Social Media as an Agenda-Setting Tool: How Social Media Is Defining the Reality of Younger Generations

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Abstract

This paper examines social media as an agenda-setting tool that aims to shape a mediated reality for younger generations. Due to increased accessibility and exposure to social media, the voices and images therein are being infused and imprinted on the conscience of the younger generation during their formative years. Naively, they believe what they see and hear, oblivious to the influence these mediated voices and images have on them and their future. It is shaping their perceptions, personalities, characters, and choices as they grow, and social media reality is becoming their reality. The study revealed that the images and voices on social media are indeed a mediated reality masterminded by media establishments. These establishments are owned and/or controlled by global media lords. And that these lords have strategically crafted social media platforms not only as business entities for profit but also as channels to advance psychological warfare so that they can have full-spectrum dominance over the world population. Furthermore, the study revealed that with the onset of digital culture, the truth of God's word is competing with the forms of truth on social media, which is significantly influencing the younger generation. Given that the majority of them have very limited knowledge of the truth that is founded on God's word, they readily embrace the salient points on social media as truth and reality, and these are shaping who they are becoming. This study aims to raise awareness among the younger generation and the church, a partner institution, about the urgent need to forge a strategic partnership to share God's word and its message on social media, thereby securing the younger generation with its truth. Otherwise, we could have a generation in the near future that does not know the truth, but rather a distorted form of it. The study utilizes the agenda-setting theory and draws from secondary data.

Keywords: Media and Reality, Social Media, Media Creators, Media Consumers, Digital Culture

Introduction

Innately, human beings are curious about their world, and as such, they "have a need for orientation."[1] The media have been meeting this need since ancient times through "the manuscript culture of medieval Europe and the gradual increased dominance of print from the Renaissance to our present age of digital computing.[2] Social media is the result of decades of progressive technological advancements, from the monopolized print media of the past to the modern, liberalized Internet of Things (IoT). It enables us to communicate in real-time from the comfort of our mobile devices. This has probably placed social media at the top of the list as the most influential media platform compared to traditional media. While it provides convenience and value, it is imperative to examine how it is redefining the younger generation: their conscience, thinking, habits, values, belief systems, and, ultimately, their reality. In a discussion titled "*I'd Rather Lose a Finger than Give up My Phone: Mobile Technology and Social Media,"* Bergler states that "smartphones and other screens are significant life-shaping companions for members of Generation Z.[3] It has become a common phenomenon to see a toddler quietly holding the smartphone of their parent, engulfed in its world and easily navigating it's options. Social media and the younger generation are inextricably linked, and hence, there is a need to study them closely.

According to Ragas and Roberts, "the focal point of agenda setting is the achievement of consensus on the most salient issues by the public."4 Although agenda-setting has its roots in traditional media, research conducted by Colman and McCombs strongly supports the idea that the effects of agenda-setting still prevail among the young, with a strong correlation between the media agenda and the young generation's agenda, even though they primarily use non-traditional media.5 The researcher believes that this could be attributed to Ragas and Roberts' views that "increased exposure to media among demographic subgroups of the population results in

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[1] Sebastián Valenzuela and Maxwell Mccombs, "The Agenda-Setting Role of the News Media," 2019, 47.

[2] Robert Hassan and Thomas Sutherland, *Philosophy of Media: A Short History of Ideas and Innovations from Socrates to Social Media* (Routledge, 2017), 22.

[3] Thomas E Bergler, "Generation Z and Spiritual Maturity," *Christian Education Journal* 17, no. 1 (December 31, 2020): 83.

[4] Matthew W. Ragas and Marilyn S. Roberts, "Agenda Setting and Agenda Melding in an Age of Horizontal and Vertical Media: A New Theoretical Lens for Virtual Brand Communities.," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 86, no. 1 (March 1, 2009): 49.

[5] Renita Coleman and Maxwell McCombs, "The Young and Agenda-Less? Exploring Age-Related Differences in Agenda Setting on the Youngest Generation, Baby Boomers, and the Civic Generation.," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 84, no. 3 (September 1, 2007): 504.

increased agreement on the most salient issues across these subgroups as a whole."[6] A view they imply is advanced by agenda melding, "where important issues of very different people merge when these people are exposed to a set of common issues." According to Hassan and Sutherland, human beings tend to understand their world through the media and technologies available to them at any particular time.[7] Facebook, YouTube, X, TikTok, Instagram, Threads, and all the other social media platforms, along with their host technologies, are the media available to this generation. They are the gathering places for both present and future generations, with Generation Beta being born into a world of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Accessibility and easy navigation have made social media the city square where the younger generation meets, greets, shares ideas, builds relationships, forms communities, and discovers new opportunities.

Cognizant of these facts and that "the medium is the message," social media establishments curate the images and voices they want their audiences to adopt, as well as manage the communication process to convey the salient issues. The younger generation is an easy target, given that they are in their formative years and have a high need for orientation as they develop a worldview. These images and voices are becoming embedded in their developing conscience, and as such, they are becoming submerged into the mediated, synthetic reality of social media. As they grow, social media reality is their reality. This paper examines agenda-setting closely and how social media serves as a tool in the hands of its creators and/or owners to drive their agenda, particularly among younger and future generations.

Media and Reality

Muhoro, in her study, notes that *"*mass media exerts a powerful influence on the way people perceive, think, and ultimately act in the world."[8] She goes on to say that it exerts a "powerful influence on the consciousness and worldview of their audience; it cultivates a conscience that seldom differs from the worldview and the expectations of its establishment*.*"[9] Two facts from Muhoro's discussions are central to this discourse. The first is that media establishments understand the power of media to pacify and stupefy the masses. They therefore create, process, refine, and preside over the information and images to be circulated and presented to the masses.

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[6] Ragas and Roberts, "Agenda Setting and Agenda Melding in an Age of Horizontal and Vertical Media," 50.

[7] Hassan and Sutherland, *Philosophy of Media*, 53.

[8] Njeri Muhoro, "Center Controlled Media as A Development Vehicle: A Case Study of Television and Radio in Kenya," n.d., 28.

[9] Muhoro, 29.

The second is that these voices and images do not necessarily correspond to the realities of their audience's social existence but rather are a construction of the producers' reality. In other words, consumers have to "deal with a second-hand reality created by media organizations."[10] A synthetic reality as seen in the introduction. The masses then begin to feel what the producers want them to feel; they become conscious of what the producers want them to be conscious of and start to behave as the producers want them to behave.

Social media is an outgrowth of traditional and mainstream media. It is the present-day mass media. Research conducted by Bergler in 2020 reveals that 57% of teenagers have four or more hours of screen time, averaging 2.5 hours of texting, 1.5 hours of video gaming, 0.5 hours of chatting, and 2 hours of internet use every day.[11] Five years on, these values may have certainly grown, given the speed of digitalization. According to the Honeycomb Model developed by Kietzmann et al., social media has seven (7) functional building blocks:, identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and group.[12] This is consistent with the results of a research study conducted by Cele et al., which concluded that the reasons the younger generation uses social media include "socialization, self-actualization, satisfaction of psychological needs," and staying informed about social and political activity.[13] Social media, therefore, provides a fertile environment for younger generations to interact, socialize, and develop their sense of social identity.[14] As such, we can conclude that the younger generation is becoming increasingly reliant on social media to understand and interpret their world, as they spend more time on screens and their worldview is being shaped by the synthetic reality therein.

The Agenda-Setting Theory

The agenda-setting role of mass media is its "ability to influence which issues, persons, and topics are perceived as the most important" at any given time. The first iteration of the agenda-setting theory claimed that the effects of media play a central role in shaping political reality,

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[10] Valenzuela and Mccombs, "The Agenda-Setting Role of the News Media," 45.
[11] Bergler, "Generation Z and Spiritual Maturity," 83.
[12] Jessica Lichy et al., "Understanding Pre-teen Consumers Social Media Engagement.," *International Journal of Consumer Studies* 47, no. 1 (January 1, 2023): 203, https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12821.
[13] Zamaswazi P Cele, Marina G Shilina, and Ndivhuho Tshikovhi, "Social Media Driven Mediatization of Youth in BRICS," *RUDN Journal of Studies in Literature and Journalism*, 2024, 819.
[14] Lichy et al., "Understanding Pre-teen Consumers Social Media Engagement.," 211.

given their ability to transfer object salience from the media to the public.[15] It proposes that "the prominent elements and objects on the media agenda over time ultimately become prominent on the public agenda."[16] That is, as the public is continuously exposed to media content, they begin to identify with the issues presented, discussing and debating them to the point where these issues become part of their everyday lives. A case in point: at the time of writing this article, the prominent elements in the media in Kenya have been focused on the country's political and economic issues. Although the country is not in a campaign season, researchers observe that the majority of Kenyans are constantly discussing and debating these subjects on social media. These salient issues have been trending in every sphere of Kenyan audiences and beyond. According to Weinman, the agenda-setting theory mainly originates in Walter Lippmann's writing, *The World Outside and the Pictures in Our Heads*.[17] Lippmann argues that the events depicted by the press were more often than not spurious, that is, "The images it created were misleading, distorted, and shaped false 'pictures in our heads' of the 'world outside.'" Furthermore, he claimed that people often act based on how they perceive reality as depicted by the media, rather than on real-life situations. Caroll observes that the press and the media seldom reflect reality.[18] Instead, he says, they filter and shape it by concentrating on certain issues and subjects so that the public perceives them as more important than others. Cohen, a political scientist, states that "the press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about."[19] In other words, it does not just introduce a thought but rather initiates a thought process that more often than not lingers in their minds and goes on to influence their decision-making processes. This position is affirmed by Weinman, who states that audiences get informed about public affairs through the media and learn how much importance to attach to a topic, person, or issue based on the weight the media has placed upon it.[20]

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[15] Nicoleta CORBU and Olga HOSU, "The Key Words Agenda: New Avenues for Agenda Setting Research.," *Romanian Journal of Communication & Public Relations* 19, no. 3 (December 1, 2017): 7, https://doi.org/10.21018/rjcpr.2017.3.241.

[16] Valenzuela and Mccombs, "The Agenda-Setting Role of the News Media," 26.

[17] Weimann, *Communicating Unreality*, 3.

[18] Craig E. Carroll, *Corporate Reputation and the News Media: Agenda-Setting within Business News Coverage in Developed, Emerging, and Frontier Markets*, 1st ed., Routledge Communication Series (Routledge, 2010), 154, http://gen.lib.rus.ec/book/index.php?md5=435184dd164a423f740285ea31b3fc85.

[19] Weimann, *Communicating Unreality*, 34.

[20] Weimann, 35.

The core agenda-setting theory has since evolved from agenda setting to priming, framing, and agenda melding, with each ramification arguing for a different approach and perhaps a new way of information transfer.[21] Priming and framing are considered as the first and second-level agenda-setting paradigms. Priming is a process where the media draws attention to specific political issues, while ignoring others to alter the standards by which the public evaluates candidates for an election.[22] By focusing on a particular candidate and his agenda, the media influences people to form opinions about that candidate. Framing is "the presentation of information in a way that guides its interpretation."[23] Here, certain aspects of perceived reality are selected and made more salient to promote a casual interpretation, an intended treatment, or a moral evaluation.[24] The first-level agenda setting conveys the object's salience, while the second-level agenda setting conveys the attribute salience of the object.[25] This way, the media does not just present an agenda of objects but also describes each one, articulating its attributes and traits.[26]

Corbu and Hosu argue that a third-level agenda-setting model, Network Agenda Setting (NAS), should be developed.[27] In NAS, they say "the media not only tells its audiences what and how to think about issues, they also suggest what and how to associate" with them. It is based on the premise that "human cognitive representation works in a network-like structure, rather than a linear one." Further, it provides "keywords and expressions for people to use in their daily conversations with others, on specific public issues," therefore transferring "keywords and expressions salience between agendas." In other words, each prominent topic in the media consists of a bundle of keywords connected to the subtopics associated with it, forming a network.[28]

Agenda melding is another expansion of the agenda-setting theory.[29] Here, "individuals join groups and they 'meld' their individual agendas with the agenda of the group." Agenda

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[21] CORBU and HOSU, "The Key Words Agenda," 7.

[22] Weimann, *Communicating Unreality*, 35.

[23] Carroll, *Corporate Reputation and the News Media*, 154.

[24] CORBU and HOSU, "The Key Words Agenda," 9.

[25] Maxwell McCombs, Sebastián Valenzuela, "The Agenda-Setting Theory," *Cuadernos de Información*, 19 - 6 - 0 7, 47.

[26] Carroll, *Corporate Reputation and the News Media*, 384.

[27] CORBU and HOSU, "The Key Words Agenda," 10.

[28] CORBU and HOSU, 13.

[29] Philemon Bantimaroudis et al., "Conspiracism on Social Media: An Agenda Melding of Group-Mediated Deceptions.," *International Journal of Media & Cultural Politics* 16, no. 2 (June 1, 2020): 121.

melding, they add, is primarily driven by social media platforms because it empowers ordinary individuals to establish significant themes and allows like-minded individuals to find one another and promote shared interests. The result is a convergence of agendas as individuals predisposed to certain beliefs find a place of harmony in group-mediated discourses and find validation and reinforcement in a community of like-minded people. Furthermore, as cultural and subcultural agendas merge, new ideological bonds form among the new community members, and a conglomeration of ideologies begins to thrive as individuals share.

From the discussions above, it is clear that with every ramification, the underpinned theoretical core of agenda setting is the transfer of salience with agenda melding, providing parsimony.[30] It is also clear that while the message is the center of each ramification, the medium used is equally central in the theory.

Social Media Creators

According to Muhoro,

> The history of center control of the mass media can be traced to Western Europe and the authoritarian governments that existed before the democratic revolution in the region. Being aware that mass media can arouse the people against the power centers, they remained keen on controlling the mass media, thus safeguarding the hegemony of the ruling class.[31]

This being the case, the crucial question to further this discourse is, "Who are the power centers and or ruling class?" Carrol clearly states that "two main powers control news, governments and corporations."[32] This may be attributed to the government's need to maintain control over the masses it rules and the corporations' need to safeguard their business interests. From observation, global corporations essentially fund and support governments, particularly during political campaigns, mainly to safeguard their business interests. Weimann refers to those who head and/or own global media corporations as "global media village lords."[33] He states that their motive is profits, but ideological motives should not be overlooked. Further, he states that "together they exert a homogenizing power over ideas, culture, and commerce that affects populations larger than any in history." They achieve this by leveraging global management and technological strategies and advancements. This is insinuated in the words of media expert Hal

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[30] Bantimaroudis et al., 121.

[31] Muhoro, "Center Controlled Media as A Development Vehicle: A Case Study of Television and Radio in Kenya," 16.

[32] Carroll, *Corporate Reputation and the News Media*, 302.

[33] Weimann, *Communicating Unreality*, 246.

Becker, who stated, "I know the secret of making the average American believe anything I want him to. Just let me control the television. You put something on the television, and it becomes reality. If the world outside the TV set contradicts these images, people start trying to change the world to make it like the TV set images."[34] While Becker was referring to television, the same principle applies to social media, which is an extension of television. Social media is like having a television in the palm of your hand.

Unknown to the world populace, global powers have been driving the "world view warfare," an approach borrowed from the Nazi's "Weltanschauungskrieg."[35] The approach is a long-range plan that utilizes psychological warfare to dominate the public's information spectrum across all forms of media and education, with the sole aim of manipulating their perception, influencing their interpretation, and affecting their decision-making abilities. Their ultimate agenda has been "full-spectrum-dominance over ALL aspects of a target population's interpretive and decision-making faculties."[36] Meaning they rule the masses, not by a tyrannic fist as it was in premodern times, but by manipulating their conscience.

The world has become a global village, governed by powerful global leaders. It seems that their agenda to control the masses was initiated slowly but has been incremental with modernization. While leveraging recent technological developments in media, social media has become the primary platform for advancing their agenda. This time, they have strategically positioned social media platforms as platforms of social cohesion,[37] a global social network, hence the name "social media." According to Ghavari, Mark Zuckerberg, the creator of Facebook, believes that "Facebook stands for bringing us closer together and building a global community."[38] He goes on to state that, "Elsewhere, he even likens Facebook to a church." The Social media community is a departure from the traditional way of community and is consistent with the postmodernist way of community, where postmodernists encourage individuals to pursue a sense of belonging among like-minded individuals in the global community.[39]

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[34] Dan Willis, *Who Controls the Agreed upon Reality through the Mainstream Media and Why They Fear Disclosing the Truth about the Extraterrestrial Reality?* 2023, 45.

[35] Willis, 10.

[36] Willis, 1277.

[37] Lance Gharavi, "The Saddest Bubbles: Toward a Theory of Outrage," *Ecumenica* 13, no. 2 (December 31, 2020): 137.

[38] Gharavi, 137.

[39] Esilaba, Eda M, and Richard L Starcher, "Post-Modernity's Influence on African Urban Christian Youth." The Journal of Youth Ministry," 2009, 71–72.

These facts support the notion that global media conglomerates, as part of their strategy to safeguard their global interests, create, own, and control major social media corporations worldwide.

The Message on Social Media

Every message on social media is a mix of truth and lies, half-truths and half-lies, facts and half-facts, useful and destructive information. For this study, we focus on some of the predominant messages on social media and how they are likely to shape the reality of the younger generation. The first is sex and sexuality. Traditionally, these were not topics discussed in the public sphere. However, because of social media, they have infiltrated the public sphere thanks to the continued pornification of media.[40] Eelmaa goes on to say that this has fuelled a cultural shift to what is now referred to as the sexualization of culture, where children have equally become objects, subjects, and consumers of sexualized images and voices. The resultant developmental and contextual consequences, such as anxiety, diminished value, low self-esteem, rage, and depression, do not only have short-term implications but have lifelong implications. This is because these messages diminish the inherent value of the younger generation in terms of attractiveness and looks, a superficial value that fades away with time. To confirm the reality of the sexualization culture, one needs to observe, for example, the modern dress codes among the masses. These modern dress codes promote nudity and promiscuity, making sexual arousal as ordinary as walking down the street. Social media platforms portray these as classy and normal. The long-term implications of the sexualization culture on the younger generation can be seen through the results of ninety (90) years of research by Tavistock Institute, which shows that child sexuality influences the development of personality; that early sex stimulation "produces adults whose emotional development is similar to that of a neurotic child."[41] Further, building on the concept of Dr. Kurt Lewin, where an individual is deprogrammed of their traditional beliefs through trauma to allow for reprogramming according to the controllers' wishes, the research shows that "people under controlled stress became more infantile and gave up strongly held beliefs under group pressure to conform to popular opinion." When children experience hurt, uncertainty, and tension during their Oedipal phase, which typically occurs between the

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[40] Simone Eelmaa, "Sexualization of Children in Deepfakes and Hentai," *Trames* 26, no. 2 (May 1, 2022): 230, https://doi.org/10.3176/tr.2022.2.07.
[41] Willis, *Who Controls the Agreed upon Reality through the Mainstream Media and Why They Fear Disclosing the Truth about the Extraterrestrial Reality?* 43.

ages of 4 and 6, an internal conflict between opposing forces develops.[42] Shakya goes on to say that "infantile neurosis is a form of age-appropriate mental problem engaged by Oedipal phase constructs." The result, he states, is regressive behaviors and fears as the individual attempts to displace the internal conflict often aroused by their Oedipal longings. The longing for attention, love, and care was not fulfilled in childhood.

The second message on social media is outrage. "We live in an age of outrage, not because the world is more outrageous but because we can see it better."[43] He explains this because social media amplifies, multiplies, and lubricates outrage performances through its design elements, material structures, and incentives, thereby enhancing its operation and proliferation. In addition, virality research shows that outrage content captures more attention and is highly likely to be shared widely more than any other type of content, thus generating more revenue in the form of page views, clicks, likes, and shares, making it beneficial for business.[44] From our earlier discussions, we saw that one of the outcomes of the sexualization culture is neurotic behaviors. This means it is highly likely that the younger generation will have frequent bursts of outrage as they attempt to deal with their internal conflicts.

A third predominant message on social media is, "You can become an influencer." This could explain the use of the term "influencers" on social media to describe individuals who influence the masses towards a particular trend or way of thinking. While some claim to have become influential, rich, and famous through social media, the researcher found no scholarly research or statistics to confirm these claims. Yet, because social media images and voices have conditioned the masses to believe that one can become influential like the ruling class, clout chasing has become an obsession among the younger generation. In a desperate attempt to identify with the influential social community, the younger generation is heavily exploring and using social media to gain popularity, even engaging in obnoxious behavior to trend. As they seek affirmation and acceptance on these platforms, they will often relinquish strongly held beliefs and conform to social media communities that align with their current interests and drives. As observed earlier, this outcome is a result of deprogramming and reprogramming through controlled stress.

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[42] Shakya, Dhana Ratna, "Childhood Neurotic Traits," *Journal of Nepal Paediatric Society* 28 (March 1, 2008): 28.

[43] Gharavi, "The Saddest Bubbles," 127–29.

[44] Gharavi, 137–38.

Finally, in this study, we examine the message of spirituality. World populations are part of a religion or are influenced by religion. As cultures converge on social media, there is an equal convergence of religions, as well as realists and non-realists. For realists, the truth already exists out there, while for non-realists, they are the "makers of truth, and truth is the current consensus among them."[45] Meister explains that spirituality is abandoning "all ideas of objective and eternal truth, and instead seeing all truth as a human improvisation." It means giving up the idea that there is a heavenly supernatural world that exists beyond. Furthermore, he asserts that adopting a religious lifestyle can lead to eternal happiness through spirituality.

These messages are packaged on social media as drawings, cartoons, reality shows, games, teachings, movies, and even live performances. As we saw earlier, social media structures and systems are designed to promote content that captures attention and is quickly shared. To this end, social media establishments have developed algorithms that enhance the proliferation of such discourses and those that align with their interests and agenda.[46] In addition, they have carefully crafted visual icons consistent across social media platforms, such as emojis, like buttons, and share buttons, to simplify and codify these discourses online.

Social Media Consumers

Bantimaroudis *et al*. state that drawing the line between the real and the false on social media has become an increasingly challenging task.[47] This is attributed to the fact that what one person terms as truth, another person terms as false, and what one sees as delusional or deceptive, another person terms as alternative thinking. This means that everyone is entitled to their own perspective, and their truth is valid. This is an alternative spiritual concept where consensus defines truth.

The younger generation, including youths and children, spends a significant amount of time on social media from a very young age. Given that they are in their formative years, they are curious and searching because their need for orientation is higher as they try to make something of their world. Their conscience is like a blank canvas awaiting the brush and paint of a painter. Unfortunately, because their ability to distinguish between the real and false, truth and lie, is still developing, they naively consume the curated images and voices on social media

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[45] Chad Meister, *Introducing Philosophy of Religion* (Routledge 2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN: Routledge; Taylor & Francis Group., 2009), 15–16.

[46] Gharavi, "The Saddest Bubbles," 137–38.

[47] Bantimaroudis et al., "Conspiracism on Social Media," 116.

as they are presented to them. Consequently, their emotions and conscience are being subjected to the emotional sublimity of social media in their formative years.[48] A study done by Bantimaroudis *et al.* found that students tend to trust individuals with similar beliefs online and consider social media communities a credible and trustworthy source of news and information.[49] The fact that they trust those they see and hear on social media means that social media truths are becoming their truths and reality. The mark of these imposed patterns is evident in the changing behavior trends among the younger generation, with promiscuous fashion trends and degenerating ethical and moral standards becoming increasingly acceptable. As people of all nations are eagerly and increasingly declaring their beings and beliefs on social media,"[50] the younger generation is explicitly exposed to a myriad of things. Perhaps more than their innocent souls can accommodate.

Final Observations

The communication theory, "the medium is the message,"[51] helps drive the point home for this study. The theory suggests that the medium used to convey a message plays a crucial role in how the message is received, perceived, interpreted, and even acted upon; it shapes and influences human association and behavior. Evidently, we are living in a world overwhelmingly "dominated by an instrumentalized, calculative, technically mediated form of knowledge"[52] masterminded by media organizations. We live in a postmodern global community that defines its truths in ways that diverge from the natural and traditional. A community that states that "it is obnoxious to declare 'wrong' another community's beliefs or practices"[53] and therefore encourages the embracing of all beliefs and practices as true and acceptable, and social media is the common pool from which this community drinks.

Critically, while digitality has improved efficiency, its social media platforms lack the capacity to develop or sustain societal ethics and morals that are essential for the survival of any society.[54] This is obviously because its foundation is flawed, and the global village media lords

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[48] Willis, *Who Controls the Agreed upon Reality through the Mainstream Media and Why They Fear Disclosing the Truth about the Extraterrestrial Reality?* 43.

[49] Bantimaroudis et al., "Conspiracism on Social Media," 117.

[50] McLuhan and Lapham, *Understanding Media*, 8.

[51] McLuhan and Lapham, 11.

[52] Hassan and Sutherland, *Philosophy of Media*, 244.

[53] Esilaba, Eda M, and Richard L Starcher, "Post-Modernity's Influence on African Urban Christian Youth." The Journal of Youth Ministry," 71–72.

[54] Hassan and Sutherland, *Philosophy of Media*, 218.

are tactfully nurturing a generation that is severely internally conflicted, whose moral and ethical standards are wanting. A generation that is "ill-equipped to think sufficiently (ethically or otherwise) about nature."[55] A generation "doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry."[56] A generation whose money is their master, a generation that upholds spirituality but denies the truth as seen in the second book of Timothy,

> A people who will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud and arrogant, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous reckless, swollen in conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness but denying its power.[57]

Sadly, these traits are becoming a common phenomenon among the younger generation. Even more critical is the fact that, because the digital culture has made everything easy and graphic, the Bible has to compete for attention with social media and computerized games among the younger generation."[58] In cases where they do not have parents or guardians who can guide them in reading the Bible for spiritual nourishment, enabling them to take a personal stand against the vices they see on social media, they are left with a spiritual vacuum, which becomes a serious gap in developing a Christ-like character.

While social media poses a significant challenge, it also presents an opportunity for the church and the younger generation to share and implement the truth.[59] It has made it easier to evangelize global communities with the Gospel while eliminating cultural and distance barriers. Even so, to win this worldview warfare that the global village media lords have waged against the younger generation, the church, and the Kingdom of God, they need to forge a strategic partnership to drive the Kingdom of Light's agenda. It is a war cry for the younger generation. They have distorted the truth and nature, creating a mediated reality for the masses.

Conclusion

Social media is the media available to the global masses in the present day and age. It has become the city square for the global community to meet, greet, share information and

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[55] Hassan and Sutherland, 220.
[56] English Standard Version, *The Bible,1 Peter 4:3*, n.d.
[57] English Standard Version, *The Bible, 2 Timothy 3:1-5*, n.d.
[58] Paulus Widjaja, "Teaching Christian Character and Ethics to Generation Z," *The Conrad GrebelReview*, 2016, 78.
[59] Gernaida Krisna R. Pakpahan et al., "Social Media and Contextual Evangelism for Millennial Generation" (International Conference on Theology, Humanities, and Christian Education (Iconthce 2021), Atlantis Press, 2022), 122.

knowledge, build relationships, and trade. Social media is owned and managed by global media establishments that global lords own. These global lords create and/or influence global digital systems and structures to safeguard their business interests and drive worldview warfare on the masses. While social media is not exclusive to the younger generation, the long-term approach of these platforms is evidence enough that their target is the young, particularly during their Oedipal phase and formative years. This approach is informed by the knowledge that this phase is critical in the formation of their worldview, owing to their high need for orientation as they discover their world. Naively, the young generation is being entertained by what they see and hear; the images and voices therein are infiltrating their conscience and subtly influencing almost all, if not all, their faculties. They are being submerged into the synthetic reality of social media, and because they do not know better, this mediated reality is becoming their reality. Sexuality, nudity, fame, money, instant gratification, and all forms of worldliness are becoming more acceptable to them. The result is a generation that is internally conflicted, anxious, has diminished value and low self-esteem, is rageful, and depressed as they try to fit. This means that the global lords and elites are ruling over the younger generation and will continue to do so, not by a tyrannical fist, as would be the case in premodern times, but through social media by manipulating their perception, influencing their interpretation, and decision-making abilities. By crafting social media platforms as global city squares, they create a space for a modern community and make it appealing, particularly to the young, further empowering like-minded individuals to continue driving their agenda through agenda melding.

It is indeed a worldview warfare; ungodliness is competing with godliness, deception with truth. And because the younger generation has very limited knowledge of the truth that has its foundation in the written word of God, they are primarily dancing to the tune of social media lords and their agenda. This study aimed to raise awareness among the younger generation and the church institution about the urgent need to form a strategic partnership to effectively disseminate God's word and its messages on social media, thereby securing the younger generation with the truth. Otherwise, a generation that does not know the truth but rather a form of truth shall rise in the near future. A generation that does not know the Lord.

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