



Religion and Communication Working Group

Abstracts of papers accepted for presentation in the Online Conference Papers of the
International Association for Media and Communication Research¹

IAMCR

tampere2020.iamcr.org
July 2020

Report any problems with this document to support2020@iamcr.org

Version: 24/04/20

¹ These are the abstracts of the papers accepted by the IAMCR section or working group named above for presentation in the Online Conference Papers component of the 2020 annual conference. This publication will be updated prior to the conference to include the papers that are actually included in the final programme. To be included in the programme, authors must submit their paper by 19 June 2020 and register for the conference.

Table of Contents

Religion and Media: Value transformers in Nigeria.....	3
Stories that matter: slow journalism for interreligious understanding.....	4
An Interrogation of Divisive Conflict, Church Mediated Politics and Leadership Crisis: The Case of the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe.....	5
Social Media and the Temple Mount, Jerusalem Question.....	5
The social media for ex-Muslims in Pakistan.....	6
A Study on Social Media use among the Catholic Seminarians in India: Personal, and Formative Aspects.....	7
Miracle-marketing: The reformulation of power and social relations in Pentecostal Christianity in Nigeria.....	8
AI - my God: a thematic analysis on the reference to religion and God in AI media debates.....	9
New ways of evangelization - Mormons and YouTube daily Vlogging. Case study of "8Passengers" on YouTube.....	10
Using Ecological Systems Approach to Analyze Minority Media Representations: Tracing Shifts in Sikh American News Discourses since 9-11.....	10
CONTEXTUALISING THE SOCIAL ECOLOGY THROUGH THE JAPJI OF GURU NANAK	12
Reimagine the Digital Future with Inclusion, Respect and Reciprocity Strengthening Spiritual Competition in Children and Adolescents.....	12

Religion and Media: Value transformers in Nigeria

Authors

Ifeoma Ayeni - Babcock University

Isaiah Abolarin - Babcock University

Abstract

Values are essential ingredients in determining the actions and activities in any human society. The level of morality in a society is directly related to the cherished values in such society. Therefore, an amoral society is where values are broken down and the common good is not cultivated by both the leaders and followers. Religion and media have been presented as important instruments in building and promoting values. Before the arrival of foreign religion and western education the people of Nigeria believed in the gods that would not allow amoral behaviours. Information went to the people from the community leaders (kings and chiefs). It was the belief in the gods or deities and the trust in the information from the leaders that shaped the values of the people. In the civilized era, traditional belief system had been replaced with foreign religions—majorly Christianity and Islam—and the local transmission of information has been substituted with media. In the case of the present Nigeria, evidences show that there is a breakdown of values and the common good is no longer preached nor lived by people. The values and morality that were practiced before have been influenced by the processes of modernity that are passing through the nation. This breakdown of values could not be without religion and media roles as the vanguard of helping people to build positive orientation which leads to good character. Every religion and media encourage values and moral society but in situation where religion and media are compromised, values are broken in the society. The study used documentary design of qualitative research approach consulting plethora of sources, including journal articles and books to explore the function of religion and media in transforming values in Nigeria. The study indicated that for the ideal values to be cherished in Nigeria, religious groups and media need to stop promoting amoral behaviours but promote values that can change the country from her negative to positive image.

Keywords: value transformation, religion and media, amoral society, building and promoting, positive orientation

Submission ID

164

Stories that matter: slow journalism for interreligious understanding

Authors

Alba Sabaté Gauxachs - Blanquerna Observatory on Media, Religion and Culture at Ramon Llull University

Miriam Diez Bosch - Blanquerna Observatory on Media, Religion and Culture at Ramon Llull University

Josep Lluís Micó Sanz - Blanquerna Observatory on Media, Religion and Culture at Ramon Llull University

Abstract

Tell stories that matter. This is what journalism do and also what religions have done during centuries (Sharlet, 2018). Interfaith dialogue is one of the challenges faced by society (Abu-Nimer and Alabbadi, 2017) in a digital, globalized and accelerated (Rosa, 2019; Durham Peters, 2018) world, in which population movements are constantly growing. In this context, media is an agora for people of different faiths and beliefs. However, these media are still implementing the digital dynamics, which demand to be fast, immediate, interactive and short.

In this framework, slow journalism breaks the digital rules (Sims, 2018) and appears as a genre working for the sake of quality and rigour, implementing an in-depth fact-checking and an impeccable literary writing. This genre has the non-fiction tradition of literary journalism (Wolfe, 1973) as its reference and practice the so-called new new journalism (Boynton, 2018), which talks about facts using the techniques of fiction, giving voice to everyone involved in stories and prioritising knowledge to immediacy.

As religion and media influence each other (Campbell, 2018; Hoover and Lundby, 1997), this study wonders: How is slow journalism covering religion? Are its techniques a tool for better knowing the Other? Is this practice a path for dialogue? These are the questions that this research aims to study through the content analysis of 75 articles published the slow journalism magazines Jot Down, Gatopardo, and The New Yorker, along with 38 in-depth interviews with journalists and experts related with them.

Submission ID

340

An Interrogation of Divisive Conflict, Church Mediated Politics and Leadership Crisis: The Case of the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe.

Authors

Joseph Muyangata - JAMI Etiquette and Grooming Consultancy

Abstract

The last decade has been a rough one for the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe (AFM), with the church being marred with serious media attention, court cases, leadership wrangles all that resulting in a split. The church's organizational strategies, corporate governance, and organization development were and are still being put to test as the church continues to both privately and publicly interpret their constitution. It is also invoking the church's charter that speaks to their organogram, hierarchy and leadership structures. Awash in the local news (both print and visual media) is the church's "fights" and "disagreements". This paper, therefore, seeks to interrogate the divisive conflict of church mediated politics and Leadership crisis in AFM. Further, the paper will use an ethnographic approach to examine the media's influence and effects on the entire church after a century of AFM's existence in Zimbabwe.

Submission ID

570

Social Media and the Temple Mount, Jerusalem Question

Authors

Yoel Cohen - School of Communication, Ariel University

Azi Lev-On - School of Communication, Ariel University

Abstract

The Temple Mount in the Old City of Jerusalem is holy to two faith groups, Judaism and Islam, and is a point of tension between the two populations. It was the site of the Jewish Temple in the First and Second Temple period, spanning the period of 1000 years prior to the common era. It was from the Temple Mount that by Islamic tradition the prophet Muhammed ascended from there to Heaven to receive the tenets of Islam from Allah. So after the 1967 war in which the old City of Jerusalem, was recaptured by the Israelis, Jews sought to strengthen their rights, including religious Jews who sought to pray. Muslims on the other hand were concerned that their prayer rights at the El Aqsa Mosque and Dome of the Rock would be threatened. In the end the Israeli Government preserved the Muslim rights but limited Jewish prayer rights to the Western Wall (the Kotel').

All this has produced friction and tension - which has gained expression through violence and through the mass media, including social media. In order to clarify the picture, our study has examined qualitatively and quantitatively posts on Facebook . We rfecexiuve3d from IFAT, a media monitoring company a total of 16,001 posts which were published in 2017, in Facebook groups, that include the Hebrew phrase "Har Habit" (meaning "Temple Mount"). Next we picked every 32nd post to compose a sample of 502 posts representing the Hebrew discourse on "Temple Mount" throughout the entire year.

The 502 posts may be divided under a number of sub-groupings, the largest of which were "nationalist" which concerns the question of sovereignty over the Mount, which produced 202 posts; "religion" which relates to the various religions, notably Judaism and Islam; the question of prayer rights, and the spiritual significance of the mount (151 posts).

A third category concerns security aspects - the Police - on the Temple Mount who impose law and order among both Muslim and Jews visiting the mount. During the period examined there was a major security incident on the Mount in which Arabs shot dead two Israeli policemen. Overall, there were 135 posts in the period examined, of which 108 posts concerned the incident.

The findings indicate that the Temple Mount is discussed in social media mainly in National, or Religious or Security contexts (and much less on Historical, Archaeological, Economic, Diplomatic and other contexts). Findings also indicate that there is a lot of discussion on the Temple Mount concerning security matters. In the rest of the year, the discussion is focused on right-wing and Jewish religious groups.

Submission ID

1568

The social media for ex-Muslims in Pakistan

Authors

Tehreem Azeem - Communication University of China

Abstract

Muslims who leave faith can face abuse and violence especially if they decide to be vocal about their views. It pushes them to find new networks where they can express themselves while keeping their identity safe. In the past few years, Ex-Muslims from Pakistan have made different groups for freethinkers on various social media platforms. This study tries to explore the ways ex-Muslims in Pakistan are using social media platforms - Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Whatsapp. Seeing the sensitivity of the topic, participation in this research study was voluntary. 20 ex-Muslims agreed to be part of this research. First, the participants were asked to fill a questionnaire about their social media use and later they were interviewed in-depth to know about their social media presence in detail. The findings of this study showed that ex-Muslims in Pakistan use multiple social media platforms and use different strategies to keep themselves safe on the internet. The strategies involve

using fake profiles, VPN and complex language on social media to express themselves. It was also found that the ex-Muslims face high level of state violence and scrutiny for their digital presence.

Submission ID

1772

A Study on Social Media use among the Catholic Seminarians in India: Personal, and Formative Aspects

Authors

Leslin Bastian - MICA

Anish Devasia - St.Pius X College Mumbai

Abstract

Social media are web-based communication tools that enable people to interact with each other by both sharing and consuming information. Social networking through social media is paramount for the Church in the 21st century, if it wants to reach out to the younger generation with the message of the Gospel. Pope Benedict XVI's 2010 Message on World Communications Day entitled *The Priest and Pastoral Ministry in a Digital World: New Media at the Service of the Word* spoke about how priests could use the new technologies for the spread of the Gospel. He wrote: Priests stand at the threshold of a new era: as new technologies create deeper forms of relationship across greater distances, they are called to respond pastorally by putting the media ever more effectively at the service of the Word. Even Pope Francis has recognized the role social platforms play in shaping culture and engaging individuals; thus the Pope's social media presence is managed well by the Vatican.

Aim of the Study

Seminarians are future leaders in the Church. Hence, it becomes imperative to study how they are being trained in Social Media use for being effective communicators and engaging the culture. We also look at the seminarians' use of social media in their personal lives and what are the formative aspects involved in handling social media.

This research will help us to gauge whether the Church in India is resisting social media or has embraced a strategy to be present to an audience that may never engage with the Church through the traditional communication channels.

Methodology

To address the above mentioned objectives of the present research a mixed methodology method will be adopted for conducting the research among the seminarians. Both qualitative as well as quantitative methods will be used for data collection. For quantitative method a questionnaire would be developed while for the qualitative method in-depth interview and focus group discussion would be carried out. The study will cover seminaries from two zones in India.

Submission ID

1978

Miracle-marketing: The reformulation of power and social relations in Pentecostal Christianity in Nigeria**Authors**

Adjua Akinwumi - Simon Fraser University

Abstract

Prevalent in Nigeria today is the rapid spread of Pentecostalism. Its untaxed churches worth hundreds of millions of dollars form an unregulated yet influential economy. 'Church' is big business, but it is also political. The rise of the mega-church and its mega-pastor highlights the exponential influence of Pentecostal leaders within Nigeria's socio-political space, blurring the perceived dichotomy of the religious and the secular. Religious discourse is drawn upon to legitimize political action, and political candidates have been drawn from the growing pool of prominent religious leaders – as is the case of the country's current Vice President, Yemi Osinbajo. Media technologies play an essential role in this development. Broadcasts of religious services and practices have become fixtures of the Pentecostal movement, growing congregations - and consequently pastoral influence - beyond the borders of Nigeria.

This paper seeks to explore the role of the pastor as an emergent socio-political leader. To do this, it deconstructs the discourse found in broadcast miracle sessions. These are sessions where people with physical afflictions and social and economic problems come to church to be cured through a miracle that the pastor bestows on them. The sessions have become a focal point of the Pentecostal 'Health and Wealth' doctrine. While Agazue (2013), refers to these broadcast practices as 'miracle marketing', in reference to the increasing commercialization of church activities in Nigeria, this paper reconceptualizes the term to highlight the social currency of these sessions and their use in the negotiation of power. Leaning on the scholarship of Asad (2009), the paper frames these sessions as forms of discourse that embed, negotiate, and potentially transform systems and relations of power. The paper utilizes a Critical Discourse Analysis approach to deconstruct three miracle-sessions carried out by the influential pastor TB Joshua. By doing so, it aims to make clear the construction and enactment of power and social relations within a Nigerian Pentecostal community. Furthermore, it aims to present a more nuanced understanding of the subjectivities and the narratives of truth that are legitimated, and those that are discredited in the process.

Submission ID

2559

AI - my God: a thematic analysis on the reference to religion and God in AI media debates

Authors

Geetanjali Kala - University of Westminster

Abstract

The proposed paper seeks to analyse the reference and construction of religion and God in the news stories, features and commentary on Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology. Artificial intelligence is already part of our everyday lives in the form digital assistant tools like Siri, Alexa and much more. In the context of AI and religion, there is an animated debate in the media about AI being a threat to the idea of God, religion, morality, etc. (Meritt, 2017; Brandon, 2017). In fact, there already is an AI religion called the Way of the Future (Harris, 2017). It has its own church called the Way of the Future Church (Way of the Future, 2020). Soul, consciousness, immortality, doomsday, spirituality (Ambrosino 2018) are some of the key words often used in the media stories around AI and religion. This paper will thematically analyse the news coverage in the media of the said subject especially from the point of view of religious morality and ethics. Since this is a niche area of reporting therefore news publications will be selected keeping in mind the frequency of relevant stories.

Bibliography

An AI god will emerge by 2042 and write its own bible. Will you worship it? | VentureBeat (no date). Available from <https://venturebeat.com/2017/10/02/an-ai-god-will-emerge-by-2042-and-write-its-own-bible-will-you-worship-it/> [Accessed 11 February 2020].

Inside Artificial Intelligence's First Church | WIRED (no date). Available from <https://www.wired.com/story/anthony-levandowski-artificial-intelligence-religion/> [Accessed 11 February 2020].

Is Artificial Intelligence a Threat to Christianity? - The Atlantic (no date). Available from <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2017/02/artificial-intelligence-christianity/515463/> [Accessed 11 February 2020].

Way of the Future (no date). Available from <http://www.wayofthefuture.church/> [Accessed 11 February 2020].

What would it mean for AI to have a soul? - BBC Future (no date). Available from <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20180615-can-artificial-intelligence-have-a-soul-and-religion> [Accessed 11 February 2020].

Submission ID

2579

New ways of evangelization - Mormons and YouTube daily

Vlogging. Case study of "8Passengers" on YouTube

Authors

Zita Bartolomé Narbón - Girona University - UdG

Abstract

In the year 2000, C. Helland proposed the dichotomy between "Online Religion" and "Religion Online". In 2015, he extended his theory by affirming that "for those individuals who participate in online religious activity, there is no separation between their offline lives and their online experiences". In this way, he perceives the Internet as being simply one more way to extend religious practices and significance. This article analyses the content produced by a family member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from Utah on YouTube. Under the hypothesis that the followers of the Church use YouTube Vlogs not only to share their vision and experience of faith with other members of the Church, but also and above all to bring their dogma closer to those who are not part of their religion, breaking stigmas and practicing a kind of indirect evangelization. At the same time, the official position of the Church regarding the production, consumption and use of digital content, both from official sources and from its members, has been analysed.

During the research, a total of 270 videos uploaded onto the 8Passengers channel between January 2nd 2018 and November 24th 2018 have been analysed, in particular noting that religion appears in 44.6% of them. Those values were present not only in the private sphere of home, but also in their community, school, social relationships, family etc. Researcher has also reviewed the Church's videos and official articles, comparing styles and messages, perceiving that the incarnate values coincide 100%. Conclusions show that 8Passengers is not an isolated case. There are multiple accounts grouped under the category of Mormon YouTube Influencers and the Church actively encourages its members to become producers of digital content, thereby blurring the edges of Helland's dichotomy.

Submission ID

2977

Using Ecological Systems Approach to Analyze Minority Media

Representations: Tracing Shifts in Sikh American News

Discourses since 9-11

Authors

Srividya Ramasubramanian - Texas A&M U

Satveer Kaur - national university of singapore

Abstract

Media research continues to show the pervasive effects the media have on the representation of minorities (Alia, 2005). Bleich, Bloemraad, and Graauw (2015) share how the media communicates and depicts communities in particular ways that have an impact on both policy responses and audience perception. Our research specifically locates the representation of Sikhs post 9-11 in mainstream US news media. In adopting discourse tracing as a qualitative method, we pay attention to how ruptures and shifts both at the macro-level structures to micro-level movements reveal the formations of discourse post 9-11 about Sikhs.

The ruptures and shifts were analyzed through an Ecological Systems Approach. Developed by Bronfenbrenner (1994), Ecological Systems Approach help us develop insight into how different interactions across multiple levels (micro, meso, exo, macro, and chrono systems) impacts the individual. The interrelatedness of the micro to the macro complexifies our understandings of how communication systems reveal differences, disparities, and inequities. The very theorizing of interactions that take place across these ecological systems can contribute to insight on macro-level structures and in its influence across systems and vice versa.

Our study analyzed all (n=2330) news stories about Sikh Americans from 2001 to present published in three top newspapers in the US (USA today, The Washington Post and The New York). Discourse tracing, a relatively novel qualitative approach, is used to analyze the ebbs and flows of discursive formations of minorities in the news. This approach is particularly helpful to understand moments of ruptures, which refers to significant shifts in micro and macro systems. The one dimensional narrativizing of Sikh representations amid ruptures that function to impact multiple ecological levels have structured how the American media reports Sikhs in the news. Building on existing research on media framing, we discuss minorities in relation to ruptures (shifts) as systems, impacting how mediatizing practices inform representations of minorities in the media.

Our findings revealed the racialized representations of Sikhs for selective visibilities in the news cycles. Sikhs remained hypervisible in the news media in relation to hate crimes, everyday violence, and experiences of bias in news frames discussing Sikhs as central to the story or as subjects of anti-Islamic violence. At the micro-level system we see Sikhs discussed in relation to interpersonal violence. The navigation of the Sikh figure in American news reporting conveys Sikhs as minorities for consumption in the production of media visibilities. At the meso-level system, we see Sikhs discussed in relation to Sikh corporeality and everyday navigation. At the exo-system, erasures of a complex representation of Sikh corporeality remains limited in a dialectical relationship to hyper-visibility with state-level surveilling of how the Sikh body is assembled for the consumption of fear. The gendered media narratives of the Sikh body, erase other assemblies of the Sikh body. At the macro-level, the manufacturing of ideologies of exclusion in geopolitical discussions in relation to the Sikh figure once again centers in relation to the function of the corporeality of the Sikh figure.

Submission ID

3012

CONTEXUALISING THE SOCIAL ECOLOGY THROUGH THE JAPJI OF GURU NANAK

Authors

HAPPY JEJI - punjabi university patiala

Abstract

The teachings of Guru Nanak (1469-1539), the first Sikh Guru and founder of Sikh faith, are of perennial importance to the humanity for having a universal appeal. His philosophy of universalism has great relevance today to understand the life and its objectives. The Japji of Guru Nanak shows us the path to adhere to the real meaning of life and understand the human existence within social environment. After 550 years of his birth, while looking at the sufferings of contemporary times, it seems very pertinent to understand the Social ecology through his teachings in Japji Sahib. Social ecology, defined as the study of the relation between the developing human being and the settings and contexts in which the person is actively involved, when contextualised in socio- religious perspectives of this prayer, offers a comprehensive understanding of relationship of human beings and their surroundings. Social ecology has been described as the conceptual adaptation of plant and animal ecology to the analysis of human communities within the social and behavioral sciences. "Contextualising the social ecology through the Japji of Guru Nanak" is an attempt to comprehend the meaning and nature of this relationship of human beings to their environment. Social ecology which has emerged as the most dynamic interdisciplinary research field can better be understood through his teachings.

Submission ID

3858

Reimagine the Digital Future with Inclusion, Respect and Reciprocity Strengthening Spiritual Competition in Children and Adolescents

Authors

PATRICIA CORTES - Cepies UMSA

Abstract

The future of humanity in relation to the development of digital technology in the field of communication is surely a priority issue for reflection in contemporary societies.

Research in this field is still very incipient. Working for a digital future that generates a human and social balance, in many contexts, is still an illusion. To face these challenges, the main challenge of

communicators and other professionals, is not only to continue advancing in the digitalization of communication processes but to work in parallel on proposals that facilitate inclusion, respect and reciprocity.

Therefore, our research aims to make a contribution that allows the application of strategies that strengthen the individual and social skills of children and adolescents. It is about the theoretical and practical development of the spiritual competence that has its starting point in the communicative competence.

From this perspective, our initial question can be formulated as follows: Among the competencies that children and adolescents should have in front of digital media messages, what role does spiritual competence have, how should it be understood and applied in the perspective of facilitating inclusion, respect and reciprocity?

To address these questions, we start from the main results of our previous research on the communicative dimension of media education (dialogue and cognitive decentration) in order to deepen now the anthropological-philosophical dimension where aspects of spirituality can be addressed.

On this occasion we wish to offer researchers and those in the field of education and the production of media messages a proposal for analysis and application of spiritual competence. Our proposal is based on the theoretical contributions of Arnaud Join-Lambert, Walter Lesch, Henri Derroitte, André Fossion, Marie-France Daniel, Jean-Pierre Meunier, Paul Ricoeur, Paulo Freire Mario Kaplún, among others. In the experimental part our indicators arise from research results with children and adolescents - that is, people with identity, spirituality and dignity - after having been exposed to various types of media messages in different geographical, social and cultural contexts.

As a general conclusion, it has been observed that the understanding and subsequent application of spiritual competence in children and adolescents - within formal, non-formal and informal educational processes - can contribute significantly to strengthening the noblest values (inclusion, respect and reciprocity) that lead them to be actors of a digital future for the benefit of humanity.

Submission ID

3959