A Comparative Study of the Use of Interpersonal Communication and Religious Advertising for Church Growth in Port Harcourt

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Abstract

Concerned for the level of persuasiveness of religious messages, this study was carried out to compare interpersonal communication with religious advertising in the growth of select churches in Port Harcourt metropolis. To accomplish this objective, a mixed-method of survey and semi-structured interview were used. Using the check market online sample size calculator, a sample of 377 subjects was drawn from a population of 18,450, to participate in the survey study. Six (6) respondents were involved in the interview segment. The questionnaire and semi-structured interview schedule were used to collect data for the study. The data collected were analyzed using frequency distribution tables, simple percentage and Weighted Mean Scores. The interview questions were analyzed using the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Findings showed that evangelization is practiced through such means as televangelism; sharing of posters, flyers and handbills; visitation to orphanages and hospitals; and open-air preaching and crusades; that both interpersonal communication and religious advertising have challenges which include controversially limited reach for interpersonal communication and high cost of running religious advertising. The study concluded that a combination of both interpersonal communication and religious advertising will not only be complementary to each other but that both of them will immensely drive church growth. It recommended, among other things, that Pentecostal churches' choice of either religious advertising or interpersonal communication or both should be reflective of the communication peculiarities and dynamics of the target audience.

Key Words: Religious advertising, Interpersonal communication, Evangelization, Church growth, the great commission

Introduction

From the days of the Apostles, communication, whether personal, interpersonal or group, has kept Christianity on the move. Driven by the great commission which demands that Christians should go across the nations preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and converting multitudes from sin to righteousness, religious communication has continued to evolve. Over the ages, religious communication has been mostly interpersonal and at other times group. The aptness of these types of communication was based on the circumstances at the time vis - a-vis the size of the targeted audience. Now, the audience for religious communication are burgeoning and at a tremendous speed. The interpersonal or group communication appears

not to adequately serve the purpose. Yet, it will be rather hasty to think that interpersonal communication has phased out with time. Suffice to say that it is still as effective as it was with the Apostles in terms of evangelism.

Interestingly, the development in technology is opening up newer communication frontiers. Poster (2001) notes that "on the eve of the 21st century, there have been two innovative discussions about the general conditions of life: One concerns a possible 'postmodern' culture and even society; the other concerns broad, massive changes in communication systems" (p.612). It is this massive change in communication systems that have given rise to better communication options. These options are those that facilitate faster, convenient communication, devoid of the impediments of time and space. These options have the tendency to reach many more persons than could be imagined.

For religious organizations, it seems that both interpersonal and mediated (religious) advertising go together; after all they have levels of strength and weakness. Religious organizations are fast exploring the option of religious advertising. This is in view of the fact that these religious advertisements target larger audience beyond the membership of the religious organization. This study, therefore seeks to compare interpersonal communication and religious advertising in the growth of select churches in Port Harcourt metropolis.

Statement of the Problem

Religious organizations always engage in persuasive communication. This type of communication is no easy task, especially as it borders on attempting to alter the target audience's perception, ideology, positioning and even worldview. This in itself requires some level of strategizing.

Evangelism is a form of advertising, and like every other advertising campaign planning, budgeting and even evaluation are sacrosanct. But, it does appear that members of religious organizations barely go through this process in their campaigns. Thus, lack of planning for religious messages and campaign either through interpersonal or mediated communication makes it difficult, first to decide what type of communication to adopt for what situation and the attendant effects of their messages. Impliedly, in some cases, campaign evaluation seems lacking. Communication has been studies widely but not much has been done concerning religious communication. This study was an attempt to contribute to the existing literature on religious form of communication.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Find out how Pentecostal churches in Port Harcourt use interpersonal communication and religious advertising in evangelism
2. Identify challenges in the use of interpersonal communication or religious advertising by select churches in Port Harcourt Metropolis in communicating to their audience members.

Research Questions

1. How do Pentecostal churches in Port Harcourt Metropolis use interpersonal communication and religious advertising in evangelizing to target audiences?
2. What challenges are there in the use of either interpersonal communication or religious advertising by select churches in Port Harcourt metropolis in communicating to their audience members?

Theoretical Review
Social Penetration Theory

Social Penetration theory was formulated by psychologist Irwin Altman and Dalmas Taylor in 1973. This theory is founded on the premise that relationships evolve from a sheer causal to a more intimate level through interpersonal interaction. The theory was developed to explain how information exchange functions in the development and dissolution of interpersonal relationships. Social penetration describes the process of bonding that moves a relationship from superficial to more intimate (Carpenter and Greene, 2016). The theory thrives on social intimacy between parties in a relationship.

Social penetration theory provides progressional relationship paradigm. Each phase of the social penetration is distinguished by layers. There is the superficial layers, middle layers, inner layers and the core personality layers. The superficial layers are made up of fairly peripheral information such as likes and dislikes in clothing and music. Middle layers include political views and social attitudes. Inner layers include spiritual values, deep fears, hopes, goals, fantasies and secrets. The core personality includes the most private information about a person (Carpenter & Greene, 2016). Accordingly, self-disclosure is the end point of a successful interpersonal relationship and communication. Altman (1987) maintained that interpersonal relationship progresses through four (4) stages to attain self-disclosure. They are the stages of social penetration theory, which includes: orientation, exploratory affective exchange, affective exchange and stable exchange.

Conversely, a number of criticisms trail the social penetration theory. For instance, the theory restricts social penetration to the success of a communication process without some consideration for other intervening variables like demography, social category, conditional factors (health status, crisis situations). Also criticized about the social penetration theory is limited scope. This criticism is borne out of the fact that the theory is mostly utilized to describe early stages of relationship development and how rating relationships develop over time but does not apply as well to coworkers, neighbors, or acquaintances (Carpenter & Greene, 2016).

Literature Review
A Review of Interpersonal Communication
This form of communication involves two persons, in some cases three. It can be DYADIC (between two people) or TRAIDIC (between three people), the sender is one person while the receiver can be one or more (Ndolo, 2005). The basic characteristic of this type of communication is that it is between two key players or entities. It is the most common type of communication (Nwabueze, 2014). The message is usually personalized and the feedback is immediate (Ndolo, 2005). The immediacy of the feedback is possible when it is fact-to-face. It could be delayed if the process is machine-assisted. Nwabueze explain that communication is machine assisted interpersonal communication where the process involves direct communication between a sender or group of senders and a receiver. Examples of machine assisted interpersonal communication are information exchange activities between two persons using telegraph, e-mail, or phone calls. Suffice to note that the machine-assisted communication has been made possible by advancement in Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

Imperatively, the success or otherwise of interpersonal communication is mainly predicated on the environment and the relationship between parties in the process. It is also important to stress that interpersonal communication is viewed in line with factors that are relational, situational, quantitative and functional. It relational (qualitative) when the roles of sender and receiver and shared by two people simultaneously in order to create meaning. The situational (contextual) factor occurs between people in a specific context, while the quantitative has to do with dyadic interactions including impersonal communication. The functional (strategic)

factor borders on communicating for the purpose of achieving interpersonal goals (see www.shodhganga.inflibret.ac.in>bitstream).

Interpersonal communication entails a whole lot of forms of communication. While it involves two persons engaging in verbal communication, interpersonal communication could be somewhat complex. The complexity is in the various communication forms that add up to the communication process and the outcome eventually. In interpersonal communication, information is exchanged through non-verbal means (Sethi & Seth, 2009). Accordingly, Hasan (2013) gives the following types of non-verbal communication that play out in between the interpersonal communication processes. They are: facial expression, eye behaviour, body movement, posture and gait, personal appearance, clothing, touching, proxemics, paralanguage, smell and taste and environmental factors. An explanation of a few of these factors will suffice. For instance, proxemics and paralanguage, as harmless as they seem, could either enhance or affect interpersonal communication. Hasan (2013) cited in Nwabueze (2014) explains that proxemics refers to factors surrounding the maintenance of distance between people as they interact. There is intimate distance for embracing, touching or whispering, personal closeness for interaction among friends or family members, social distance for interaction among acquaintances, and public distance used for public speaking (Hasan, 2013). By implication, the distance persons in an interpersonal communication maintain largely determines the success or otherwise of the interaction. This plays out especially in a formal scenario like evangelism. The same applies for paralanguage. Tones, pitch, range, tempo resonance (variation in volume of voice from quiet, thin level to loud, booming level) and quality of voice, all add value or otherwise to spoken words (Nwabueze, 2014). Nwabueze, observes that "pitch for instance can indicate the gender of a person. The tone of voice could indicate anger, surprise, happiness, love (including what is referred to as "bedroom voice") among others" (p.16).

Stressing the role of non-verbal communication in interpersonal communication, Sethi and Seth (2009) note that "when words are not enough or we are not able to speak with entire comprehension, non-verbal communication works visually" (p.23). So beyond what is heard through words is what is seen through actions and gestures. Signs or emotions or body language which are different forms of non-verbal communication tools are used in daily interpersonal communication. Emotions are of social importance in non-verbal communication because they have more meanings in them (Sethi & Seth, 2009). Different forms of emotions elicit different meanings. Sethi & Seth, maintain that "the reason for using non-verbal communication tools is that they provide sense to words or messages that one wants to send, and at the same time manage our conversation" (p.34).

Sethi and Seth (2009) list the following uses of interpersonal communication. Interpersonal communication can be used to:
   (i)   Furnish and gather information
   (ii)   Influence the stances and conduct of others
   (iii)   Develop acquaintances and preserve relationship
   (iv)   Formulate sense of the planet and our experiences in it.
   (v)   Utter personal desires and understand the desires of others as well.
   (vi)   Bequeath and take delivery of emotional joist
   (vii)   Make decisions and solve problems
   (viii) Cry to anticipate and envisage behavior

It is imperative to note that as seemingly simplistic as interpersonal communication looks, the conveying of intended meanings does not often come easily. Except otherwise, a number of impediments come in between the communication process. Lunenburg (2010) citing Shaw (2011) admits that "the greatest problem with communication is the illusion that it has been accomplished" (p3). Again, Eisenberg (2010) cited in Lunenburg (2010) enumerates four

types of barriers to effective interpersonal communication. They are process barriers, physical barriers, semantic barriers and psychosocial barriers (Eisenberg, 2010). The process barriers border on distortions within the communication components – sender barriers, encoding barrier, medium barrier, decoding barrier, receiver barrier and feedback barrier. The physical barriers could induce telephone call, drop-in visitors, and distances between people, walls and statics on the radio (Lunenburg, 2010). Semantic barriers arise as a result of the choice of words used and how they are used and the meaning we attach to them could affect the effect of the interpersonal communication process. Words could mean different things depending on the context it is used. So if the right word is used in the wrong context, the meaning might be distorted.

Sethi and Seth (2009) identify the following as barriers to ineffective interpersonal communication: sentiments, filtering, message crammed with information, defensiveness, cultural difference and argot. For sentiments, Sethi and Seth observe that intense emotions are most likely to encumber effective interpersonal communication as the idea or message may be misconstrued by the receiver. Cultural difference has been identified as another barrier in interpersonal communication. Culture could be a colossal encumbrance for effective interpersonal communication. Differences in culture often leads to misinterpretation of the meaning of what each person is trying to convey (Sethi & Seth, 2009). The last is the fact that certain social categories and societies have their argot/jargon words. The use of jargons in communicating with persons that are not of the same social category as the individual could impede effective interpersonal communication.

The responsibility of receivers lies in their being good listeners, putting the talker at ease, demonstrating being good listeners, removing distractions, empathizing with the talkers, being patient, holding their temper, going easy on argument and criticism, asking questions when necessary and stopping talking (see Lunenburg, 2010). Ultimately, both the sender and the receiver must be active listeners. Roger and Farson (n.d) give five guidelines that can help individuals involved in the interpersonal communication to become active listeners. They are: (1) Listen for message content, (2) Listen for feelings, (3) Respond to feelings, (4) Note all cues, verbal and nonverbal and (5) Rephrase the sender's message. The last guideline is the most powerful of the active listening techniques and it help the receiver of a message in interpersonal communication to avoid passing judgment or giving advice and encourages the sender to provide more information about what is really the problem (Lunenburg, 2010). However, Sethi and Seth (2009) recommend that in overcoming the barriers of effective interpersonal communication, the following points should be noted – the use of simplified language, emotion control, ardent listening and use of feedback. On the use of feedback, Sethi and Seth opine that the sender as a means of confirmation use closed-ended questions such as "Did you understand what I have just said? Or is "what I said clear to you? Or using an open-ended question to have the receiver recapitulate the message. This is to ensure that the receiver completely recognizes what the sender communicated (Sethi & Seth, 2009).

Understanding the Dynamics of Religious Communication
Religion is said to wield much influence on society. The same cannot be said any less of communication. At the point of convergence, religion and community hold tremendous potential to impact individuals and societies in more ways than one. In fact, not many factors have shaped the world as religion and communication have. Religious communication, therefore, is a form of communication by religious bodies and their members (leaders, followers and prospective followers) to communicate with one another. The intent of religious communication is to grow and sustain members' cognitive positioning about their religion. This is done through teachings, sermons, doctrines and dogma.

Religious communication is often aimed at instilling religious values that activate social identity boundaries that shape citizen attitudes (Djupe & Calfano, 2012). At the centre of religious communication is the need to continue to conscientize people on what religions organizations deem as "acceptable values". Religious values sit in the most obvious, credible purview of clergy to communicate how people should order their lives, and how religious communities should orient themselves to the world (Newport, 2007, cited in Djupe & Calfano, 2012). Suffice it to say that, there is a continuous quest for superiority among religious organizations. This, in some cases, is betrayed by their communication patterns. Arguably, religious communication has been the source of tension between groups and societies (Finke & Stark, 2005).

The Growth of Religion in Nigeria: Focus on Church Growth
Until the advent of colonialism in parts of Africa and indeed Nigeria, the people had always demonstrated brazen consciousness of the existence of a supernatural being. For instance, Olumati (2014) observes that prior to the advent of Christianity and Islam, there had been this perception by Africans who believe that invisible and visible forces account for human fortunes or misfortunes. The same worldview also teaches that human beings are fragile beings, at the mercy of many powers beyond their control (Kalu, 1978, cited in Olumati, 2014). It is this consciousness of the supernatural being that informs the positive values many scholars have observed are enshrined in African traditional religion.
Over the years, religion has been ingrained in the very fabrics of the Nigerian people. In fact Nigerians are deeply religious. Iheanacho and Ughadrumba (2016) observe that "Nigeria has a very rich religious environment replete with diverse religious groups, movements and denominations with a market of current and potential adherents" (p.287). They maintain that "the Nigerian space is alive with varieties of religious programmes, multiplicity of religious affiliations, faith systems, mosques, churches and houses of prayer and different categories of religious ministers" (p.287). Accordingly, in the last three decades of the twentieth century, Nigeria witnessed the emergence of more religious movements and groups than in the previous half century (Ukah, 2003). Christianity and Islam are the two most flourishing and influential religions in Nigeria (Iheanacho & Ughaerumba, 2016).
In recent times, Nigeria has witnessed a tremendous upsurge in the proliferation of churches. A majority of the proliferating Christian organizations are made up of what may be characterized as the Pentecostal and charismatic movements and ministries (Ukah, 2003). The proliferation of these churches is not a happenstance. Ukah (2003) citing Turner (1979), recalls that "the emergence of this group of churches is not altogether sudden. There have been some incipient forms of Pentecostalism on the religious landscape of Nigeria since the beginning of the twentieth century" (p.209). Several other accounts have been given about the growth of Pentecostalism (Peel, 1968, 2000; Ojo, 1988, cited in Ukah, 2003). Very important, the proliferation of Pentecostal and Pentecostal like churches in Nigeria, have been triggered by a number of factors. These factors are social, political, economic and religious. For instance, Kukah (1992) avers that the craving for spiritually followed the sense of disillusionment created by the Nigerian civil war in the 1960s, had instigated the growth of churches in Nigeria. However, Peel (2000) looks at the growth of churches viz Pentecostalism from an economic and political conditionality's.

Methodology
The research design of the study is the survey method. The population of the study comprised all selected Pentecostal churches in Port Harcourt Metropolis. From the available records obtained from the churches, the composite population comprised Living Faith Church (5,700) (church register, 2018); the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG, Rivers Province,

6210) (church register, 2018); Salvation Ministries (6,340) (church register, 2018) and Christ Life Jubilee Assembly International (200). Therefore, the population of the study was 18,450. The sample of the population was determined using the check market online sample size calculator, ad it was calculated to be 377. The study utilized the purposive and accidental sampling techniques. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the churches for interview while the accidental sampling technique was used to administer the instruments on respondents from the churches.

Data Analysis and Interpretation
Research Questionnaire 1:
How do Pentecostal churches in Port Harcourt Metropolis use interpersonal communication and religious advertising in evangelizing to target audiences?

Table 1: Responses on ways of using interpersonal communication and religious advertising by select churches in evangelization

Ways of Evangelising	SA	A	U	D	SD	WMS	Decision
Religious Advertising							
(i) Televangelism (use of radio and television in soul-winning)	59	171	5	86	30	3.4	Agreed
(iii) Use of posters, flyers and handbills	69	163	4	68	47	3.4	Agreed
Interpersonal Communication							
(iii) Open-air evangelism (like morning cry/call) and crusades	120	130	21	40	40	3.7	Agreed
(iv)Visits to orphanages, clinics and hospitals to preach to and pray for orphans/ patients	110	102	30	60	49	3.5	Agreed

Table 1 above shows that all the views expressed were endorsed by the respondents as the various ways through which people can be evangelized through interpersonal communication and religious advertising.

Research Questionnaire 2:
What challenges are there in the use of either interpersonal communication or religious advertising by select churches in Port Harcourt metropolis in communicating to their audience members?

Table 2: Responses on challenges in the use of either interpersonal communication or religious advertising by select churches

Challenge	SA	A	U	D	SD	WMS	Decision
Interpersonal Communication							
Limited reach	69	163	4	68	47	3.4	Agreed
Strenuous	35	130	6	108	52	2.8	Disagreed
Cost intensive	36	100	5	161	49	2.8	Disagreed
Ineffective communication	40	106	3	156	46	2.8	Disagreed
Not in tune with the times	34	109	6	154	46	2.8	Disagreed
Religious Advertising							
Messages are often fleeting (short-lasting)	59	171	5	86	30	3.4	Agreed
Strenuous	32	100	6	154	59	2.7	Disagreed
Cost intensive	55	176	5	95	20	3.4	Agreed
Ineffective communication	40	108	4	158	41	2.0	Disagreed
Not in tune with the times	20	100	5	169	57	2.6	Disagreed

The table above compares the challenges inherent in the use of interpersonal communication and religious advertising by select churches. For interpersonal communication, the greatest challenge is its limited reach as most respondents (163) agreed with this position while for religious advertising, the cost of embarking on religious advertising campaign is prohibitive as pointed out by most of the respondents (176). The implication of this result is that both interpersonal communication and religious advertising have some challenges; yet both are unique in their rights and their effect on church growth is predicated on their appropriate usage.

Presentation of Interview Result
Assessment of the Communication Strategies adopted by Churches for Evangelism
In responding to this, interviewee A noted that churches are dynamic in adopting communication strategies for evangelism. Interviewee A maintained that churches' choice of communication strategies is mainly dependent on their sizes and field experience. By field experience, interviewee A explained that "we follow up on the responses we get from either the interpersonal communication or religious advertising". Also, on the subject matter, interviewee B stated that their church largely practices interpersonal evangelism. Interviewee B insisted that "we are mainly into evangelism and this on a one-on-one basis. For us, the fact is that a number of our converts have been won through interpersonal communication and rigorous follow-up". For interviewee C, "we are both into interpersonal communication and religious advertising. What matters for us is the result we get in the adoption of both communication forms". Yet interviewees maintained that although bigger churches are more into religious advertising, interpersonal communication is a general communication form for all churches irrespective of the size.

Assessment of Churches Level of Adoption of Interpersonal and Religious Advertising
As a follow-up on churches' preferred communication strategies for evangelism, interviewee D maintained that churches are more into interpersonal evangelism than they are in religious advertising. He noted that "in my church, there is some level of understanding on evangelism among members … and many of us are into evangelism on personal basis". Obviously, "the church is complementing our individual efforts with religious advertising" interviewee D, added. For interviewee E, "the subject of evangelism is everybody's business. In fact, the Great Commission was handed to every individual … And so in my church, soul winning is

seen as a personal kingdom commitment and sacrifice. It is this understanding that drives most of us to the harvest field for souls … I believe my reward is not tied to religious advertising, both in the number of persons I bring to church through evangelism" interviewee E insisted. Interviewee F's submission, "I think in my church, both the interpersonal communication (one-on-one evangelism) and religious advertising (mediated evangelism) go together … it is impossible not to have the two go together, especially when there are very many persons to reach with the gospel". Interviewee F argued that evangelism has been made easier with technology. For instance, after evangelism, we follow-up members with SMSs and social media chats. Fliers alone will not effectively convince them, interviewee F, added. This position of the interviewees contradicts the finding in research question 1. Respondents preferred religious advertising to interpersonal communication. In this interview, more interviewees made a case for interpersonal communication and appear more in tune with it. However, it confirms research questions 2 and 3, both of which indicate that interpersonal communication and religious advertising are both used to a high extent by religious organizations.

Discussion of Findings
The finding from research question one (1) showed that evangelization can be practiced through televangelism; sharing of posters, flyers and handbills; visitation to orphanages, clinics and hospitals; and open - air evangelistic campaigns and crusades. These indeed are veritable evangelism outlets in preaching the word to the needy. The finding from research question 2 indicated that both the interpersonal communication and religious advertising have their attendant challenges. For instance, top on the challenge for interpersonal communication is its limited reach, while the cost of running a religious advertising campaign makes it challenging for its adoption by some churches.

Obviously, interpersonal communication is most geographically limited as churches only engage members and intending members through the word of mouth (Hayward, 2005). However, the finding contradicts Faniran (1998) who argues that rather than seeing "limited reach" as a challenge for the use of interpersonal communication for evangelism, churches should rather promote authentic communication. Promotion of communication from within the church through a better diffusion of information among the members will put it in a more advantageous position to communicate to the world the good news of the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ (Faniran, 1998).

Accordingly, Faniran (1998) suggests that to complement interpersonal communication, churches can evangelize through songs, music, mime, theatre, proverbs and fables, noting that "these are very useful and effective despite the pervading nature of modern media" (p.3). Faniran argues that with Christians seen in most parts of the world, "limited reach" is not much of a challenge. Faniran maintains that both the interpersonal and group communication are within the reach of every Christian. But it is a pity that little attention has been paid to them when structuring evangelization strategies. More than proclamation of ideas, evangelization is a witness of individual and community life which is truly Christian and which responds to the exigencies and values of the Gospel (Faniran, 1998).

Conversely, the finding on the challenge in the use of religious advertising confirms Tomaselli and Nkosi (2010) who observe that its adoption may be feasible for the well-heeled televangelists (who have used broadcasting to accumulate wealth and build their electronic empires). But it is fundamentally expensive for conventional and small Christian organizations. The cost of running religious advertising is way in excess of what conventional churches and other religious institutions can or be prepared, to afford (Tomaselli & Nkosi, 2010). For instance, fund raising becomes the prime appeal of the teleministries to be able to sustain their stations, or the purchasing of airtime (Tomaselli & Nkosi, 2010).

The point is that religion is a brand or product (Caputo, 2001; Einstein, 2008) and rigorous campaign must be put into its "sale". Understandably, the amount of money budgeted for religious advertising will most likely determine the churches' reach and membership. This in itself is expensive. This could partly explain why Pentecostalism has increasingly taken on entrepreneurial shape influenced by modern business and money management practices and strategies with emphasis on promotion, success, breakthrough, miracles among others (Kuponu, 2015). Every aspect of religious advertising could be expensive. Whether it is the printing of Christian books, airtime on radio or television or both, maintaining a robust virtual presence, renting spaces on billboards, producing movies among others, Pentecostal churches must have a huge followership or members and a huge budget to sustain the campaigns. Specifically, money is staunchly tied to Pentecostal churches' potential survival and expansion (Kuponu, 2015). Even the social media that is assumed to be relatively cheap for religious advertising might not be so after all. For instance about N6,498 ($18) is needed to advertise on Facebook alone (see https://www.bernskioldmedia.com).

However, "the most effective advertising in virtually every field, including the church, is word of mouth marketing (WOMM) – friends who invite friends; coworkers who invite coworkers; relatives who invite their relatives; and acquaintances who invite acquaintances"... (Tenny-Brittain, 2017, p.1).

In essence, the focus of church evangelism, is not as much about the media as it is with how religious messages are effectively communicated in such way that are persuasive and penetrating enough to convince individuals to consider their beliefs. Faniran (1998) advocates a communication the ultimate aim of which is not the flaunting of an array of media but one done in the promotion of understanding, love, unity, communion and community. This must be the criterion for evaluating all forms of communication – starting with the oral communication (the way Christians speak and gesticulate) to the written form of communication (the books they write, the newspapers they publish) to the electronic communication (the radio and television programmes they broadcast and the way they package the news stories) (Faniran, 1998).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The nature of religious communication makes it incumbent on religious organizations to move beyond merely communicating in the literary sense to effectively persuading followers and would-be adherents. In doing this, utmost priority must be given to appropriate channels that best serve the purpose at a given time.

Despite the rapid development in human communication, which has given rise to technologically mediated communication, it will be sheer wasteful to think that interpersonal communication will be fizzling out any soon. A fusion of both interpersonal communication and religious advertising will not only be complementary but will be far-reaching in driving church growth. In fact, the Great Commission recognizes the need for both individual and mediated communication in the evangelism drive.

Drawing from the conclusion above, the following recommendations were proffered:

1.   The various outlets for evangelism should be sustained as they are effective for their purpose.

2.   The challenges of each communication type notwithstanding, because of the compelling mandate of the Great Commission to Christians, sacrifices in cash and kind should be made by the concerned churches to continue expanding the Kingdom of God through soul-winning.

3.   That Pentecostal churches' choice of either religious advertising or interpersonal communication or both should be reflective of the communication peculiarities and dynamics of the target audience. This will make for effective communication.

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