

Strategies for Optimizing the Use of Social Media in the GTDI Sungai Yordan Batam Congregation

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ABSTRACT

The development of digital technology and social media has brought significant changes to various aspects of life, including church services. The congregation of GTDI Sungai Yordan Batam, as part of the church community, needs to optimize the use of social media as a means of communication, information, and spiritual service. This study aims to analyze strategies for optimizing social media usage in the GTDI Sungai Yordan Batam congregation and to identify the obstacles faced in its implementation. The research method used is a qualitative approach with data collection techniques through observation, interviews, and documentation. The research results indicate that the use of social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram has helped disseminate information about church activities and expand the reach of ministry. However, it has not been fully utilized due to limitations in human resources, consistency in content management, and the lack of a planned digital communication strategy. Therefore, an optimization strategy is needed in the form of forming a media team, structured content planning, improving congregational digital literacy, and regular evaluations so that social media can be used effectively to support church ministry and congregational growth

INTRODUCTION

1. Background of the Problem

Social media has become an integral part of modern society. Since the emergence of platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok, social media has not only functioned as a space for social communication but has also evolved into a strategic tool in organizational communication management, including religious organizations. Social media enables the rapid dissemination of information, a wide audience reach, and two-way interaction between organizations and their publics, making it an important medium in today's digital communication context. Previous studies have shown that the strategic optimization of social media use can strengthen audience engagement and participation in organizational activities (Lovejoy and Saxton 2012a).

In the context of religious organizations, including churches, social media has the potential to enhance spiritual services, spread messages, and connect congregation members beyond traditional face-to-face worship. Effective digital communication strategies can support congregation growth and expand the reach of both social and spiritual services, especially in today's digital era where many individuals spend significant time on digital platforms. Strategic research on social media in the context of preaching or digital ministry shows that social media can be an effective tool if it is managed in a structured manner and with strategies that align with the characteristics of its audience (Nawawi n.d.2025).

The current phenomenon shows that many institutions, including religious institutions, are starting to use social media to disseminate information about activities, deepen faith, and provide community services. However, in practice, the use of social media as a service tool is sometimes sporadic, unplanned, or poorly coordinated, so it does not yet maximize its potential. In some communities, social media use is more often in the form of random posts without a clear content strategy, resulting in suboptimal interaction with congregants and not yet being able to maximize audience engagement (Mukhlisin, Hayati, and Kharisma 2025).

Furthermore, although social media is easily accessible and has great potential as a digital communication medium, there is a reality of a gap between this potential and its actual implementation in many church organizations. Some churches do not yet have dedicated teams or sufficient digital literacy to design targeted content, and there is no evaluation mechanism to monitor the effectiveness of social media use. This gap impacts low engagement and inconsistent information dissemination to congregation members as well as the wider community. This is also reinforced by research findings showing the need for a planned content strategy to increase engagement on social media (Oktaviani 2025).

Moreover, in the era of digital transformation, changes in platform algorithms also affect the reach of content publications, making social media management a distinct challenge. Without strategies and an understanding of social media characteristics, church organizations are vulnerable to decreased audience reach and minimal active interaction from congregants and the surrounding community. Therefore, this study is necessary to identify these gaps

and formulate strategic solutions based on best practices in social media use for church service purposes.

The solutions offered through this research include the formation of a social media management team, improving the digital literacy of church administrators, structured strategic content planning, and the use of evaluation metrics to measure the success of social media strategies. This solution model is designed based on the principles of effective digital communication management, such as content planning, periodic evaluation, and capacity building of human resources in the field of social media (Nawawi n.d.2025).

With this approach, it is hoped that the use of social media in the GTDI Sungai Yordan Batam congregation will not only be used as a mere publicity tool, but can also serve as a means of community empowerment, a medium for interaction, spiritual guidance, and strengthening the relationship between the congregation, the church, and the wider community.

2. Problem Identification

The main problem in this study arises from the fact that social media usage within the GTDI Sungai Yordan Batam congregation is not yet optimal. Although social media accounts are available and active, the content displayed is often not strategically planned, making it less capable of attracting active interaction from the congregation or the wider community. This indicates a gap between the potential of social media as a digital communication tool and its practical use in church services.

In addition, the lack of operational standards for managing social media and the church leaders' limited digital literacy are additional problems. This results in the effectiveness of information dissemination and congregation engagement in church activities through social media being not yet optimal. Identifying these issues is important to formulate appropriate and effective strategies for optimizing the use of social media as part of church ministry.

3. Problem Formulation

The research problem in this study is formulated to direct the research toward strategic issues regarding the use of social media in the GTDI Sungai Yordan Batam Congregation. First, to what extent has the current use of social media contributed to the ministry and communication of the congregation? This issue is important to measure the effectiveness of social media in the church context.

Secondly, what obstacles or challenges are faced by the church in optimizing the use of social media as a means of communication and ministry? This formulation helps identify the gap between the potential of technology and its practical implementation. This problem statement question will guide the design of strategies for optimizing the use of social media within the church environment.

4. Research Objectives

This study primarily aims to understand and analyze the conditions of social media usage in the context of church services at the GTDI Sungai Yordan Congregation in Batam. Specifically, this study aims to identify the extent to which social media utilization has been implemented and the role of social media in supporting both internal and external communication within the congregation.

Another goal is to formulate a strategy for optimizing the use of social media that is relevant and effective in increasing congregational engagement and expanding the reach of church services in the digital era. Thus, it is hoped that the findings of this study can serve as a guideline for church leaders in designing more effective and measurable digital communication policies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review is an important part of scientific research that serves to build a theoretical foundation and clarify the position of the research in relation to previous studies. Through the literature review, researchers can understand the main concepts, relevant theories, and previous research findings related to the topic of optimizing social media usage strategies in church services. This theoretical foundation becomes a reference in analyzing data and formulating strategies that are contextual and scientifically based (Creswell and Poth 2018b).

1. Social Media and Its Development

Social media is an internet-based platform that allows its users to interact, share information, and build social networks virtually. (Kaplan and Haenlein 2019) define social media as a group of Web 2.0-based applications that enable the creation and exchange of user-generated content. The presence of social media has changed societal communication patterns from one-way communication to interactive and participatory two-way communication.

The development of social media continues to increase alongside advancements in digital technology and the use of mobile devices. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube are not only used for personal purposes but are also utilized by organizations, including religious organizations, as a means of communication and information dissemination. (Nasrullah 2020) asserts that social media now functions as a new social space that shapes the communication culture, identity, and social relationships of modern society.

2. Social Media in Church Services

Social media in the context of church services serves as a communication tool that bridges the relationship between the church and the congregation outside of face-to-face worship meetings. Through social media, the church can quickly and broadly convey information about activities, spiritual reflections, online worship broadcasts, and pastoral messages. Research (Lovejoy and Saxton 2012b) shows that social media is effectively used by non-profit organizations, including religious organizations, to build community and increase member engagement.

In addition to being an information medium, social media also functions as a means of service and spiritual guidance. The church can use social media to reach congregants who have time or distance limitations, as well as to engage the younger generation who are more familiar with digital technology. According to Campbell (2020), the presence of the church in digital spaces is a form of service adaptation that is relevant to the social and cultural changes of the digital society. However, the use of social media in church ministry also faces various challenges, such as a lack of content strategy, limited human resources, and low digital literacy among church administrators. Without planned management, social media has the potential to become merely a one-way publication medium without meaningful interaction. Therefore, the church needs to develop a strategic approach so that social media can be used effectively as a tool for spiritual ministry and strengthening the congregational community (A. Nawawi 2025).

3. Digital Communication Strategy

Digital communication strategy is the planning and management of communication that utilizes digital technology to achieve organizational goals effectively. (Ardianto 2019) states that communication strategy includes message planning, media selection, audience determination, as well as communication outcome evaluation. In the context of social media, digital communication strategy plays an important role in determining the type of content, posting frequency, and communication style that aligns with the characteristics of the audience.

In church service, a digital communication strategy is necessary so that spiritual messages and service information can be well received by the congregation. An appropriate strategy will help the church build a positive image, increase congregational engagement, and expand the reach of its services. Without a clear strategy, the use of social media tends to be inconsistent and less impactful (Kaplan and Haenlein 2019).

4. Social Media Optimization

Social media optimization is a systematic effort to maximize the functions and benefits of social media through planning, management, and continuous evaluation. Optimization includes technical and non-technical aspects, such as content quality, consistency of posting, interaction with the audience, and effective use of platform features. According to (Tuten and Solomon 2020), social media optimization aims to increase engagement, reach, and the effectiveness of digital communication.

In the context of church ministry, optimizing social media means making digital platforms an integral part of the ministry strategy. This can be done through the formation of a media team, improving digital literacy, and preparing a well-planned spiritual content calendar. Proper optimization will help the church address the challenges of the digital era while also strengthening the relationship between the church and the congregation (Nasrullah 2020).

5. Relevant Previous Research

Previous research shows that social media plays a significant role in supporting communication and services of religious organizations. (Lovejoy and Saxton 2012a) found that strategic use of social media can enhance community engagement and encourage active participation of members. This research emphasizes the importance of digital communication planning that is interaction-oriented, not just focused on information dissemination.

Another study conducted by (A. Nawawi 2025) in the context of digital da'wah communication shows that optimizing social media requires content strategy, consistent management, and understanding of audience characteristics. These findings are relevant to this research because they emphasize the need for a strategic approach in utilizing social media for church services. By referring to previous studies, this research aims to fill a gap in the study by focusing on strategies to optimize social media at the GTDI Sungai Yordan Batam Congregation.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach, which is a research method aimed at understanding and describing social phenomena in depth based on the perspectives of research participants. The qualitative approach is widely used in studies of digital communication strategies because it can explore the meanings, experiences, and processes that occur in communication practices on social media (Creswell and Poth 2018a). Through this approach, researchers can comprehensively understand how social media is utilized, managed, and interpreted by church administrators and congregants.

A qualitative approach was chosen because this study focuses on gaining an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of social media usage in the context of church services, rather than on statistical measurement or quantitative generalization. Qualitative data allows researchers to explore narratives, experiences, and the social context underlying church social media management in a richer and more holistic way compared to numerical data alone (Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña 2021).

The data collection techniques in this study include participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Participatory observation was carried out by directly observing the church's social media activities, such as the types of content published, posting frequency, and interactions between the administrators and the congregation. This observation method is important for understanding the actual social media management practices in a real-world context (Moleong 2021).

In-depth interviews were conducted with church administrators and several congregants who were involved with or affected by the use of the church's social media. This technique aimed to explore the informants' views, experiences, and perceptions regarding the digital communication strategies implemented. In addition, documentation was used to collect data in the form of social media post archives, photos, videos, and records of church activities. The combination of these three data collection techniques made it possible to obtain comprehensive and complementary data (data triangulation), thereby enhancing the validity of the research findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data analysis was carried out using thematic analysis, which is the process of identifying, grouping, and interpreting patterns or themes that emerge from research data. Thematic analysis was chosen because it is flexible and effective in examining qualitative data related to strategies, challenges, and opportunities in the use of social media. Through this analysis, researchers can develop strategic recommendations that are relevant and contextual based on empirical findings in the field (Braun and Clarke 2021).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the research findings obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation related to the use of social media in the GTDI Sungai Yordan Congregation in Batam. The research results are then analyzed and discussed in relation to digital communication theory, social media, and relevant previous studies. This approach aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the actual conditions, challenges, and strategies for optimizing the use of social media in congregational ministry (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020).

1. Overview of the GTDI Sungai Yordan Batam Congregation

The GTDI Sungai Yordan Batam congregation is one of the local churches under the umbrella of the God's Church in Indonesia (GTDI) and serves congregants with diverse social backgrounds and ages. The church carries out various ministry activities such as general worship services, category-specific worship, prayer fellowships, as well as other spiritual development activities. In carrying out these services, the church strives to adapt to the times and the increasingly dynamic needs of the congregation.

Organizationally, the GTDI Sungai Yordan Batam Congregation has a management structure that involves the pastor, the council, as well as several service teams. However, social media management is not yet fully under a structured dedicated team. This impacts the management of digital communication, which is still incidental and not strategically planned. According

to (Ardianto 2019), a clear organizational structure greatly influences the effectiveness of an institution's communication strategy.

In terms of congregation characteristics, the majority of active members are from the productive age generation and the younger generation who are relatively familiar with digital technology. This situation actually presents a great opportunity for the church to develop social media-based services. However, without proper strategy and management, this potential has not been fully utilized optimally (Nasrullah 2020).

2. The Use of Social Media in the GTDI Sungai Yordan Batam Congregation

The research results show that the congregation of GTDI Sungai Yordan Batam has used several social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram as a means of communication and information dissemination. These social media platforms are used to share worship schedules, church activity announcements, service documentation, and occasionally short devotional messages. This usage indicates an awareness of the importance of social media as a digital communication medium.

Nevertheless, the use of social media in this congregation still tends to be informative and one-way. Interaction between account managers and the congregation has not been optimal, so the function of social media as a space for dialogue and a digital community has not been fully realized. (Lovejoy and Saxton 2012a) emphasize that the effectiveness of an organization's social media is largely determined by the level of audience interaction and engagement, not just the frequency of posting.

3. Challenges in Using Social Media

One of the main challenges in using social media at the GTDI Sungai Yordan Batam congregation is the limited human resources with competence in digital communication. Social media management is still carried out by a few administrators who have other service responsibilities, resulting in a lack of focus and consistency in managing content. This condition aligns with the findings of Tuten and Solomon (2020), which state that the lack of a dedicated team is a common barrier to optimizing an organization's social media.

Another challenge is the lack of structured and sustainable content planning. The content uploaded is often spontaneous and has not been tailored to the needs or characteristics of the audience. As a result, the level of congregation engagement on social media is relatively low. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2019), unplanned content strategies reduce the effectiveness of digital communication.

In addition, the limited digital literacy among some church administrators also poses a challenge. The lack of understanding of social media algorithms, effective posting times, and content performance analysis has resulted in social media not being utilized to its full potential as a tool for ministry and communication. This highlights a gap between the potential of digital technology and the capacity to manage it (Nasrullah 2020).

4. Social Media Optimization Strategy

Based on the research results, the social media optimization strategy that can be implemented at GTDI Sungai Yordan Batam Congregation is the establishment of a dedicated and structured social media team. This team is responsible for planning, producing, and evaluating social media content continuously. Establishing a dedicated team is considered important to improve the consistency and quality of social media management (Ardianto 2019).

Another strategy is the preparation of a planned spiritual content and service information calendar, as well as improving the digital literacy of church leaders. Through regular training and evaluation, the church can enhance the effectiveness of using social media as a means of ministry, communication, and strengthening the congregation community (Tuten and Solomon 2020).

5. The Impact of Social Media Use on Congregational Services

The use of social media has a positive impact on congregational services, especially in terms of information dissemination and increasing the congregation's access to church activities. Congregants can easily obtain the latest information regarding worship schedules and service activities without having to be physically present at the church. This aligns with the view of Campbell (2020), who states that digital media expands the reach of church services beyond physical spaces.

In addition, social media also has the potential to strengthen the sense of togetherness and connection among congregants, especially for those who have limitations in time or distance. However, this impact has not been fully optimized due to the still limited digital interactions. Therefore, optimizing social media strategies is necessary so that these positive effects can be felt more fully by the congregants.

6. Discussion of Research Results

The results of this study indicate that the use of social media in the GTDI Sungai Yordan Batam congregation has been implemented, but not yet fully optimal. This finding aligns with research by Lovejoy and Saxton (2012a) which states that many organizations use social media for informational purposes, but have not maximized its interactive potential. This underscores the importance of a paradigm shift from one-way communication to participatory communication.

This discussion also shows that the main constraint in optimizing church social media does not lie in the availability of technology, but in managerial aspects and human resources. These findings support the theory (Nasrullah 2020) which emphasizes that the success of social media is determined by strategy and management, not merely the existence of the platform.

Thus, this study reinforces previous research and offers practical contributions in the form of recommendations for optimizing social media strategies that are contextual to church services. These strategies are expected to help the congregation of GTDI Sungai Yordan Batam utilize social media more effectively as a means of spiritual service, communication, and community strengthening in the digital era.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Based on the results of the research and discussion regarding strategies to optimize the use of social media in the GTDI Sungai Yordan Batam congregation, it can be concluded that social media has been used as a means of communication and dissemination of church service information. Social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram play a role in conveying information about church activities, documenting services, and fostering communication between the church leaders and congregation. This shows that the congregation has begun to adapt to the development of digital technology in the context of church service.

However, the use of social media in the GTDI Sungai Yordan Batam Congregation is not yet fully optimal. Social media management is still mainly informative and one-way, with relatively low levels of interaction. The lack of a structured content plan and the absence of a dedicated team managing social media have resulted in its use not being able to support the church's services maximally and sustainably.

The next conclusion shows that the main constraint in using social media does not lie in the availability of technology, but rather in the limitations of human resources and digital communication management. A lack of digital literacy, unclear division of tasks, and minimal regular evaluation are factors that hinder the optimization of social media as a means of service and strengthening the congregation community.

Therefore, this study concludes that optimizing the use of social media at the GTDI Sungai Yordan Batam congregation requires a planned and sustainable strategy.

The strategy includes forming a structured social media team, preparing relevant and contextual content planning, and enhancing the capacity of church administrators in social media management. With the right strategy implementation, social media has the potential to become an effective, interactive service tool that supports congregational growth in the digital era.

Recomendations

Based on this conclusion, it is recommended that the congregation of GTDI Sungai Yordan Batam form a special team responsible for managing the church's social media. This team is expected to plan, produce, and evaluate social media content consistently so that the use of social media can be more directed and professional in supporting church ministry.

In addition, the church is advised to improve digital literacy for its administrators and ministers through continuous training or mentoring. Enhancing skills in digital communication, content management, and the use of social media features will help the church optimize social media as a means of spiritual service and congregational communication.

The final suggestion is directed to future researchers to develop this study using a different approach, such as employing quantitative methods or comparative studies between churches. Further research can also examine the impact of social media use on congregation growth or youth engagement in more depth, thereby enriching the study of church ministry in the digital era.

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