyadu's (2020) postulation that Pentecostal churches convey images of their leaders as anointed, revered, and influential to their faith. Portrayals of leaders by these two Pentecostal churches reflect a self-presentation strategy of constructing a leadership image that commands respect and veneration, which in turn reinforces the leaders' authority over the congregation. This method of self-presentation ensures that the churches followers view their leaders not just as administrative figures but as essential intermediaries between the divine and the faithful as suggested by Asamoah-Gyadu (2020).

Additionally, Schnabel (2023) asserted that communicating hierarchy could be a self-presentational posture of religious groups to be seen as organised. In light of Schnabel's (2023) viewpoint, it is instructive to suggest that both churches use Facebook to subtly assert their structured leadership hierarchies, which serves to enhance their image as organised and authoritative institutions. Through emphasis on leadership, particularly the projection of their leaders and involvement in leadership programmes, these churches convey a sense of order and clear governance, which can be appealing to followers who seek stability and structure in their religious lives. In providing the nine fundamentals of a healthy church, Dever (2021) highlights the importance of leadership in providing direction and shaping the public image of a church. The Assemblies of God and the Church of Pentecost leverage their leaders' visibility on Facebook to not only guide their congregations spiritually but also to craft a public image of the church as a well-led, mission-focused organisation. This deliberate portrayal aligns with the self-presentation strategies these churches use to ensure that their public image reflects their core values and leadership-centric orientation.

The leadership-centric portrayal of these churches seamlessly aligns with Goffman's dramaturgical concept. Goffman's theory posits that social interactions resemble a theatrical performance where individuals and organisations manage their "front stage" to control how they are perceived by others (Goffman, 1959). In this context, the churches' Facebook profiles act as their "stage," where leaders are presented as central, authoritative figures, carefully curated to project an image of spiritual charisma, wisdom, and organisational competence. This approach also mirrors Leary's (1996) self-presentational tactic of attitude statement, where self-presenter subtly expresses their values, beliefs, and identity through the attitudes and behaviours they display, rather than through explicit declarations or what Leary (1996) calls 'self-description'.

The deliberate showcasing of church leaders as authentic and influential figures is a strategic move to delicately convey the church's mission and spiritual authority, aligning with the values and expectations of their audience. Zargooni (2007) supports this by indicating that on social media platforms, self-presenters frequently use attitude statements to project esteemed identities and establish reputations, as it allows them to communicate their core attributes in a non-overt yet impactful manner.

In addition to attitude statements, other self-presentational postures commonly employed by organisations online include ingratiation and exemplification (Mulwa, 2021). In the self-presentation of these Pentecostal leaders on Facebook, the tactics of ingratiation and exemplification could play significant roles in shaping public perception. Ingratiation involves efforts to make leaders more likable and relatable, which is often achieved by sharing content that humanises them and fosters a sense of connection with the audience (Jones, 1990; Hatch, 2023). For instance, sharing affirmative and encouraging messages by the General Superintendent of the AG and the Chairman of the COP could be analysed as an attempt to position these leaders as empathetic to the emotional and spiritual needs of their followers. In essence, posts featuring words of inspiration, motivational quotes, or prayers contribute to a perception of the leader as someone who is empathetic and supportive, further strengthening the bond between the leader and the community (Olsin & Esplin, 2021; Watkins, 2021). Active engagement on social media, such as participating in live sessions, also reinforces this connection by making leaders appear accessible and invested in their followers' well-being.

This multifaceted approach to self-presentation on social media platforms aligns with both Goffman's (1959) and Leary's (1996) frameworks, demonstrating how these

churches strategically manage their online presence to maintain and enhance their reputation and influence. Such strategies are practical and verifiable, as evidenced by the consistent patterns observed in their social media activity, where leadership is portrayed as the cornerstone of their organisational identity. This careful management of public perception underscores the significance of leadership in shaping not only the church's internal dynamics but also its external image and influence in the broader community.

4.2.4 Philanthropy

Another compelling way the COP and AG engage in self-presentation on Facebook is through altruism. The study essentially defines the theme philanthropy as engaging in acts of volunteering, charitable giving, and compassionate behaviour towards others. Scholars have however indicated that Facebook has emerged as a significant channel for projecting organisational philanthropy (Cudjoe & Amo-Mensah, 2021). This position is reflected in findings from the present study owing to the fact that 14% of analysed Facebook posts by the selected churches revolved around humanitarian projects and philanthropic endeavours. These churches effectively utilise Facebook as a platform to showcase their commitment to humanity and demonstrate their acts of kindness and generosity. The selected Pentecostal churches leverage Facebook to share photos and stories about their involvement in various humanitarian initiatives. These posts often feature images of free health screenings conducted by church volunteers, donations made to hospitals or medical facilities, and support provided to individuals in need of covering medical expenses. By highlighting these activities, the churches project an image of compassion and care, emphasising their dedication to improving the well-being of others. However, one striking observation in connection to this theme is that although the two churches tend to project prosocial and selfless identities on

Facebook, the COP is conspicuously ahead of the AG in this portrayal. Comparatively, the COP shows this self-presentation posture than the AG. Out of the 106 posts (14.2%) recorded for this theme, the COP recorded 70 that is 9.4%, with the AG recording 36 constituting 4.8%.

The COP, for instance, updates the Facebook page with posts about their participation in community service projects like general cleaning, fundraisers, and awareness campaigns aimed at addressing social issues such as sanitation, poverty, hunger, homelessness, and education. By actively engaging in these events and sharing their involvement on Facebook, the church demonstrates their commitment to making a positive impact in society and rallying their followers to join in these endeavours. In addition to these efforts, the COP showcases their support for the elderly, widows and veteran pastors through Facebook posts. They share stories and images of visits to nursing homes, distribution of care packages, and organising special events to honour and appreciate the contributions of senior citizens and veterans. These posts reflect the churches' recognition of the value and importance of these individuals within the community, projecting a sense of respect and gratitude. Some of philanthropic-related posts obtained from the COP's Facebook page are shown below;

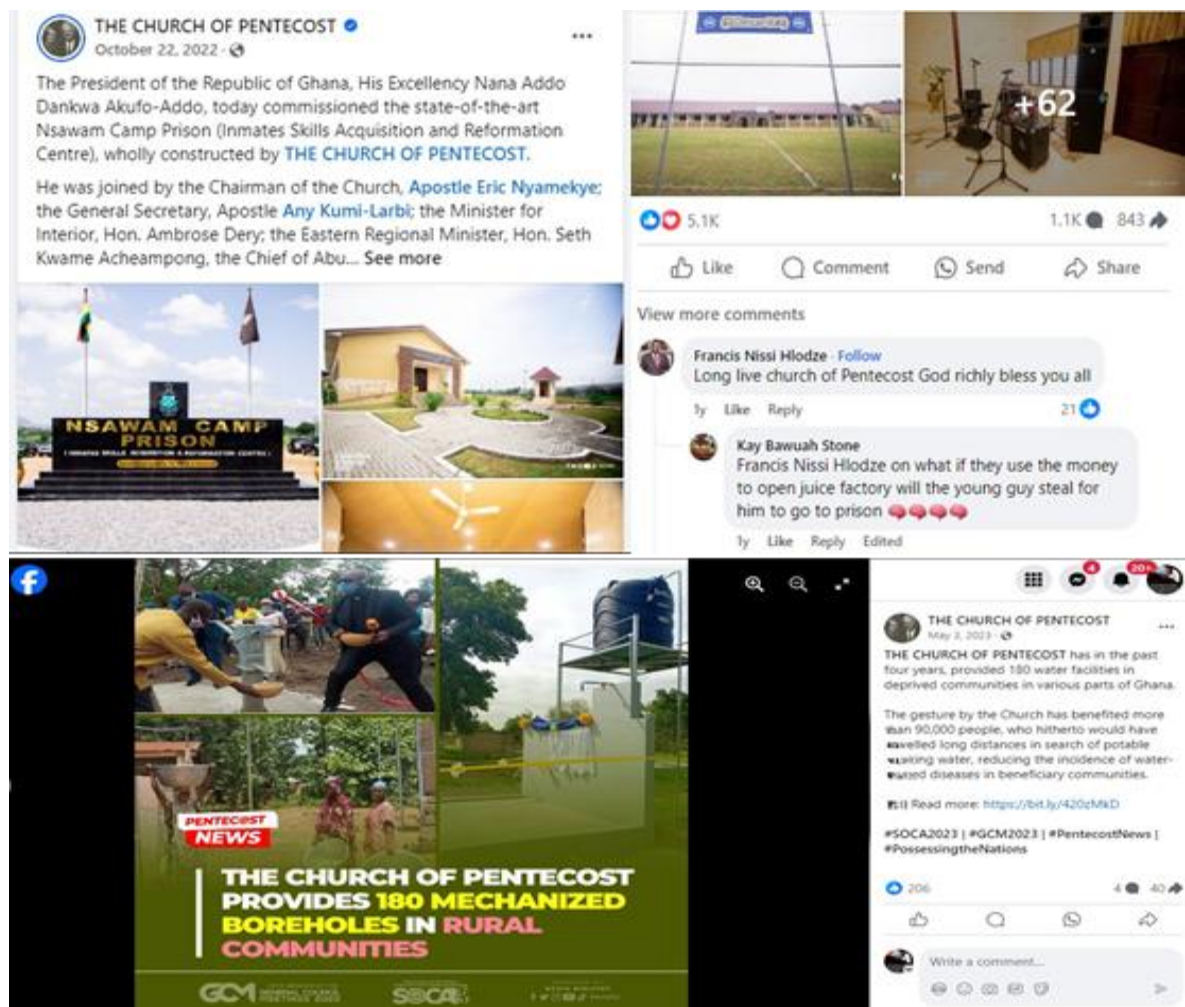


Figure 13: Facebook Posts Showing Humanitarian Projects Undertaken by the COP at the Nsawam Prison and Some Rural Communities in Ghana

Just like the COP, the AG also projects this self-presentational posture on Facebook. The AG similarly shares posts and photos of their engagements in initiatives such as free health screening, donations to orphanages, visitation to disaster victims, as well as showcasing their support for bereaved families. By sharing photos, stories, and updates about their humanitarian projects, donations, support for the aged and veterans, and assistance to bereaved families, the AG effectively communicates their commitment to serving others and making a positive difference in the lives of individuals and communities. These posts do not only highlight the churches' acts of kindness but also inspire their Facebook followers to participate in acts of compassion and generosity.

Some philanthropic-related posts retrieved on the AG's Facebook page are shown below:



Figure 14: A Post showing AG Presenting Relief Items to Flood Victims at Weija

These observations reaffirm previous findings in the literature (Belanova et al., 2022; Okyerefo, 2017). In a study by Belanova et al. (2022), it was established that Christian organisations utilise social media platforms to present Christianity as a pro-social entity with a genuine concern for making positive impacts in society. Findings from Belanova et al.'s (2022) study highlighted that these organisations strategically leverage social media to showcase their engagement in philanthropic endeavours, acts of kindness, and community service. Meanwhile, Okyerefo (2017) posits that Pentecostal churches are making deliberate efforts and adopting mass media networks to communicate their commitment to social responsibility and demonstrate their active involvement in activities that benefit others. By utilising social media in this manner, it could be suggested that these religious organisations aim to shape public perceptions and promote a positive image of Christianity as an influential force for good in society. In consequence, they leverage the reach and accessibility of social media platforms to

amplify their philanthropic efforts, inspire others to get involved, and foster a sense of community and collective responsibility.

The literature on churches portraying altruism or philanthropy on social media highlights the strategic use of these platforms to enhance their public image and reinforce their moral and spiritual authority (Campbell & Tsuria, 2021; Espinoza, 2022). According to Campbell and Tsuria (2021), social media offers religious organisations an opportunity to publicly display their charitable activities, which can help them build a positive reputation and increase their influence both within and outside their congregations.

Moreover, others also argue that the portrayal of altruism and philanthropy on social media can serve as a form of digital evangelism, where the good works of the church are used to attract new followers and deepen the faith of existing ones (Rotter, 2021; Wu, 2022). This is, particularly effective, in an era where visual and narrative storytelling on platforms like Facebook and Instagram can evoke strong emotional responses, leading to greater engagement from audiences (Lim & Childs, 2020). It was suggested that the act of publicising philanthropic efforts can also foster a sense of community among followers, as they see their contributions being put to good use, which can increase their loyalty and participation in the church's mission (Wu, 2022). Thus, it can be argued the strategic portrayal of altruism and philanthropy on Facebook by the COP and AG not only fulfils the religious mandate of serving others but also strengthens the churches brand and outreach efforts (Horsfield, 2015; Campbell & Tsuria, 2021). This clearly dovetails with the idea of self-presentation (Grishaeva & Shumkova, 2021). According to Grishaeva and Shumkova (2021), the portrayal of

appealing and sentimental values on social media platforms by churches is a self-presentational effort to establish affinity with target audiences.

In view of Jones' (1990) techniques of self-presentation, there are active deployments of the technique of ingratiation by the selected churches on Facebook as a means to portray Christianity and Pentecostalism as altruistic entities. Ingratiation, as a technique of self-presentation, refers to communicative strategies used by individuals to manage impressions and project a likeable image (Jones, 1990). Ingratiation clearly aligns with the performance of pro-social behaviours such as charity, philanthropy and advocacy (Hart et al., 2020; Stratulat, 2019).

In the same vein, gestures such as offering assistance, performing favours, and demonstrating support and benevolence towards others align with the self-presentation technique of ingratiation. By employing ingratiation, the selected churches strategically position themselves as organisations that embody kindness, compassion, and generosity. These actions are strategically aimed at establishing a positive perception of the churches and fostering admiration and likeability among their followers and that is why efforts were made to put out altruistic ventures on Facebook. Taking a look through Goffman's Dramaturgical lens (Goffman, 1959), it is accurate to say that this is a front stage performance. In his book, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman (1959) hinted that the portrayal of charity is largely self-presentational. Stratulat (2019) also highlighted that ingratiation is a peculiar self-presentation technique that organisations deploy in their attempt to create favourable impressions on their audiences. Fereday (2017) suggests that ingratiation could be used by churches as a way of asserting their religious identities in virtual communities.

4.2.5 Socially Aligned

Another fascinating finding that came to light during the online observation and analysis of the Facebook pages of the selected churches is their intentional efforts to project their influence and social connections within the country. Through strategic Facebook posts, these churches position some individual church members and leaders of the church as voices of authority on national issues. Some Facebook posts also demonstrate relationships and engagement that the churches have with influential figures in society. Based on the analysis of the data corpus, the study defines ‘socially aligned’ as the churches’ affiliations with authoritative figures or prominent people in the Ghanaian society. This in a way highlights the churches connection to broader social structures, values, norms, or influential networks.

On the Facebook pages of the AG and COP, there are posts that depict some members of the church actively participating in national discourse. A total of 63 (8.4%) posts featured their leaders speaking on significant national topics through various media channels such as television and radio. These posts seek to inform their audience about the churches’ active involvement in shaping public opinion and contributing to national discourse. By featuring these engagements, the churches present themselves as entities that have a voice in influencing public opinion and policy.

The AG, for instance, recorded 33 (4.4%) Facebook posts to document visits made by their leaders to traditional authorities, government officials, and diplomats. These posts signify the church’s social ties and relationships with influential figures in society. By sharing images and stories of these visits, the church seems to convey that their leaders are respected and recognised by prominent individuals and organisations. This

presentation serves to enhance their credibility, positioning them as influential entities within the social fabric of the country.



Figure 15: A Post Showing GS of AG in Exchange with Vice President of Ghana, Dr. Bawumia



Figure 16: A Post Showing the General Superintendent's Visit to the Ashanti Chief, Otumfour Osei Tutu II

In the same vein, 30 Facebook posts, that is, 4% are created by the COP to extend good wishes and felicitations to their members who have attained promotions in various social, academic, employment, and entrepreneurial pursuits or have accomplished noteworthy achievements within Ghanaian society. The COP churches strategically

showcase their affiliation with prominent individuals in academia, government, business, and the arts, emphasising their membership and the connection they have with the church.

Also, Facebook is used by the COP to portray their alliance or the connections between their leaders and traditional authorities in Ghana like the King of the Ashanti Kingdom and the Overlord of Dagbon. In essence, by strategically projecting their leaders' engagement in national discourse and showcasing their social ties with influential figures, the selected Pentecostal churches present themselves as socially influential entities. These posts aim to convey that the churches have a recognized presence in shaping public opinion, influencing national discussions, and enjoying social connections with prominent individuals. Such portrayals contribute to the churches' branding and perception as influential institutions within the broader societal context.

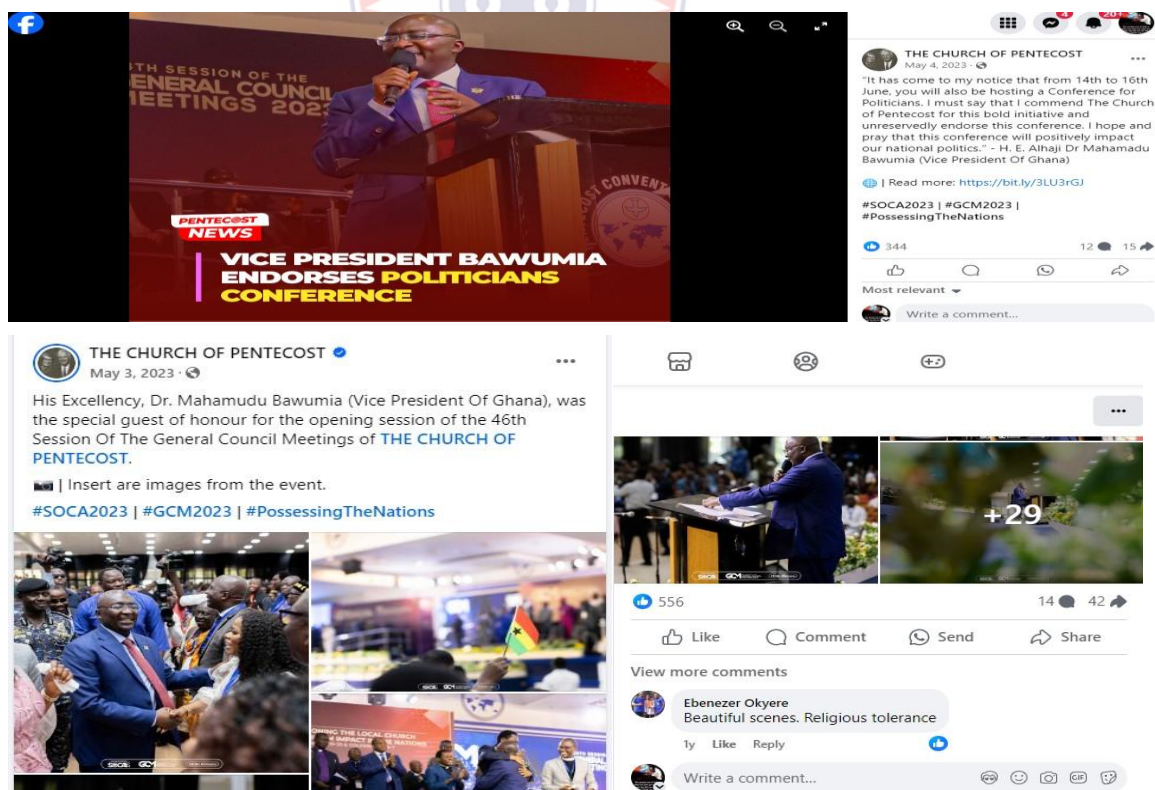


Figure 17: Posts Showing Dr Bawumia Gracing the General Council Meeting of the COP



Figure 18: A Post Showing the Chairman of the COP with the Overload of the Goaso Traditional Council

By portraying their association and relationships with authority figures and prominent social actors in the realms of governance, education, and traditional leadership, the COP and AG seek to project an identity of being socially credible. There is some consistency between this finding and Zijderfeld's (2023) observation that religious leaders are increasingly projecting their affinities with prominent figures in their societies. In a study by Zijderfeld's (2023) to examine how some selected European religious leaders project their authorities on Instagram, it was observed that religious leaders post photos of themselves with famous politicians, media celebrities and sports teams in order to show some symbolic association with people of influence. Analysing this data via the lens of Goffman's (1959) self-presentation theory, Zijderfeld (2023) argues that this presentation is a calculated attempt by religious leaders to establish a socially relevant image through their front stage performativity. Meanwhile, scholars such as Ward (2020) indicated that accentuating photos with prominent people on social media is an attempt to enhance one's authority and garner public recognition. Essentially, photos

uploaded by AG and COP are inarguably an effort to create socially endearing impression of themselves.

These portrayals on Facebook by the selected Pentecostal churches align closely with Leary's (1996) tenet of self-presentation by association. Leary (1996) identifies social association as a key tactic in self-presentation, where individuals create ideal impressions by emphasising their connections with prominent figures rather than their own attributes. This indirect method involves highlighting relationships with celebrities, politicians, athletes, and other successful individuals to enhance one's own perceived worth and importance. Zargooni (2007) notes that this tactic is particularly relevant for online self-presentation, where the emphasis on such associations can effectively project an idealised image to others. For example, Cudjoe and Amo-Mensah (2021) found that the United Grand Lodge of England Freemasonry frequently employed this technique to highlight their connections with prominent world leaders who are members of the organisation.

The self-presentation by association posture by the COP and AG also aligns with the technique known of "basking in reflected glory." This concept, discussed by Cialdini and De Nicholas (1989), refers to a form of identity management where self-presenter highlights their social connections with prominent or successful individuals as a means of presenting an idealised version of themselves to others. By associating with individuals who possess a high level of social or professional success, these churches subtly leverage the accomplishments of others to enhance their own image. This aligns with Baumeister et al.'s (2005) observation that people—and by extension, organisations, tend to emphasise their affiliations with those who are successful or

positively regarded while downplaying or avoiding associations with those who have negative reputations.

The portrayal of connections with influential social figures and church members who have achieved significant success can be seen as a deliberate strategy to craft a favourable public image. This not only boosts the church's reputation but also fosters a sense of communal pride among its members, who may feel elevated by their association with such high-status individuals (Gonzales & Hancock, 2011). Moreover, the strategic display of these connections on social media platforms like Facebook allows these churches to reach a wider audience and reinforce their image as influential and successful institutions. This practice is particularly effective in the digital age, where social media serves as a key platform for impression management. By showcasing their ties with respected figures, these churches engage in a form of social validation, leveraging the perceived prestige of their associates to bolster their own standing within both religious and broader social communities (Mehdizadeh, 2010). The repeated emphasis on these associations not only enhances the perceived status of the churches but also helps to attract new members who may be drawn to the church's connections and influence.

4.3 Research Question 2

What are the Rationales behind the Online Self-Presentation of the Selected Pentecostal Churches?

This section of the study focuses on examining the rationales that underlie the online self-presentation with respect to the AG and COP.

Previous scholars, including Hollenbaugh (2021) and Cudjoe and Amo-Mensah (2021) have posited that online behaviours and portrayals are often inspired and driven by specific goals. According to Attrill-Smith (2018), individuals who engage in online self-presentation may consciously or unconsciously select and present certain aspects of themselves in fulfilment of particular motives.

To investigate the motivations behind the online self-presentation of the two selected Pentecostal Churches, the researcher relied significantly on the interview data. Initially, a thorough examination of the interview transcripts revealed five distinct thematic areas. However, as the analysis progressed, it became apparent that some of these themes were closely interrelated and overlapped in significant ways. Consequently, the researcher decided to merge these overlapping themes, refining the analysis into three comprehensive thematic areas: visibility enhancement and outreach purposes, reputation management purposes, and positioning the churches as thought leaders.

The thematic area of visibility enhancement and outreach purposes reflects the churches' efforts to increase their presence and reach on digital platforms, ensuring they remain accessible and relevant to both their current congregation and potential new members. Reputation management purposes emerged as another critical theme, highlighting how the churches use online platforms to carefully curate and manage their public image. Finally, the theme of positioning the churches as thought leaders captures the churches' aspirations to be seen as leading voices within the religious and broader social communities.

It is noteworthy that the interviewees from both churches consistently expressed similar viewpoints concerning these motivations. This convergence of perspectives underscores the shared strategic objectives of these churches in their online self-

presentation, revealing a shared approach to leveraging digital platforms for organisational growth and influence.

4.3.1 Visibility Enhancement and Outreach Purposes

In today's digital landscape, social media platforms offer churches unprecedented opportunities to enhance their online presence and connect with their members and audiences (Matobobo & Bankole, 2021; Nwachukwu, 2019). Interviewed participants emphasised that their members and target audiences are increasingly using social media platforms, a trend the churches have also recognised. The interviewees mentioned that this phenomenon necessitated the assertive use of social media to meet their members and audiences wherever they are. According to them, by establishing a strong online presence, the churches can connect with individuals who may not physically attend services but engage with them on social media. This motivation aligns with literature findings on the importance of adapting to evolving communication channels (Dawson, 2018; Parveen et al., 2017; Rasmussen, 2017).

Also, responses from the interviewees indicate that one of the underlying reasons for engaging in online self-presentation is to extend the churches' reach and impact of their missionary and evangelistic efforts. They expressed that through strategic use of social media, they were able to reach individuals across different geographic locations, including those in remote areas or countries with limited religious freedom. This expanded reach enabled them to share their beliefs, provide spiritual support, and fulfil their mission of spreading the gospel.

These excerpts from the interview data from the Social Media Managers of the COP and AG respectfully accentuates the discussion of this theme;

P-1:

You know, everyone is now on social media. So as a church if you are also not using these platforms, who will know you? You won't be known the way you want to. So basically, we use social media so that people can know about us and what we do. Otherwise, our own members will see us to be old-fashioned.

Another interviewed participant (P-2) also indicated that;

.....one of the key motivations behind our social media use is to expand our reach and visibility. By embracing social media platforms, we can extend our message to a wider audience beyond their physical locations when we embrace social media. The world would know of us through social media, something the traditional media might not be able to take care of.

These findings align with arguments made by earlier researchers about the potential of social media to amplify organisational visibility and reach (Faroudi, 2015; Parveen et al., 2017). According to Schlagwein & Hu (2017), human institutions have become fully aware of the diverse impacts of social media and are strategically incorporating its use into their communication arsenal with the intention of remaining relevant and visible in contemporary society. These churches also recognise the power of social media in attracting new members, engaging with the community, and spreading their message beyond geographical boundaries.

This finding underscores the viewpoint that Facebook pages serve as a powerful tool for organisations to gain visibility and step into the public spotlight. These platforms allow individuals and entities that share specific organisational goals and interests to “like” these pages, thereby engaging with various forms of content such as posts, articles, videos, audios, and photos (Pletikosa & Michahelles, 2013). Treem and Leonardi (2012) observe that organisations increasingly understand the importance of online visibility, prompting them to adopt more strategic approaches in how they

present themselves on social media platforms. Boyd and Ellison (2008) further argue that social media platforms are unique not merely because they facilitate relationships, but because they empower users to articulate their presence and significantly enhance their visibility.

For Pentecostal churches like the Assemblies of God and the Church of Pentecost, establishing a robust presence on Facebook has become integral to their digital strategy. It enables them to be part of the broader virtual landscape while effectively disseminating their messages to a global audience. The interview participants in this study strongly supported this notion, asserting that Facebook provides an efficient and accessible platform for churches to sustain their visibility and actively present themselves to a wide-ranging audience. They highlighted that Facebook offers a simple yet powerful way for churches to maintain an active online presence, often requiring only a weekly post to keep the church's activities, messages, and mission in the public eye.

Essentially, this strategic use of Facebook aligns with the broader motivations of these churches to ensure that their online self-presentation is consistent with their goals of outreach, visibility enhancement, and community engagement. By leveraging social media, these churches are not only able to engage with their existing congregations but also reach potential new members, thereby fulfilling their mission of growth and influence in both the digital and physical realms. The interviewees noted that this approach allows the church to appear vibrant and active with minimal effort, a sentiment that resonates with the churches' desire to appear dynamic and alive in the ever-expanding digital world.

Goffman (1959) explicitly stated that visibility is a core element of self-presentation, arguing that self-presenters optimise certain aspect of their performances and tactically select rewarding platforms so they can be easily noticed by their target audiences. Meanwhile, in a systematic review conducted by Hollenbaugh (2021) on self-presentation in the online context, it was found that visibility is a key motivator for individuals seeking to present themselves online. According to Hollenbaugh (2021), self-presentation driven by visibility involves intentionally portraying oneself in a specific manner to increase awareness and exposure to others.

Findings from this study is also consistent with observations by Cudjoe and Amo-Mensah (2021) that one of the goals of self-presentation on social media is to stay current with communication trends in order to capture the attention of target audiences. Essentially, individuals who desire to maintain visibility put effort into creating polished profiles, engaging in discussions on relevant topics, and sharing contents that showcase their expertise and experience (Hollenbaugh, 2021). Clearly, these dispositions that Hollenbaugh (2021) mentioned are largely evident in how the selected churches presented themselves on social media. The accentuations placed on evangelism, leadership, altruism and social ties using well-polished visuals suggest an effort to optimise their visibility on Facebook.

4.3.2 Reputation Management Purposes

Reputation management plays a crucial role in how organisations present themselves online, and the selected churches are no exception. By analysing the contents of their Facebook posts, and incorporating insights from interviewed participants, the researcher found that reputation management is evidently interwoven in churches'

social media practices. Additionally, findings from extant literature were relied on to support the analysis.

Interviewed participants emphasised that the churches wish to be known for all the honourable things they do. This motivation aligns with the concept of reputation management, where organisations actively shape public perception to maintain a positive image (Argenti & Druckemiller, 2018). By utilising social media platforms, the churches highlight their charitable work, community engagement, spiritual teachings, and positive impacts. They aim to cultivate a reputation aligned with their values and mission, ensuring that they are known for their benevolence, inclusivity, and positive contributions.

From the analysis, it was also found that one of the motivations behind the selected churches' social media use is to demonstrate transparency and authenticity. They leverage social media platforms to share real-time updates, behind-the-scenes glimpses, and personal stories of church leaders and members. This approach fosters a sense of trust and authenticity, as transparency is essential for maintaining a positive reputation (Coombs & Holladay, 2012). By openly showcasing their activities, practices, and values, the churches aim to build credibility and establish themselves as trustworthy institutions.

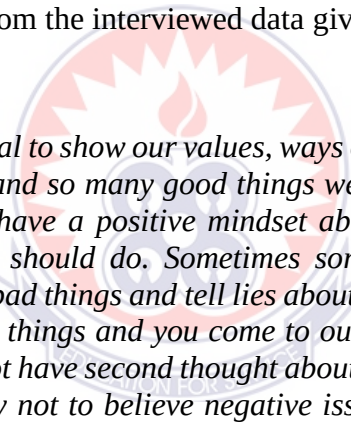
Interviewed participants also hinted that Facebook provides a platform for the churches to address misinformation and challenges that may arise. They indicated that in the digital age, false narratives and negative perceptions can spread quickly and so being active on social media gives the church a leverage to quickly tackle any wrong impression that could surface. According to the interviewees, who are managers of the

Facebook pages, social media channels are used by their outfit to provide accurate information, address concerns, and engage in constructive dialogue.

Meanwhile, testimonials and personal stories are powerful tools for reputation management (Fereday, 2017). The selected churches leverage social media platforms to share stories of transformation, testimonies of faith, and personal experiences of their members. By showcasing the positive impact, they have on individuals' lives, the churches strengthen their reputation as sources of inspiration, guidance, and support (Moss et al., 2015). These narratives resonate with their audience and contribute to a positive perception of the churches.

The following excerpts from the interviewed data give credence to this finding;

P-1



Using social to show our values, ways of doing things, social supports, and so many good things we do, you know makes people to have a positive mindset about us and what true Christians should do. Sometimes some people or entities could say bad things and tell lies about the Church but if you hear those things and you come to our social media pages, you will not have second thought about those things. You are more likely not to believe negative issues about the church when you are familiar with our page.

The second interviewed participant (P-2) also pointed out that;

These days, people say so many untrue things about the Christian body on social media. Sometimes you cannot engage them one on one to defend yourself. But if you are also presenting and managing yourself well on social media, these things won't fly. Everything we put on our social media is authentic and that is part of us.

The interview data clearly point to the fact that the selected churches aim to cultivate a positive reputation by demonstrating positive traits, transparency, authenticity, and responsiveness to challenges. Reputation management has been identified as one of the facets of self-presentation (Goffman, 1959). According to Goffman, self-presentation

serves as a crucial aspect of reputation management, contributing to both identity construction and image management functions. When individuals engage in the process of constructing impressions of themselves in the minds of others, they are simultaneously creating a reputation for themselves, as noted by Brown (2014). This process involves strategic choices and deliberate efforts to shape how others perceive them, ultimately managing their reputation.

Reputation management through self-presentation entails carefully selecting and presenting aspects of oneself to create a specific impression. It goes beyond mere self-expression, as individuals strategically control and shape how they are perceived by others (Fullwood, 2018). They actively construct their identity by highlighting specific characteristics, behaviours, and values that align with their desired image and reputation (Brown, 2014). Organisations understand that a sound reputation can lead to increased opportunities, social connections, and influence (Jaworska & Bucious, 2019; Stratulat, 2019). Conversely, a negative image or reputation may result in scepticism, exclusion, or limited opportunities.

This finding therefore reverberates arguments by Belanova et al. (2022) that religious organisations such as churches are effectively harnessing the power of social media to manage their reputation. According to Belanova et al. (2022), they carefully curate and present information on their social media profiles, select specific behaviours and language in social interactions, and align themselves with certain social groups or contexts that accentuate their religious dispositions. In the context of this study, the portrayal of rewarding alliances is arguably a reputation building strategy. This finding is also consistent with observations by Sircar and Rowley (2019) who indicated that

mega churches in England are actively using social media to build their brands and manage their reputation.

4.3.3 To Position the Churches as thought Leaders

The selected Ghanaian Pentecostal churches engage in online self-presentation on social media platforms with the intention of projecting themselves as thought leaders within the religious sphere. By strategically utilising online platforms, these churches aim to position themselves as knowledgeable and influential voices, fostering a perception of authority and expertise in matters of faith and spirituality. Based on online observations and responses drawn from interviewed participants, it is in place to suggest that social media platforms, particularly Facebook is used by these selected churches as an avenue to portray themselves as authoritative figures on social issues as well.

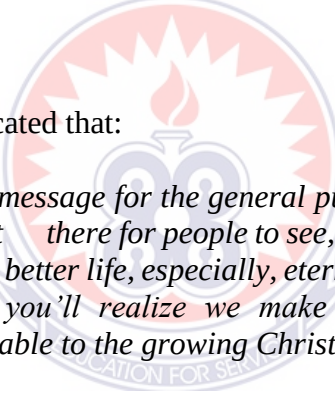
Online self-presentation allows these churches to share insightful and thought-provoking content that reflects their deep understanding of religious teachings and principles. They exploit social media platforms to disseminate well-crafted messages, including sermons, devotional reflections, and biblical interpretations. By consistently offering valuable and meaningful content, these churches seek to establish themselves as reliable sources of spiritual guidance and wisdom.

Through their online self-presentation, the churches demonstrate their commitment to intellectual engagement and the exploration of complex religious concepts. They actively contribute to ongoing discussions and debates within the religious community, offering their unique perspectives and interpretations. By showcasing their ability to provide nuanced insights, they aim to position themselves as thought leaders who can guide individuals in their spiritual journeys.

Online self-presentation also allows these churches to engage with wider audiences beyond their physical congregations. By reaching individuals who may not have direct access to their physical services, they expand their influence and impact. Through their online presence, they attract individuals who are seeking intellectual stimulation, thought-provoking discussions, and a deeper understanding of their faith.

The churches' online self-presentation as thought leaders is evident in their strategic use of language, their ability to tackle complex theological topics, and their commitment to providing a platform for intellectual and spiritual growth. By projecting themselves as thought leaders, these churches aim to attract individuals who are looking for guidance, inspiration, and a community that values intellectual exploration within the context of faith.

An interviewee (P-2) indicated that:



We have a message for the general public and we just want to put it out there for people to see, for people to hear and then have a better life, especially, eternal life. When you visit our page, you'll realize we make the tough scriptures understandable to the growing Christian and everyone else.

P-1 also pointed out that:

Social media is a tool we use in showing the world that we are a Christian organisation that understands how to be in-tune with the Word.

This finding aligns with the assertions made by Baker and Smith (2018), who examined the dynamics of online religious communication. In their study, they argued that religious organisations, including Pentecostal churches, often strategically present themselves as authoritative voices on matters of Christianity and religion. By sharing religious content, offering scriptural interpretations, and engaging in theological discussions, these churches actively position themselves as thought leaders and experts in the domain of faith. This strategic self-presentation is crucial for maintaining their

influence and authority within the religious community, particularly in the digital age where visibility and credibility are closely linked to an organization's ability to articulate its expertise and leadership.

Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical theory supports this notion by suggesting that self-presenters are frequently motivated to portray themselves as experts in a way that is both convincing and diplomatically sound. This aligns with the observed practices of the selected Pentecostal churches, which appear to carefully curate their online presence to project an image of theological and spiritual expertise. Their approach to self-presentation is not overtly boastful but rather measured, aligning with Goffman's idea of presenting oneself as an expert in a subtle and credible manner.

The analysis of the churches' online activities further suggests that this projection of thought leadership is not accidental but is a deliberate strategy that incorporates the self-presentational technique of attitude statement, as described by Leary (1996). Through attitude statements, these churches subtly communicate their positions on various religious matters, thereby reinforcing their authority and leadership in the religious discourse. This technique allows them to assert their viewpoints and theological stances while fostering a perception of wisdom and insight among their followers.

By engaging in these practices, the churches not only establish themselves as leaders within their faith communities but also gain the trust and respect of their audience. This trust is essential for their continued influence and growth, as it enables them to guide their followers and shape the broader religious conversation. In this way, the motivation to present themselves as thought leaders is intricately woven into their online self-presentation, manifesting through carefully crafted content that emphasizes their

expertise and authority in matters of faith. The strategic use of attitude statements and diplomatic self-presentation underscores the sophisticated approach these churches take in navigating the digital landscape, ensuring that their voices are heard and respected in the ongoing religious dialogue.

4.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter of the study focused on the analysis and discussion of the data. Data for the study was gathered from the Facebook pages of the Assemblies of God, Church and the Church of Pentecost. The data were examined via the lens of the self-presentation theory, coupled with extant related literature. The first research question delves into the online self-presentational postures of the selected churches and found that the two churches presented themselves as evangelistic consortia, leadership-driven, altruistic and socially influential. Relying on the interview data, the second research question however examined the rationales behind the online self-presentation and established that the churches were spurred by the desire to expand their visibility and outreach, to manage their reputation as well as to establish themselves as thought leaders in the arena of religion and Pentecostalism.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter serves as a summary of the entire study on the self-presentation of religious organizations on social media. It presents the conclusions derived from the analysis of data and offers relevant recommendations that would be beneficial to religious bodies. Furthermore, the chapter provides suggestions for researchers interested in conducting further studies on the topic of self-presentation of religious organizations on social media.

5.1 Summary

The present study sought to explore how selected Pentecostal Churches in Ghana employ social media, particularly Facebook for self-presentation purposes. The churches include the Assemblies of God Church, Ghana as well as the Church of Pentecost. These two churches were the torch-bearers of the Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council hence their selection for this study. The study was spurred by two key research questions. The research questions that underlie the study are as follows;

1. How do the selected Pentecostal churches present themselves on Facebook?
2. What are the rationales behind the online self-presentation of the selected Pentecostal churches?

Based on the exploratory nature of the study, the qualitative research approach was adopted. Data for the study was gathered through the unobtrusive online observation of the Facebook pages of the two selected churches. Interview data was also gathered based on the researcher's interaction with the administrators of the Facebook pages.

The data were subjected to qualitative content analysis and appropriate themes were developed to reflect the data.

Also, to exhaustively examine the data, Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical approach of self-presentation was adopted, as well as Leary's (1996) tactics of self-presentation. In view of the first research question, findings and analysis clearly suggest that the selected churches present themselves as evangelistic consortia on Facebook. This theme encapsulates posts on evangelism, spiritual engagements, devotions, preaching and fellowships as well as church services. Essentially, the churches portray themselves as institutions that are determined to propagate the gospel and draw people closer to God.

Findings also suggest that the churches were keen on presenting themselves as leadership-centric entities. This theme examines posts that were made to accentuate their leaders and their spouses, promote leadership events as well as quotes on leadership. Additionally, the AG and COP presented themselves as altruistic. The altruism theme highlights the churches' involvement in pro-social activities like philanthropy. Aside all these self-presentational postures, the churches portrayed themselves as socially influential. This theme encompasses their involvement with public figures, their leaders' contribution to national discourse and their members who were well-placed in society.

For the second research question, findings and analysis establish that the churches were assertively involved in online self-presentation as a way to expand their outreach and visibility, manage their reputation and identity, as well as to establish themselves as thought leaders in the Ghanaian society.

Based on the notions of dramaturgical approach and self-presentation tactics, the study found that the selected churches were deliberate in portraying a front stage persona that is engineered to resonate with the target audience. This was achieved to strategic selection and posting of well-edited photographs. Also, the AG and COP predominantly employed the attitude statement in indirectly presenting to reflect their desired selves.

5.2 Implications for the Study

The findings of this study offer valuable insights into how religious organisations in Ghana strategically manage their online identities. Specifically, the study reveals how the Church of Pentecost and the Assemblies of God Church engage in intentional self-presentation on Facebook. It highlights a shifting landscape in religious communication—from traditional, pulpit-based messaging to digital platforms that require conscious and strategic image construction.

This research underscores the relevance of self-presentation theory in explaining not only interpersonal online behaviour but also institutional identity management. The deliberate portrayal of these churches as evangelistic, leadership-centric, altruistic, and socially engaged entities suggests that religious bodies are increasingly conscious of their digital footprints and the reputational outcomes of their online presence. Consequently, this implies that social media managers within religious organisations are assuming roles similar to corporate communication or public relations officers, focusing on branding, audience engagement, and perception management.

Furthermore, the study suggests that online self-presentation has become a critical component of religious outreach and institutional growth. It reveals the potential for social media to influence public perception, foster religious affinity, and broaden organisational influence. This has broader implications for church leadership,

communication strategists, and public relations professionals within the faith sector, who must now integrate social media management as a central part of institutional identity-building and mission fulfilment.

Lastly, the findings imply that theological education and training programs in communication may need to be updated to reflect the increasing role of digital media in religious expression and administration. The study, therefore, contributes to expanding the discourse on strategic communication within religious contexts and offers a model for future research into how other faith-based institutions construct identities in online spaces.

5.3 Recommendations of the Study

Based on the insights derived from the study, it will be noteworthy to offer some recommendations. Findings suggest that the selected churches predominantly use Facebook for carving images and reputations without necessarily involving the followers in online interactions. In essence, majority of the self-presentational posts were informational and monologic in nature, limiting audiences' participation and interaction. Scholars such as Saxton & Guo (2014) mentioned that self-presentation is more fruitful if the self-presenter actively engages the audience in a two-way information exchange. Owing to this, the study recommends that the churches consciously interact with their followers using the comment section of Facebook and not to over-concentrate on uploading posts. If it continues this way, audience engagement on posts might hit a decline.

Secondly, the online observation suggests that the churches upload about 40-80 photos in a singular post. This approach might also reduce user engagement as they are bombarded with so many photos which they may consider pointless as indicated by

Wang, Li and Xie (2019). This study recommend that religious organizations should be calculative in the kind of photos they post.

5.4 Suggestions for Future Research

Based on the scope and findings of this research, similar studies could also be conducted in the future to look at how the selected Churches use other social media tools such as Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn among others. This would help understand whether the dynamics are the same or different. Additionally, other scholars could examine the comment sessions of these Pentecostal Churches to understand how their audiences react to their posts.

Meanwhile, future researchers can extend or widen the scope by looking at more Pentecostal Churches in Ghana. Essentially, comparative studies could be conducted to explore the similarities or differences between how the older Pentecostal churches and modern ones are engaged in the use of Facebook for self-presentational purposes.

5.5 Conclusion

The present study was set in the social constructivism paradigm. The qualitative approach was used and data was gathered through online observation and interviews. The study therefore concludes that the earliest Pentecostal Churches in Ghana are assertively using social media to position themselves as well-resourced evangelistic consortia which has influential social ties and are top of religious and social matters in the country.

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