

## TikTok Theology: Youth Spiritual Formation in the Age of Short-Form Video Content

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine "TikTok Theology," conceptualised as the mediation and interpretation of Christian teachings through algorithm-driven short videos, and its influence on youth religious engagement and understanding. The rise and proliferation of short-form video platforms have significantly transformed the landscape of religious communication, particularly among youth. Anchored in Mediatization Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory, the study employed a convergent mixed-methods design involving 100 youths selected through purposive sampling who completed Google Forms questionnaires and 10 pastors selected through purposive sampling who participated in semi-structured interviews. Questionnaires were used to obtain quantitative data, while interviews provided qualitative insights. Findings reveal that TikTok enhances accessibility to and engagement with religious content; however, it also contributes to theological simplification, fragmented doctrinal understanding, and a shift in religious authority from institutional leaders to digital influencers. The study concludes that TikTok theology represents both a transformative opportunity for digital evangelism and a significant challenge to traditional discipleship models, thereby necessitating intentional theological engagement within digital spaces.

**Key terms:** Christian communication, digital religion, mediatization theory, TikTok theology, youth engagement.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The rapid rise of TikTok among youth has transformed not only patterns of communication and entertainment but also the ways in which religious knowledge is accessed, interpreted, and practised. Increasingly, young people encounter Christian teachings through short-form, algorithm-driven videos that prioritise brevity, personalisation, and emotional engagement. This development raises important concerns regarding youth spiritual formation, particularly the depth, accuracy, and authenticity of theological understanding shaped through digital platforms. Within this context, TikTok has emerged as a significant site for religious communication, where theological ideas are simplified, mediated, and disseminated by both religious leaders and digital influencers.

The relationship between religion and communication has historically evolved alongside technological advancement, with each new medium reshaping how religious knowledge is transmitted and experienced. From the invention of the printing press to the emergence of broadcast media, Christianity has continually adapted its modes of communication in response to changing technological landscapes. In the contemporary digital era, however, this relationship has undergone a profound transformation, as media is no longer merely a channel for religious dissemination but a structuring force that actively shapes religious meaning, authority, and practice. Scholars such as Hjarvard (2013) argue that religion is increasingly influenced by "media logic," whereby religious content is reformatted to align with the characteristics of modern media speed, accessibility, personalisation, and entertainment. This process, referred to as mediatisation, suggests that religious institutions must now operate within a media-saturated environment that influences not only how messages are delivered but also how they are interpreted.

The emergence of digital religion further complicates this transformation by blurring the boundaries between online and offline religious practices. Campbell (2013) emphasises that digital platforms have created new spaces for religious engagement, where individuals can interact with theological ideas outside traditional institutional frameworks. This change has led to a weakening of centralised religious authority, with believers increasingly relying on online platforms for spiritual guidance. Couldry and Hepp (2017) reinforce this perspective by arguing that the media have become deeply embedded in everyday life, shaping how individuals construct reality, including religious belief systems. Within this context, the rise of algorithm-driven platforms introduces an additional layer of complexity, as content is curated based on user preferences, thereby influencing the type of theological material individuals are exposed to.

Within this global transformation, short-form video platforms such as TikTok represent a significant departure from earlier forms of digital media. Unlike traditional platforms that support long-form content, TikTok prioritises brevity, visual engagement, and virality, requiring content creators to condense complex ideas into short, highly engaging clips. This has profound implications for theology, as doctrinal teachings that traditionally require depth and reflection are increasingly presented in simplified, emotionally appealing formats. Hutchings (2017) observes that digital religion often encourages selective engagement with theological content, leading to individualised and sometimes fragmented belief systems. Consequently, the emergence of what may be termed "TikTok Theology" raises critical questions about the depth, accuracy, and authenticity of religious knowledge in the digital age.

In the African context, the interaction between religion and media has been particularly vibrant, especially within Pentecostal and Charismatic traditions that have historically embraced media technologies for evangelism and spiritual expression. Meyer (2015) demonstrates how media not only communicate religious ideas but also shape religious experience by appealing to emotions and sensory engagement. Similarly, Hackett (2006) notes that religion in Africa has increasingly become mediated, with religious messages adapted to suit the formats and expectations of contemporary media audiences. However, much of the existing scholarship in Africa has focused on earlier forms of media such as television, radio, and long-form online platforms, with limited attention given to emerging short-form platforms like TikTok. Gifford (2015) further highlights that African Christianity is undergoing rapid transformation due to globalisation and technological change, yet scholarly attention has not kept pace with these developments.

Kenya presents a compelling context for examining digital religion due to its high levels of religiosity and rapidly expanding digital infrastructure. Recent data from the Communications Authority of Kenya shows a steady rise in smartphone ownership and internet access, with youth accounting for the largest share of social media users in Kenya. TikTok has rapidly expanded among Kenyan youth due to its ease of access, entertainment appeal, and algorithm-driven personalised content. The growing availability of affordable internet and smartphones has further boosted youth engagement with social media platforms. Churches in Kenya have increasingly incorporated digital tools into their ministry, using online platforms for evangelism, teaching, and community building. Empirical work by Kathambi (2023) on ICT and the Great Commission in FGCK underscores the growing importance of digital technologies in advancing mission work, while Mwongera et al. (2017) highlights the proliferation of new Christian movements in urban centres such as Meru, driven in part by changing social and technological dynamics. Despite these developments, existing studies largely focus on structured digital practices such as livestreamed services and online sermons, with minimal attention to algorithm-driven, user-generated platforms like TikTok.

Among youth, TikTok has emerged as a dominant platform for communication and self-expression. Its popularity is driven by its ability to deliver personalised, engaging, and easily consumable content. Within this environment, religious messages are increasingly embedded in entertainment-oriented formats, raising concerns about the depth and authenticity of theological engagement. The brevity of TikTok videos necessitates the simplification of complex doctrines, potentially leading to misinterpretation or superficial understanding. Furthermore, the platform's algorithmic nature amplifies certain voices over others, contributing to a shift in religious authority from trained theologians and pastors to digital influencers. Similarly, Kiruja et al. (2025) collectively argue that the increasing reliance on online church services presents both opportunities and challenges for Christian discipleship, particularly concerning theological depth, doctrinal accuracy, and the credibility of online religious authorities.

Despite the growing prominence of TikTok in shaping youth culture and communication, there remains a significant gap in scholarly research examining its impact on Christian theology and spiritual formation, particularly within the African context. Existing literature has not adequately addressed how short-form video content influences theological understanding, how youth interpret and internalise such content, and how pastors respond to this emerging form of digital theology. Therefore, this research seeks to bridge this gap through an empirical analysis of TikTok theology, focusing on its implications for youth spirituality and pastoral practice.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

An expanding body of literature on digital religion highlights how social media is reshaping religious engagement, especially among young people. Existing scholarship has extensively explored digital participation, online spirituality, and mediatisation; however, limited research has specifically examined how short-form video platforms such as TikTok shape Christian theological understanding and spiritual formation, particularly within Kenyan contexts. Scholars widely agree that digital platforms have shifted religious participation from passive consumption to active engagement, enabling users not only to access but also to produce and share religious content. Boyd (2014), in her analysis of networked youth, highlights that social media serves as a critical space for identity formation, where young people negotiate meaning through interaction and participation. In religious contexts, this participatory culture allows youth to engage with theological ideas in ways that are more interactive and personalised than traditional forms of worship. Campbell (2013) similarly argues that digital environments foster “networked religion,” characterised by community formation, storytelling, and flexible expressions of faith. The emergence of TikTok introduces new dynamics into this landscape due to its emphasis on short-form content.

Kaye et al. (2021) note that TikTok’s algorithm curates content based on user behaviour, thereby creating highly personalised media experiences that reinforce existing preferences. From the perspective of Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1974), this suggests that youth are not passive recipients of religious content but active agents who select and engage with content that meets their spiritual and emotional needs. TikTok’s interactive features, including likes, shares, and comments, further enhance user engagement, creating a sense of community and participation. These dynamics not only influence how youth consume theological content but also shape how they construct spiritual identity and interpret religious authority in digital spaces. However, while these studies provide valuable insights into digital engagement, they largely focus on entertainment and general social media use, leaving a notable gap in understanding how such dynamics apply specifically to Christian theological content, particularly within Kenyan contexts.

In relation to spiritual formation, traditional Christian theology emphasises structured teaching, mentorship, and communal practices as essential components of spiritual growth. Willard (2002) underscores the importance of intentional discipleship processes in shaping Christian character and belief. However, the rise of digital media has introduced new forms of engagement that are often fragmented and individualised. Hutchings (2017) observes that online religious practices tend to encourage selective engagement, where individuals choose content that aligns with their preferences, leading to what he describes as a “pick-and-mix” approach to spirituality. This trend is especially visible on TikTok, where theological messages are presented in short, emotionally appealing videos that may sacrifice depth and contextual understanding. While such formats enhance accessibility and appeal, they also raise concerns about the quality and accuracy of theological understanding. Hjarvard (2013) argues that mediatisation leads to the transformation of religious content into media-friendly formats, often prioritising entertainment over depth. The interaction between algorithm-driven engagement, selective consumption, and simplified theological messaging, therefore, contributes to individualised forms of spirituality that may weaken doctrinal depth and communal discipleship. This suggests that while TikTok theology may increase exposure to religious ideas, it may simultaneously undermine the depth of doctrinal understanding required for meaningful spiritual formation. Despite these concerns, there is limited empirical research

examining the long-term impact of short-form religious content on spiritual growth, representing a significant gap in the literature.

Another critical dimension of digital religion is the transformation of religious authority. Traditionally, authority within Christianity has been vested in trained clergy and institutional structures. However, digital media has disrupted this model by enabling individuals to access diverse sources of religious knowledge. Campbell (2013) notes that digital platforms facilitate the emergence of new forms of authority, where influence is determined by visibility and engagement rather than formal training or institutional affiliation. Gifford (2015) further observes that in African contexts, while pastors remain influential, their authority is increasingly challenged by alternative voices in the digital space. TikTok amplifies this shift by privileging content that is engaging and shareable, often elevating charismatic individuals who may not have formal theological training. This transformation illustrates how mediatisation, youth participation, and algorithmic visibility interact to reshape religious influence and credibility in contemporary Christianity. While some studies acknowledge the democratisation of religious discourse as a positive development, others caution that it may lead to misinformation and doctrinal inconsistency. However, there is a lack of focused research on how pastors perceive and respond to these changes, particularly in relation to TikTok theology.

Overall, while existing literature provides valuable insights into digital religion, youth engagement, mediatisation, and changing religious authority, it does not sufficiently address the specific phenomenon of TikTok theology, particularly within African contexts. There is a clear need for empirical research that examines how short-form video platforms influence theological understanding, spiritual formation, and religious authority in interconnected ways. This study contributes to this emerging field by providing a context-specific analysis that bridges these gaps.

### 3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study employed a convergent mixed-methods research design to examine the influence of TikTok theology on youth spiritual engagement and pastoral practice. The mixed-methods approach was deemed appropriate because it enabled the integration of quantitative and qualitative data to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Quantitative data provided measurable patterns of youth engagement with religious content on TikTok, while qualitative data offered deeper insights into pastors' perceptions and experiences regarding digital theology. Data were collected concurrently, analysed separately, and then merged during interpretation to allow comparison and corroboration of findings, thereby strengthening the overall validity and depth of the study.

The study targeted Christian youth who actively use TikTok as well as pastors involved in youth ministry and discipleship. Youth participants were included because they represent the primary consumers of short-form digital religious content, while pastors were selected to provide theological and pastoral perspectives on the emerging practice of TikTok-based religious communication. Participants were drawn using purposive sampling to ensure inclusion of individuals with relevant experience and knowledge of the subject under investigation. A total of 100 youths participated in the quantitative phase through online questionnaires administered via Google Forms. Participants were recruited based on their active TikTok use and exposure to Christian-themed content. In addition, 10 pastors were purposively selected for semi-structured interviews due to their involvement in church leadership, youth ministry, and engagement with

digital ministry practices. This sampling approach was considered suitable for obtaining information-rich participants capable of providing meaningful insights into TikTok theology and youth spiritual formation.

Structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were employed for data collection. The questionnaires, administered online, contained closed-ended and Likert-scale items designed to capture patterns of TikTok use, exposure to Christian content, perceived theological understanding, and levels of spiritual engagement among youth. Semi-structured interviews with pastors provided in-depth qualitative data on the opportunities and challenges associated with TikTok theology, including issues of doctrinal accuracy, religious authority, and digital discipleship. These interviews also allowed participants to share detailed experiences and observations concerning youth interaction with online religious content. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, and graphical displays to reveal trends in youth engagement with TikTok theology. Qualitative data were analysed thematically by organising responses into recurring categories and themes related to digital religion, theological interpretation, youth spirituality, and pastoral concerns. The integration of both datasets facilitated a more holistic interpretation of the findings by allowing convergence and comparison of results across methods.

The study adhered to ethical considerations by informing participants of its objectives and ensuring their voluntary involvement, with informed consent secured prior to data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured, and all data were used strictly for academic purposes. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any penalty. To strengthen the study's validity, methodological triangulation was used by combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to enable cross-verification of results. Reliability was strengthened through the use of clear, consistent, and well-aligned research instruments, with questionnaire and interview items designed to directly correspond with the study objectives.

## 4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Youth Engagement with TikTok Theology

The growing popularity of TikTok among young people has transformed how religious content is accessed, consumed, and interpreted. As a highly interactive and algorithm-driven platform, TikTok provides youth with immediate access to short-form theological content, inspirational messages, and digital religious communities. This section examines the extent of youth engagement with TikTok theology and explores how digital participation is shaping contemporary religious experiences among young people.

**Table 1: Demographic Profile of Youth Respondents (N = 100)**

Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Age	18–21	30	30%
	22–25	40	40%
	26–30	30	30%
Gender	Male	48	48%
	Female	52	52%
Education Level	Secondary	25	25%
	College	45	45%
	University	30	30%

The results show that 75 per cent of respondents are digitally literate and have completed post-secondary education, indicating that most youths engaging with TikTok religious content can access, interpret, and engage with digital media. This result aligns with Campbell (2013), who argues that digital media have transformed religious participation into a more interactive and participatory process. Digitally literate users are not passive recipients but active agents in shaping religious meaning.

Furthermore, the concept of networked individualism advanced by Rainie and Wellman (2012) explains how individuals increasingly construct personalised belief systems through digital networks rather than relying solely on institutional authority. In this study, the high level of education and digital competence supports this shift toward individualised spirituality.

From an African theological perspective, this trend represents a transformation of the communal understanding of religion emphasised by Mbiti (1969). While community remains important, it is increasingly mediated through digital platforms, creating new forms of “networked religious community.”

**Table 2: Engagement with TikTok Theology**

Variable	Yes (%)	No (%)
Regular consumption of Christian content	85%	15%
Following Christian influencers	68%	32%
Preference for short-form sermons	60%	40%
TikTok as a source of spiritual inspiration	72%	28%

While high engagement levels are evident, deeper analysis reveals that TikTok is not merely a platform but a religious micro-environment where theological exposure is continuous, informal, and algorithmically structured.

Quantitative findings indicate that TikTok is a highly influential platform for religious engagement among youth. Out of the 100 respondents, 85 per cent reported regularly consuming Christian-related content on TikTok, while 72 per cent indicated that TikTok serves as a significant source of spiritual inspiration. Furthermore, 68 per cent of respondents reported following at least one Christian content creator, and 60 per cent indicated a preference for short-form video sermons over traditional long-form preaching.

These findings suggest a strong shift toward digital, mobile-centred religious engagement, where accessibility and convenience play a central role. The data further revealed that 54 per cent of respondents spend between 1 and 3 hours daily on TikTok, indicating sustained exposure to religious and non-religious content alike.

Qualitative data support these findings, revealing that youth perceive TikTok as a relatable and accessible platform for spiritual engagement. One respondent noted:

*"TikTok makes it easier for me to understand the Bible because the messages are short and straight to the point. I don't always have time to watch a full sermon, but I can watch many short videos in a few minutes."* (Youth 3)

Another participant emphasised the role of relatability:

*"The people on TikTok talk like us, they use examples from our daily lives. It feels more real compared to church where sometimes the message feels too formal."* (Youth 5)

However, some respondents acknowledged the passive nature of engagement:

*"Sometimes I just scroll and watch without really thinking deeply about the message. It's easy to forget what I watched."* (Youth 45)

These responses highlight that while TikTok increases access and engagement, it may not always facilitate deep reflection.

**Table 4: Perceived Impact on Spiritual Formation**

Statement	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
TikTok supports spiritual growth	70%	30%
Content lacks theological depth	65%	35%
Difficulty understanding complex theology	58%	42%
Do not verify theological accuracy	62%	38%

A significant majority (70%) of respondents agreed that TikTok supports their spiritual growth. This highlights the platform's role as a contemporary space for religious engagement among the youth.

According to Hoover (2006), religion in the modern media environment is increasingly experienced through everyday media practices rather than formal institutional settings. TikTok enables continuous exposure to spiritual content, integrating faith into daily routines.

Similarly, Lövheim (2011) emphasises that digital media serve as important resources for identity formation and meaning-making among youth. The accessibility and emotional appeal of TikTok content make it particularly effective in fostering personal spiritual reflection.

Consistent with Mbiti (1969), who maintains that religion is deeply embedded in all areas of African life, TikTok may be viewed as an extension of lived religiosity into the digital environment. A critical paradox of high perceived spiritual benefit and simultaneously high acknowledgement of shallow content. This contradiction suggests that perceived spiritual growth may be emotional rather than doctrinal.

*"It encourages me, but I don't think it teaches me everything I need to know about God."* (Youth 9)  
*"Sometimes it feels spiritual, but later you realize it was just motivation."* (Youth 56) This supports the argument that TikTok theology fosters affective spirituality rather than cognitive theological formation.

The study sought to evaluate how TikTok theology influences spiritual growth and doctrinal understanding.

- 70 per cent of respondents agreed that TikTok has helped them grow spiritually
- However, 62 per cent admitted that they do not verify the theological accuracy of the content they consume
- 58 per cent indicated difficulty in understanding complex theological concepts through short videos
- 65 per cent reported that TikTok content often lacks depth compared to traditional sermons

These findings suggest that while TikTok enhances exposure to religious ideas, it may not adequately support deeper theological comprehension. Some respondents described TikTok as a starting point for spiritual engagement:

*"TikTok helps me get encouraged, especially when I feel down. But if I want to understand something deeply, I still have to read the Bible or listen to a full sermon."* (Youth 34)

Others expressed concern about oversimplification:

*"Some teachings are too simplified. They make everything look easy, but when you read the Bible, it's not always that simple."* (Youth 19)

There was also evidence of fragmented theological understanding:

*"I follow different creators, and sometimes they teach different things. It can be confusing because I don't know which one is correct."* (Youth 63)

These findings align with the concept of "pick-and-mix spirituality," where individuals selectively engage with diverse teachings without a coherent theological framework. The study found that 62 per cent of respondents do not verify the theological accuracy of the content they consume on TikTok. This development highlights significant concerns over the credibility of digital religious content consumed by young audiences.

Campbell (2013) notes that digital environments often weaken traditional structures of religious authority, allowing a wide range of voices to produce and disseminate content without formal theological training. This democratisation increases access but also complicates the process of discerning credible sources. Additionally, Boyd (2014) argues that digital media encourage rapid consumption and sharing of information, often without critical evaluation. This pattern is reinforced by algorithm-driven platforms that prioritise engagement over accuracy.

The concept of networked individualism (Rainie & Wellman, 2012) further explains why individuals rely on personal judgment and peer influence rather than institutional authority when evaluating information. In the African context, where communal structures traditionally play a central role in maintaining doctrinal integrity (Mbiti, 1969), this shift toward individualised consumption may weaken collective mechanisms of authority and accountability among the youth.

## Nature of TikTok Theological Content

The type of religious content consumed on TikTok plays a critical role in shaping the theological experiences and spiritual perceptions of youth. TikTok's short-form video structure encourages simplified, emotionally engaging, and highly accessible forms of communication that may differ from traditional forms of theological instruction. This section analyses the dominant forms of theological content consumed by youth and discusses their implications for religious understanding and spiritual formation.

**Table 5: Types of Religious Content Consumed**

Content Type	Percentage (%)
Motivational/Inspirational	75%
Short sermons	62%
Bible explanations	48%
Prophetic/deliverance	40%

The dominance of motivational content suggests that youth are drawn to forms of religion that are practical, emotionally engaging, and relevant to everyday life. Hoover (2006) describes this as a shift toward "lived religion," where faith is experienced as a resource for personal meaning and well-being.

The popularity of short sermons reflects the adaptation of traditional preaching to digital formats. Campbell (2013) notes that religious practices are reconfigured in digital environments. However, the brevity of such sermons may limit theological depth (Postman, 1985).

The moderate engagement with Bible explanations (48%) suggests that content requiring deeper cognitive engagement is less appealing in short-form formats. Carr (2010) argues that youth tend to prioritise accessible and relatable content over complex analysis.

The relatively lower engagement with prophetic and deliverance content (40%) may indicate a shift in youth preferences toward less authority-centred forms of spirituality. Gifford (2004) highlights the historical prominence of such practices in African Christianity, but digital-native youth may engage them more selectively.

Despite the positive perception of spiritual growth, 65 per cent of respondents agreed that TikTok content lacks theological depth, while 58 per cent reported difficulty understanding complex theological concepts presented on the platform. These findings highlight a key limitation of short-form video content. Postman (1985) argues that media formats shape the nature of communication, often privileging entertainment and brevity over depth and critical analysis. TikTok's structure encourages simplified messaging, which may undermine theological depth.

This is further supported by Walter (1982), who explains that audiovisual media prioritise immediacy and narrative over abstract reasoning. As a result, theological ideas are often reduced to brief, emotionally engaging segments that may lack sufficient context and thus hinder depth in understanding. From an African theological lens, Bediako (1995) emphasises the importance of contextual and historically

grounded interpretation of scripture. The fragmentation of theological content on TikTok may therefore hinder deeper understanding and sustained doctrinal engagement.

The dominance of motivational content indicates a shift from doctrinal theology to therapeutic spirituality, where the focus is on emotional well-being rather than theological instruction.

*"Most videos are about how God will bless you or encourage you, not really teaching Scripture deeply."* (Youth 33)

This aligns with broader critiques of digital religion, where entertainment logic reshapes theological priorities. This highlights a shift toward experiential and affective spirituality, where emotional resonance takes precedence over theological depth.

## Shift in Religious Authority

The emergence of digital religious influencers has transformed traditional patterns of religious authority and spiritual guidance. Youth increasingly encounter theological teachings from online creators, alongside or sometimes in place of, institutional church leaders. This section explores how TikTok theology is shaping perceptions of religious authority, particularly regarding trust in digital influencers, pastors, and church teachings.

**Table 7: Authority Shift Indicators**

Statement	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
Trust TikTok influencers for guidance	66%	34%
Value TikTok teachings equal to sermons	52%	48%
Question church teachings after TikTok exposure	48%	52%

This demonstrates a hybrid authority structure, rather than a complete replacement of pastoral authority. *"I still respect my pastor, but sometimes TikTok explains things better."* (Youth 22)

This suggests that authority is becoming negotiated rather than fixed, a key transformation in digital religion. One of the most significant findings of the study is the shift in perceived religious authority. 66% of respondents trust TikTok Christian influencers as sources of spiritual guidance, 52% indicated that they sometimes value TikTok teachings as much as or more than church sermons, and 48% reported questioning church teachings after encountering alternative views on TikTok.

These findings suggest a change in authority structures, where digital influencers increasingly compete with traditional pastoral leadership.

*"Sometimes I feel like the people on TikTok explain things better than pastors because they are more direct and relatable."* (Youth Participant 22)

However, not all respondents expressed complete trust:

*"I don't fully trust everything on TikTok because anyone can post. But some of the teachings are really helpful."* (Youth Participant 39)

This indicates a complex dynamic where youth both rely on and question digital sources of authority.

## Pastoral Perspectives on TikTok Theology

The rapid growth of TikTok theology has generated varied responses among church leaders and pastors. While some view digital platforms as valuable tools for evangelism and youth outreach, others express concern regarding theological accuracy, shallow teaching, and declining pastoral influence. This section presents pastoral perspectives on TikTok theology and examines how church leaders interpret the opportunities and challenges associated with digital religious engagement.

**Table 8: Pastoral Responses (N = 10)**

Theme	Frequency	Percentage (%)
TikTok useful for evangelism	8	80%
Concern about doctrinal errors	9	90%
Concern about shallow teaching	10	100%
Support digital engagement	7	70%

Pastors expressed strong concern about theological dilution as youth continue interacting with TikTok.

*"You cannot compress doctrine into 60 seconds without losing meaning."* (Pastor 3)

*"We are discipling less, and social media is discipling more."* (Pastor 6)

This highlights a discipleship crisis, where informal digital content competes with structured teaching. However, adaptation is emerging:

*"If we are not present on TikTok, we are losing the youth."* (Pastor 5)

Interviews with the 10 pastors revealed a cautious but generally critical stance toward TikTok theology. While pastors acknowledged its potential for evangelism, they expressed significant concerns about doctrinal integrity and spiritual depth.

*"TikTok is a powerful tool for reaching young people, but it cannot replace proper teaching. Theology cannot be reduced to one-minute videos."* (Pastor 3)

Another pastor emphasised the challenge of misinformation:

*"We are dealing with a generation that is learning theology from untrained individuals online. This creates confusion and weakens doctrinal foundations."* (Pastor 7)

Some pastors also highlighted the challenge to pastoral authority:

*"Young people come to church with ideas they got from TikTok, and sometimes those ideas are not biblically sound. It becomes difficult to guide them."* (Pastor 1)

Despite these concerns, a few pastors acknowledged the need for adaptation:

*"Instead of rejecting TikTok, the church should use it wisely. We need to be present where the youth are."* (Pastor 5)

These responses indicate a tension between resistance and adaptation, reflecting broader challenges faced by religious institutions in the digital age.

## Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The integration of findings reveals a consistent pattern: TikTok significantly enhances youth engagement with religious content but simultaneously introduces challenges related to depth, accuracy, and authority. Quantitative data highlights the scale of engagement, while qualitative data provides insight into the lived experiences and perceptions of both youth and pastors.

Overall, the results demonstrate that TikTok theology is not merely a supplementary form of religious engagement but a transformative force reshaping how theology is accessed, interpreted, and practised among youth.

The findings reveal a dynamic and complex pattern of youth engagement with digital religious content. On one hand, TikTok provides a highly accessible and engaging platform for spiritual growth. On the other hand, it introduces challenges related to theological depth, comprehension, and accuracy. This duality reflects the broader dynamics of digital religion described by Campbell (2013), where digital media simultaneously empower and disrupt traditional religious practices.

In the African context, the results suggest a shift from communal, institution-based theology toward individualised, digitally mediated spirituality. However, this transformation does not indicate a decline in religiosity but rather a reconfiguration of how faith is experienced and expressed.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Conclusion:** This chapter has demonstrated that TikTok plays a significant role in shaping youth spiritual formation. While the platform enhances access to religious content and supports personal engagement, it also raises critical concerns regarding theological depth, understanding, and accuracy.

The findings emphasise the importance of enhancing digital theological literacy, establishing stronger content verification mechanisms, and making deliberate efforts to balance depth with accessibility. Ultimately, youth are not disengaged from spirituality; rather, they are actively redefining it within the context of digital culture.

The study further concludes that TikTok theology represents a major transformation in contemporary religious practice among youth. Digital platforms have become important spaces where young people seek inspiration, spiritual encouragement, and theological guidance. The accessibility, relatability, and interactive nature of TikTok make it attractive to digitally connected youth who increasingly prefer short-form, mobile-centred communication.

However, the findings also reveal significant limitations associated with TikTok theology. Although the platform supports emotional and motivational spirituality, it often lacks the theological depth necessary for sustained doctrinal formation. The study established that many youths consume religious content without verifying its theological accuracy, exposing them to fragmented teachings and potential misinformation. This shift reflects the broader transformation of religious authority from institutional and communal structures toward personalised and digitally mediated spirituality.

The study, therefore, concludes that TikTok theology should not be viewed solely as a threat to traditional Christianity, but rather as a complex and evolving digital religious environment that demands critical engagement, theological guidance, and institutional adaptation. Churches and religious leaders must recognise the realities of digital culture and develop strategies that integrate theological depth with digital accessibility in order to remain relevant to contemporary youth.

**Recommendations:** Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that churches and religious institutions actively establish a meaningful presence on TikTok and other digital platforms in order to engage youth within their preferred communication environments. Religious institutions should also develop short-form theological content that balances accessibility, creativity, and doctrinal depth to ensure that young people receive both inspiration and sound theological teaching. In addition, churches should provide digital discipleship programmes aimed at helping youth critically evaluate online religious content and identify credible theological sources. Pastors and youth leaders should embrace digital ministry training to improve their capacity to communicate effectively within contemporary digital culture. Religious institutions should further encourage the integration of online and offline spiritual engagement by connecting digital content with Bible study groups, mentorship programmes, and physical worship participation.

The study also recommends that youth develop critical digital literacy skills that enable them to evaluate the theological accuracy and credibility of religious content shared on TikTok. Young people should complement short-form TikTok teachings with deeper theological study through Bible reading, full sermons, and active participation in church fellowship. Furthermore, youth should avoid relying exclusively on social media influencers for spiritual guidance and instead maintain engagement with accountable church leadership and established theological teachings.

Christian influencers and content creators should prioritise theological responsibility by ensuring that the content they share is biblically grounded and contextually accurate. They should avoid oversimplifying complex theological concepts merely to increase views, engagement, or entertainment value. Digital religious influencers are also encouraged to collaborate with trained theologians and church leaders in order to improve the quality and credibility of online theological content.

The study further recommends that theological institutions incorporate digital theology and media literacy into ministerial training programmes to prepare future church leaders for digital ministry environments. Educational institutions should promote digital literacy education among youth to strengthen critical thinking and responsible media consumption. In addition, stakeholders in religion and media should develop ethical guidelines for online religious communication in order to reduce the spread of misleading theological content.

Finally, future studies should examine the long-term effects of TikTok theology on youth doctrinal development and church participation. Researchers should also explore gender differences in engagement with digital religious content among youth. Comparative studies between TikTok theology and other social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook are necessary to determine differences in theological influence and engagement patterns. Further research should also investigate the experiences of pastors and church leaders in adapting to digital religious environments within the African context.

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