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THE USAGES OF INTERNET AND NEW MEDIA BY THE
ROMANIAN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CLERGY

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Abstract: This article highlights how Internet and new media are experienced by Romanian Seventh-Day Adventist pastors in their ministry. What is the acceptance of Web 2.0 services for neo-Protestant pastors of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church (SDAC), what uses of these technologies they make in their work, what is their mobilization for the appropriation of an innovative culture in the daily pastoral work, how these uses allow them to manage their religious activity, these are the main questions of a survey we conducted in 2016 to shed light on uses of digital technologies by Romanian Seventh-Day Adventist pastors.

Key Words: enriched logic of the availability and appropriation of contents, use of the Internet and new media, clergy, pastors, religion, Seventh-Day Adventists

Introduction

This article highlights how Internet and new media are experienced by Romanian Seventh Day Adventist pastors in their religious activity. What is the acceptance of Web 2.0 services for neo-Protestant pastors of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church (SDAC), what uses of these technologies they make in their work, what is their mobilization for the appropriation of an innovative culture in the daily pastoral work, how these uses allow them to manage their religious activity, these are the main questions of a survey we conducted between February - April 2016 to shed light on uses of digital technology by Romanian Seventh-Day Adventist pastors.

The contributions of our research to the study of uses in the field of communication and religion and, more broadly, in the sociology of religion - considering users as actors involved in the social structure of the digital technology in the sense that they adapt by using it according to their lifestyles and to the values of the group to which they belong¹ - consist of:

a) the presentation of the types of uses of digital innovation by the clergy of a neo-Protestant Christian denomination almost not studied so far despite its group culture strongly oriented, since its creation, to a pro technology discourse and a massive use of media specific to each historical period of time²;

b) the increase of the characteristics that describe attitudes towards the culture of innovation of Seventh-Day Adventist (SDA) pastors;

c) the presentation of the religious activities carried out by SDA pastors with digital technology;

d) the availability of the survey results that may be correlated with other existing or future research on the social uses of digital technology by the clergy of different denominations.

With regard to the limits of our research, we note here two:

a) the limitation of the study of the uses of Internet and digital media to SDA pastors, a sample of the Inter-European Division³, and to only one country even if it hosts the majority of Inter-European Division SDA members and even if the Inter-European Division pastors are professionally inserted by their missions at the high management levels of the Division and General Conference.

b) the limitation given by the choice of the sample, reduced to 32 participants. This limit is however compensated by the characteristics of the sample presented above and the geographical mobility and missionaries that characterize the activity of SDA pastors who are often transferred and to whom are entrusted various missions throughout the course of their pastoral activity. To this is added the object of our study

that was not to highlight how many pastors use digital media and Internet, but to present the uses that SDA pastors make of digital technology.

The theoretical framework of our analysis is situated at the heart of the debate on uses and rather favours the approaches which value the “socio-communicational and symbolic aspect”⁴ of uses which have the merit of restoring a conception of active user, actor in the process of innovation⁵, user who not only suffers the potential availability of information by digital technology, but who also remodels digital technology by adapting it to his lifestyle and values (Campbell, 2010) in what Bratosin and Tudor called at the opening of the 4th workshop Essachess-Iarsic, “an enriched logic of the availability and appropriation of contents”⁶.

Studies of usages: beyond the instructions for use

The historical overview of the studies of media use and digital technologies gives the image of a confrontation of paradigms and approaches at the intersection of several fields such as sociology, information and communication sciences, economics, management, etc. in which the challenge consists of the role played by the user⁷. The user is alternately actor-user according to the sociological approach, receiver according to the communicational approach, or consumer according to the economic approach.

In the Information and Communication Sciences, the notion of use has its origin in the theories of “uses and gratifications”, developed in the US in the 1940s and between 1960-1970. This new direction was interested in “what people make of the media”⁸. Independently, the Cultural studies⁹ have made their contribution by transforming the receiver in user since he interprets and decodes the message in his own cultural context, social status, including age, social class...

The French studies of uses are marked by the work of Michel de Certeau¹⁰, which highlights an active user, which undergoes transformations in media messages since he tinkers them. The autonomy of the user is the thesis defended by the approach of Baboulin, Gaudin and Mallein¹¹. Other approaches complement the contributions of pioneers. Serge Proulx¹² has made an excellent synthesis citing the researches on the “social diffusion of innovations”¹³ or on the “genesis of the socio-technical innovation”¹⁴, or on the “usage meanings”¹⁵, or on the “microsociology”¹⁶, or on the “socio-political” and “critical sociology of uses”¹⁷. It nevertheless argues with other authors for an epistemology of uses, a third posture avoiding determinism¹⁸.

More or less marked by technological or social determinism, that is to say more or less passive or active, the user does not leave the logic of autonomy if autonomy is the expression of the logic of a use that, given the immediacy and the imminence of communication that involve

Internet and new media, demand a circumstantial agreement that the user concludes in order to appropriate the message made available¹⁹. Michel de Certeau has tried to understand this kind of agreement based on a logic that fills the space between the availability of information and its appropriation. The user of Michel de Certeau “tinkers with and within the dominant cultural economy to obtain countless infinitesimal metamorphoses of his law into their interests and their own rules”²⁰; users are “unrecognized producers, poets of their business, silent inventors of their own trails in the jungles of the functionalist rationality”²¹. “These are the ways to do a thousand practices by which users re-appropriate the space organized by techniques of sociocultural production”²².

Heidi Campbell addresses the use of religious actors (individual believers, religious groups, etc.) in connection with the “framing strategies of new media appropriation used by the Christian communities to justify their use of the Internet.”²³ She identifies two types of discourse on the use of digital technologies: the prescriptive discourse and the validating discourse²⁴. From the perspective of the prescriptive discourse, it is a question of appropriation of the new media for the purpose of evangelism, more exactly to make proselytes (converts) given the fact that the Internet is considered a wide mission field.

The validating discourse is a counterculture, a discourse based on the construction of responses “to traditional especially organized religion”²⁵. The user, a religious individual, a religious group or a religious organization, frames digital technology through these discourses to establish his engagement with new media, and to determine how the new technology should be integrated into his life. Heidi Campbell’s approach on the use and religious users does not really explain what is going on in the space between the availability of the content and its appropriation. However, she presupposes it, without naming it, when she approaches the negotiation between how we should and should not use the new media.

This is where the “enriched logic of the availability and appropriation of contents”²⁶ comes in, on which De Certeau has had the intuition when he emphasized that 1) each individual makes a different use of the same product, 2) between the services offered by the new media and the use that the user makes there is a gap; 3) the sense of use is built in a practical context²⁷. This logic means that the use is the result of a contractual type of logic, a circumstantial one: the user has certain expectations about new media that new media can meet and this occurs in the context of a negotiated agreement that gives an active role to the user in the usage of new media at a specific moment. In this logic, the user is actively involved in the direction of the process of production of meaning related to digital technologies because he gives meaning to the services, he interprets them. The strategies of framing are actually interpretations resulting from this enriched logic of the availability and appropriation of contents, and they can vary in function of other contexts ...

The specificities of a corpus: the SDAC and its clergy

The corpus of this study was constituted from Romanian SDAC pastors. This choice was made for the following reasons: 1. the Romanian SDAC is the biggest Union in the Inter European Division²⁸; 2. the Romanian SDAC is represented not only by parishes/churches but also by the rest of the leading institutions and missions that Global SDAC holds (media institutions, health, charitable, educational institutions, etc.); 3. the Romanian SDAC is located in an Orthodox country²⁹; 4. the use of the Internet is massive among the Adventist population because the use of Internet in Romania is wide spread³⁰; 5. the Romanian SDAC has a large number of pastors in key positions at the divisional level and the General Conference level; 6. the charitable actions of the Romanian SDAC (through the Adventist Association for Development and Care-ADRA, its main charitable organization), its involvement in the media sphere (through Hope Channel Television network-Speranta TV) and in the Romanian political sphere (through Adventists elected as deputies and senators) make it visible in the society. Another choice was made in the corpus: it consists of respondents that are part of the body of pastors from "Muntenia Conference" which is the biggest regional Seventh Day Adventist organization in Romania³¹. We have questioned 23 % of the total universe of pastors within „Muntenia Conference". They were selected as follows: pastors who have access to the Internet³², representing all ages of Romanian SDAC pastors and with activities in districts³³ from urban and rural areas. All the respondents are male, as at the moment of this research, the SDA Church through its forum at the General Conference (GC) has decided against ordination of women.³⁴

The conduct of the research and methods

Our research was conducted in a quasi-experimental perspective, in a constrained location and time framework and took place in three stages. Firstly, discussions with pastors which have allowed us to validate the dimensions of the questionnaire and the questions (February-March 2016). Secondly, the administration of the survey via Internet and face to face (April 2016). The objective was to gather data concerning the uses of digital media and Internet in pastoral activity. Thirdly, statistical treatment of data in Excel which allowed us to have the picture of different uses and of content of these uses.

For the creation and the implementation of the survey dimensions, previous similar research, from other religious denominations was taken into consideration. We especially have had as reference the study "Picture

Priests: ICT use in their Religious Experience”, research conducted jointly in 2009 by the Swiss University of Lugano (Laboratory of new media in education) and the Pontifical University of Holy Cross, run by Opus Dei in Rome. The objective of the study published in 2010 was to understand how priests use digital technologies in their pastoral work. About 5,000 priests from 117 countries (1.2% of respondents) responded³⁵. In this context, one of the objective of our study is to open the possibility to correlate in future studies our results with the existing ones for international comparisons and also for further analysis and research.

Survey design

The questionnaire created for our study contains a number of sixty-two questions organized in twelve themes. These themes are: frequency use of New Information and Communication Technologies (NICT), use of NICT in order to find out information about church, cult projects, humanitarian projects, youth activities and information about other religious denominations, level of confidence regarding the spiritual content found on the Internet, use of NICT for evangelistic purposes, specific pastoral activities on the Internet such as: online spiritual activities or evangelistic series, faith sharing activities, use of NICT for training, Bible studies, personal development, theological development or educational development, dissemination of faith in the digital media, use of Adventist NICT means: official websites of the church, TV channels, online church magazines & periodicals, websites of other church institutions (social care, youth, etc.), use of NICT to communicate online with fellow pastors, other Seventh day Adventist believers, with local church members, friends, usefulness of NICT for pastoral ministry.

The questionnaire has been conceived using open and multiple choice questions, as to approach the following layers: the frequency of using NICT, the purpose of using NICT in order to stay informed on events concerning the church, humanitarian projects, youth activities, activity of ADRA (main church charitable organization – Adventist Association for Development and Care), as well as on other religious denominations. Also, the survey tackles the aspect of using NICT as a manner to attend religious services (watching sermons, evangelistic programs, etc.), and to do research and preparation for the pastoral activity as well as to actively communicate relevant (spiritual) content on various platforms. In addition, we have intended to highlight if the materials/platforms available online (such as Bible commentaries, Bible studies, continuous training materials, Sabbath School materials, church-managed online journals, magazines and other periodicals) are being used. Last, but not least, the survey has aimed to find out whether the dissemination of the Adventist religious and spiritual message in general is adapted to the

contemporary level of technological development.

Findings

Demographic highlights

Of the 32 respondents, 78% are of ages between 20 and 45 years old, while 22% are above 45 years old, and 100% have superior education. The large majority (90%) of the respondents reside in the urban area, while the rest, 10%, reside in the rural area.

Survey results

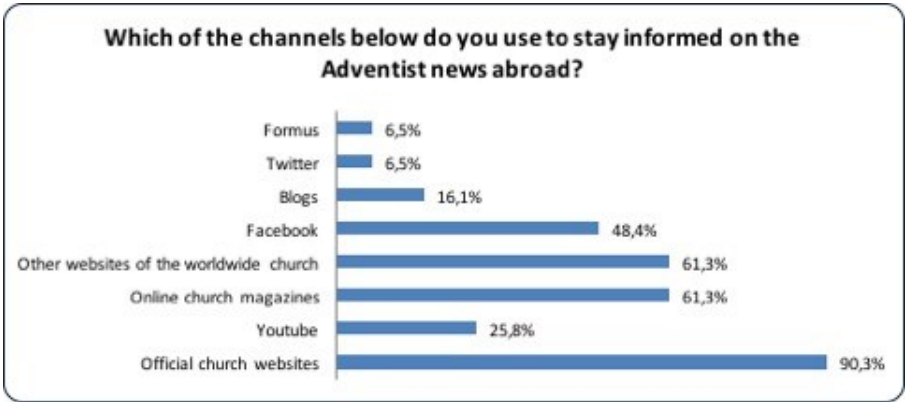
As expected, Internet usage is very common among the group: 100% of the respondents use the Internet on a daily basis, they send emails often and very often, 94% of them having more than one email account.

When it comes to social media accounts, Facebook is the most common platform (for 96.8% of the respondents), followed by Youtube (41.9%), Linkedin (38.7%), Twitter (19.4%); platforms such as Instagram and Pinterest are used by 6.5% and 9.7% respectively.

The official church website (www.adventist.ro) is used by 87.1% of the respondents to stay informed on church projects and news, but other websites such as www.curieruladventist.ro (the online version of the main church journal) and www.semneletimpului.ro (the online version of Semnele Timpului Magazine – Signs of the Times) are also visited by 64.5% of the persons. A significant number of 51.6% are also visiting the youth website www.respirotime.ro and www.adra.ro.

In order to stay informed on the current activity of the Adventist community and church within their own country but also from abroad, our group of respondents mainly make use of official Adventist websites (www.adventist.ro), followed by online magazines and journals, but also via Facebook (nearly half of them). However, besides Romanian Adventist online sources, other channels in the Christian/religious environment have been mentioned: www.christianitytoday.com, www.vatican.va, www.outreachmagazine.com, www.christianpost.com, www.catholica.ro, www.ortodox.ro (as can be seen in the Graph 1).

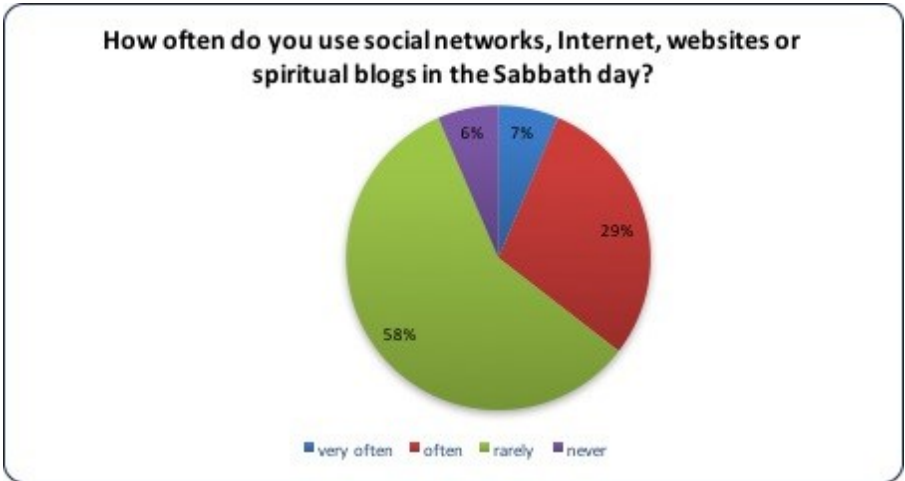
What is interesting to observe is that, while 100% of the respondents are using the above channels, platforms, sources of information, only 65% of them actually trust the spiritual content provided by the respective channels; in fact, 29% have low trust and 6.5% very low level of trust.



Graph 1. Channels of information used to stay informed on the Adventist activity inside and outside the country

As there is significant spiritual content online, via various channels and platforms, we can assume that some people replace attending actual religious services that take place in the Sabbath day (Saturday) by accessing these virtual channels.

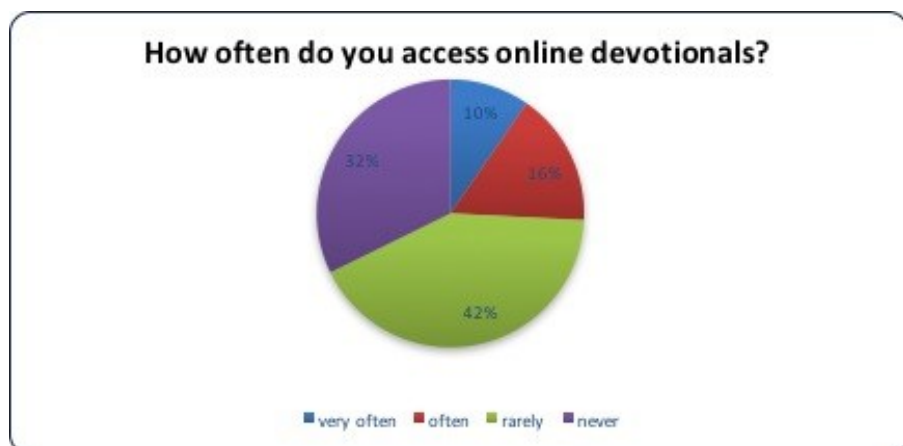
However, as our target group of respondents is made of pastors, it is no surprise that 58% of them rarely access/or not at all, social media, the Internet, and even spiritual websites (Graph 2).



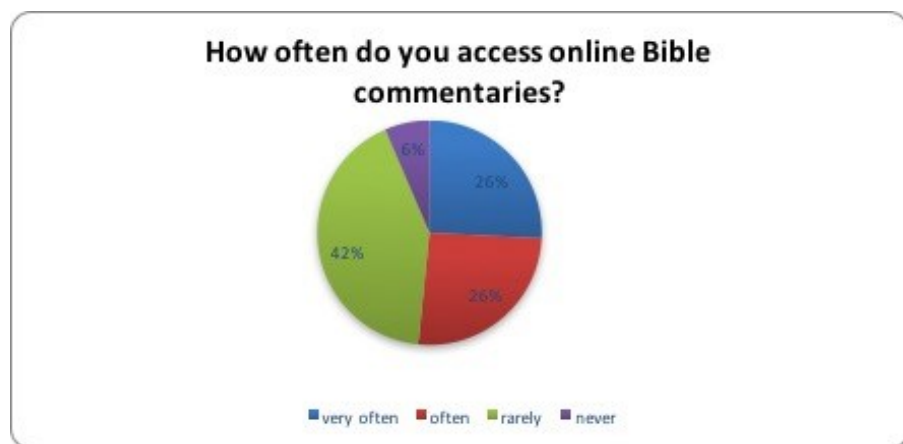
Graph 2. Accessing the Internet, social media, spiritual websites or blogs during the Sabbath day

Sabbath School materials (the Adventist program for Bible learning) available online are reportedly used by only 36% of the responders (often and very often), this showing that printed materials are still preferred to

online materials (by 64% of the persons who answered to the survey). The same is valid for online daily devotionals (only 16% use online versions, as per Graph 3). When it comes to Bible commentaries, the situation improves a bit, as more than half (26% use it very often, and an equal 26%, often) use online versions because of their higher availability (Graph 4).

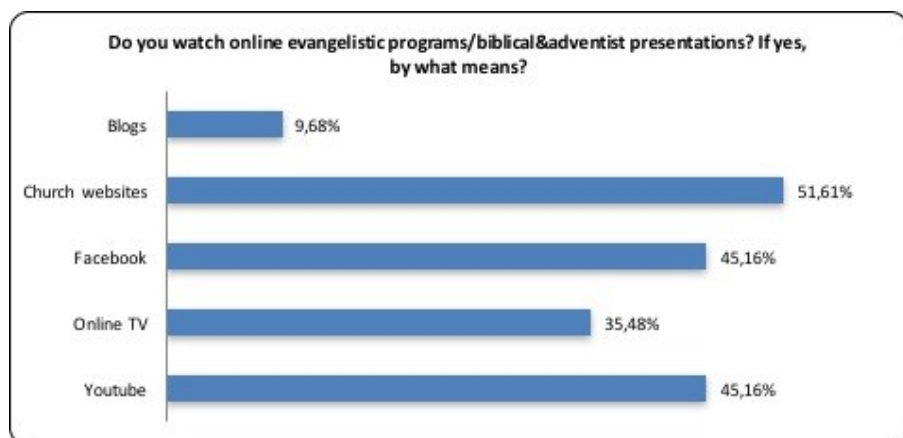


Graph 3. Accessing online daily devotionals



Graph 4. Accessing online Bible commentaries

The Adventist spiritual/biblical message is often broadcasted through online evangelical projects; the main channels for watching them are, in this order: websites owned by local churches, YouTube channels, Facebook, TV station's website (Graph 5). The most watched series/projects/themes are: *Jesus Market* (19.35%), *Sabbath Sermon (Predica de Sabat)* (19.35%), and *Hope at the horizon (Speranta la orizont)* (19.35%); *Masks of the Gods (Mastile Zeilor)* and *Start living (Incepe sa traiesti)* were watched by 12,90% of the respondents while the channel *Oxygen* by 9,68%.

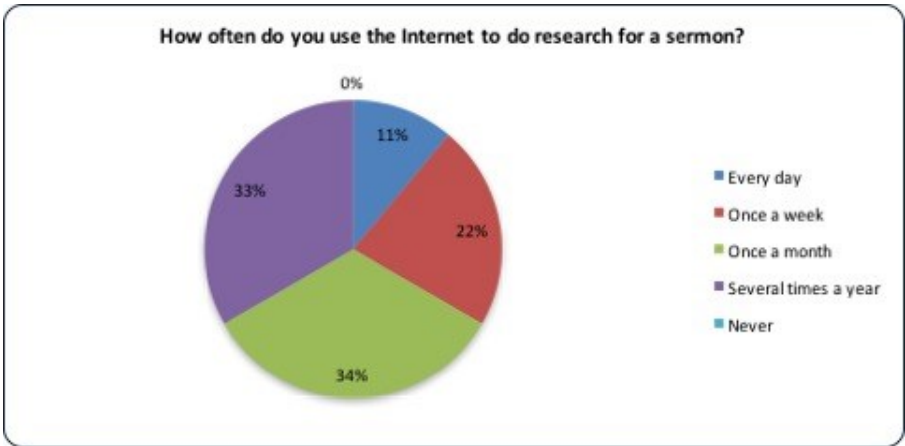


Graph 5. Channels used for watching Adventist evangelical projects

75% of the respondents follow other pastors'/churches' programs via Live Broadcasts, while only 55% via Youtube and 45% via Facebook; as such, the pastors/programs that were mentioned refer to: social projects (ADRA, Ridica-te si umbla – special project for people with disabilities, Support for Botnariu family) and specific speakers: V. Danaiata, F. Laiu, L. Cristescu, T. Hutanu, I. Campian-Tatar.

Besides the names that have strong tradition in the Romanian Adventist Church, due to their experience in leadership or academia, we also see pastors who activate outside the country, proving that the Internet is indeed a way to maintain community adhesion beyond state borders.

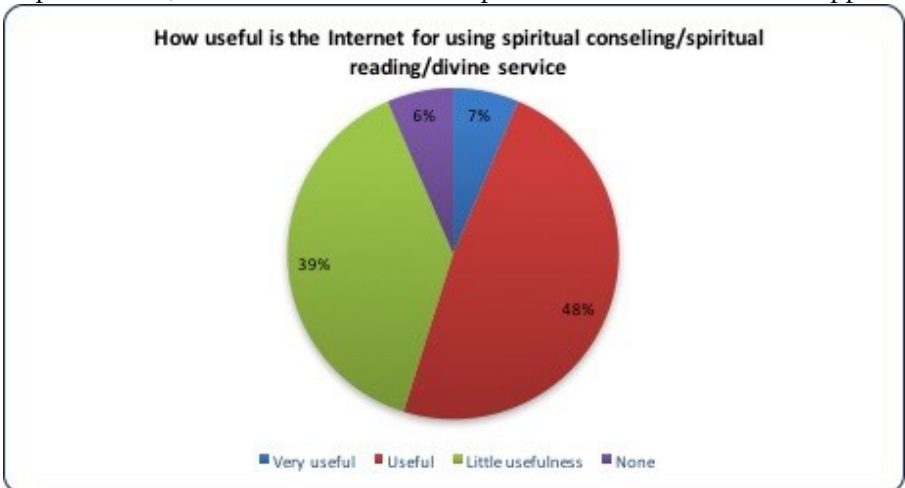
Given the large amount of information, spiritual content, resources related to Bible study available online, we interested in investigating how much of it is used in the pastoral/missionary activity. According to Graph 6, only 11% of the respondents are searching for information online on a daily basis in the preparation of their sermons, 22% of them on a weekly basis, 34% once a month, and 33% several times a year. This report is indeed surprising on the one hand having in mind that almost 80% of the respondents are younger than 45 years, and on the other, the inexhaustible amount of available information available online.



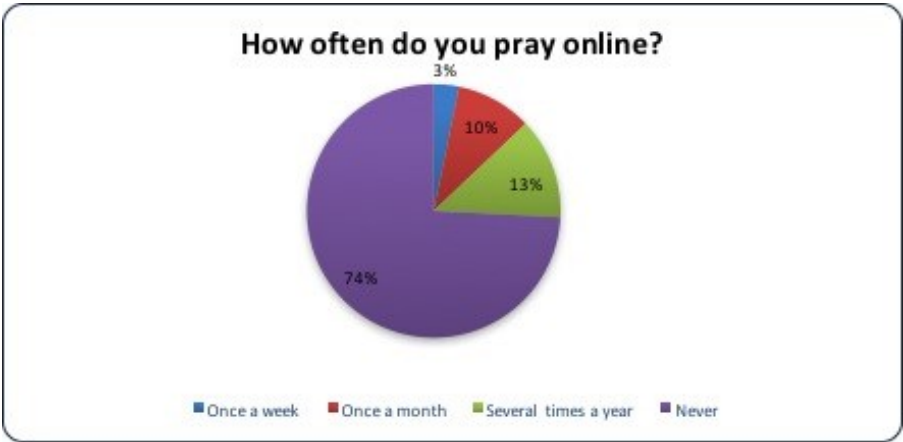
Graph 6. Frequency of Internet use for sermon preparation

We are also interested in seeing if other pastoral activities such as spiritual counselling, spiritual teachings, prayer, pastoral seminars or lectures, meditation and spiritual reflection, sharing experiences are ever performed using Internet media. We are interested in seeing if the Internet has, and in what way, affected the way faith is practiced in its qualitative aspects.

According to the survey, only around 48% of the group find the Internet useful in providing spiritual counselling (Graph 7), and an astounding 74% never pray online (3% pray online once a week, Graph 8), only 3% do online lectures or seminars on a daily basis while 38% only several times a year (Graph 9). 47% of the respondents can relate to online meditation or spiritual reflection with fellow pastors or members at least several times per year (Graph 10), showing that while there is room for improvement, the virtual environment presents some easiness and appeal.



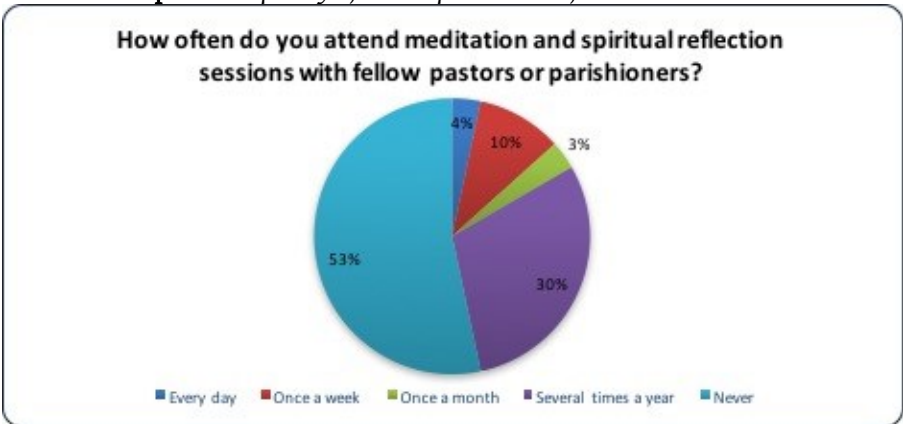
Graph 7. Usefulness of Internet in providing spiritual counselling/spiritual lectures



Graph 8. *Frequency of online prayers*



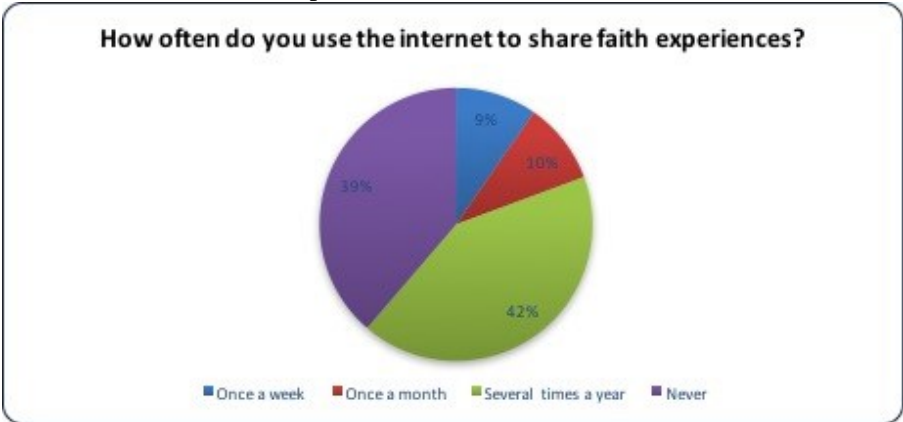
Graph 9. *Frequency of online pastoral conferences or seminars*



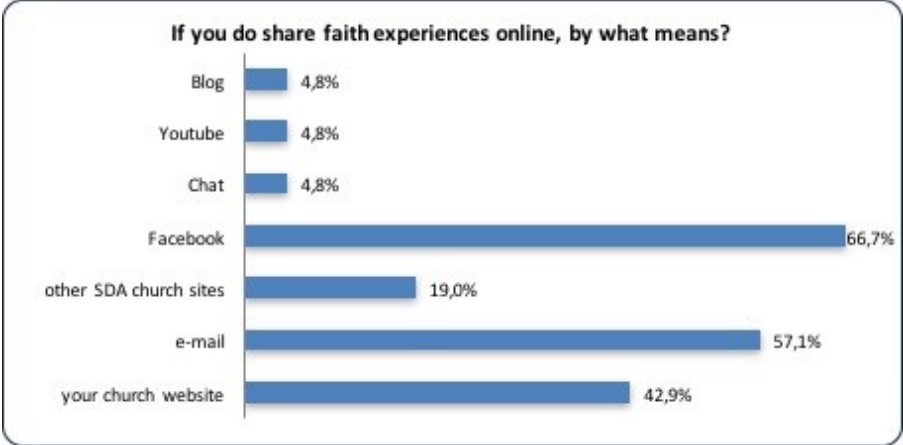
Graph 10. *Frequency of online spiritual meditation and reflection*

The practice of sharing one's personal faith experiences is very common among Christians, as the Bible encourages it in order to strengthen one another in faith. Since people spend significant amounts of

time online, on various websites and social media platforms, we wonder if this Christian practice is ever the subject of those conversations. As it turns out, 39% of the respondents never share their experiences online, however 42% do it several times a year while 9% share their experiences in the virtual environment at least once a week, and 10% once a month, as can be seen in Graph 11. The way this is done is reportedly mostly through Facebook and emails (Graph 12).



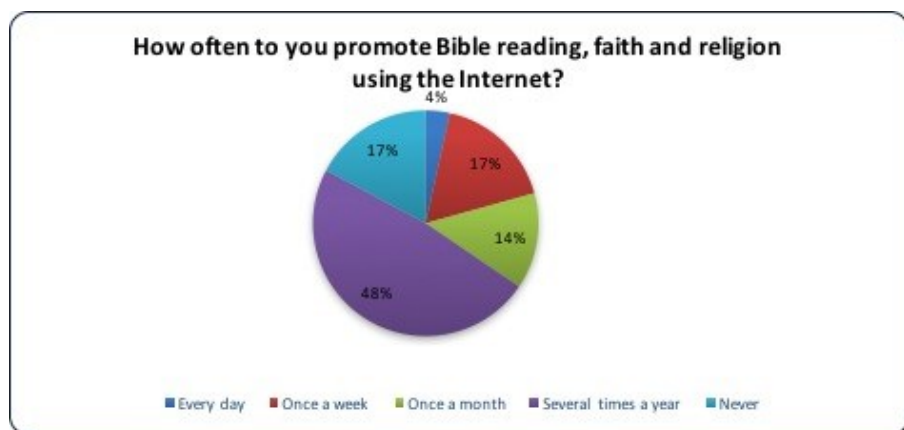
Graph 11. *Frequency of online sharing of spiritual experiences*



Graph 12. *Channels for sharing faith experiences*

For the pastoral service, spreading the Gospel is a main task. There are different manners to do so: encouraging people to read the Bible, to be witnesses of their faith in Jesus Christ etc. Therefore, it is important for this survey to observe if the spiritual leaders are used to do so using the NICT. Surprisingly, we can see that 48% of the respondents are used to promoting the Bible on the Internet only several times per year, while 17.2 % do it several times per week, 13.8 % once a month, 17.2 % never did so and an insignificant percentage of 3.5% are doing so daily, according to Graph 13. The survey also investigates which are the subjects promoted on the Internet as a way to encourage people to read the Bible; the answers

given include: devotionals, evaluation of some events from prophetic perspective, spiritual messages, sharing Bible passages/verses, book reviews, sharing spiritual music.



Graph 13. Frequency of promoting the Bible, faith and religion, via online channels

Another very important aspect of the pastoral activity is the preparation for Baptism, in relation to new converts or young adults raised within the church, consisting of an in-depth presentation and learning of the Adventist biblical doctrine. The survey explores whether pastors ever take advantage of the online channels to do this preparation with the persons preparing for baptism.

The results show, once again, how under-valued the Internet is in maintaining an open and direct communication with the congregation: only 10,3% of the responders use the Internet to do preparation for Baptism several times per year, using *direct emailing* and *Facebook*. The rest, of nearly 90%, never have. While the results are surprising, this could also be related to the congregation's access and availability to such means of learning, as the face-to-face approach is preferred.

The survey has also explored some other general approaches towards the manifestation of religious/spiritual mind-set in the virtual space; thus, we have found out that:

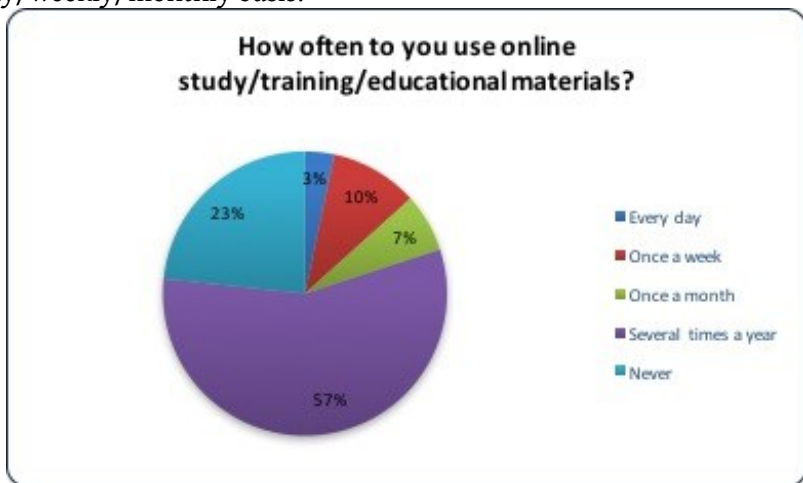
- 79.3% of the respondents share spiritual content on the Internet;
- 100% of the do it using Facebook, while 35% via Youtube, and less than 9% via blogging;
- 66.7% of the pastors who answered the survey send emails with spiritual content to their colleagues and parishioners;
- less than half (40%) use instant messaging for spiritual discussions.

Another approach of this survey is focusing on the pastors' frequency in using media channels in having spiritual conversations with their

parishioners. 60 % of the respondents are used to have spiritual conversations through online channels. Also, we have found out that the most used media means are:

- chat 44 %;
- Skype 22 %;
- other 72.2 %.

The same as any other organization, the SDA Church is interested in maintaining a high level education in its clerical body. Thus, several times a year, the pastors have to participate to different training programs. These programs are intended to be one way for personal development. That's why in this survey we have followed by what means pastors are improving their education. Specifically, in this survey we are interested in NICT ways of personal development. As a result, 57 % (graph 14) of respondents are using the NICT several times per year in their educational development, in addition to the 20% who use NICT on a daily/weekly/monthly basis.



Graph 14. *The frequency of using NICT for personal development*

Oliver Kruger is quoting Lynn Schofield Clark who considers “the phenomenon of religion on the Internet as protestantization since on the Internet the original protestant values like liberty, pluralism and democracy could now be realized”³⁶. Or even the effect of the post neo Protestantism³⁷. Similarly, Heidi Campbell’s assertion about online media is that “*those religious communities which are basically critical towards technology, must undergo a process of spiritualization of a new media technology.*”³⁸

The next part of the survey is in line with the above observations, where we intend to find out if the NICT are useful to pastoral activities. As such, 27% of the respondents are convinced that the NICT actually help them improve their pastoral education and training, 40% of them agree the NICT might have a contribution and 33% partially agree with the

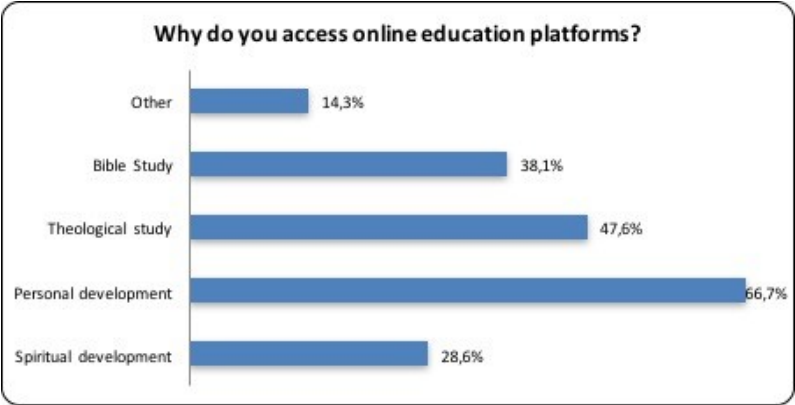
hypothesis.

As we have seen already in this paper, pastors are interested in developing their skills towards improving their ministry. What we are interested in seeing is whether online resources are used in this respect. The survey reveals if pastors are connected to online educational platforms in order to obtain relevant information in areas such as: theology, Bible study, spiritual development etc. Also, the survey has followed if the platforms are exclusively Seventh day Adventist or not. 56.7 % of respondents are connected to online educational platforms while 43.3 % of respondents have never been connected. The platforms are: www.minsityrinmotion.tv (57.1 %), www.mastertin.ro (42.9 %), Andrew University online platform (42.9 %). These are exclusively SDA platforms. Graph 15 shows other answers of the respondents, which are with few exceptions, only SDA platforms.

According to the Graph 16, the respondents answered that the purpose of the navigation on these platforms are: personal development 66.7 %, spiritual development 28.6%, Bible study 38.1%, theological studies 42.9 %.

Can you give an example except those mentioned before?	
southern.edu	
Biblical research Institute	
Specialty websites	
UM Montemorelos University	
www.churchleaderinsights.com	
www.blueletterbible.com	
Ebsco	

Graph 15. Other educational platforms



Graph 16. The purpose of accessing educational platforms

Oliver Kruger raised an important question on the subject of the use of NICT: “...the question (is) not, what do the media do to people? But, rather, what

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do people do with the media?"³⁹ We have applied this question to the clergy system; can there be any benefits from using the NICT, are there any innovative ideas brought forward by the NICT in the pastoral activity in general? The respondents were asked to say if the NICT are useful in spreading the SDA message to the world. Therefore, 53.3 % of the respondents are convinced that NICT are useful in spreading the Adventist message, 33.3 % find it quite useful, 10% find little use of NICT in spreading the SDA message while 10 % find no use in NICT for passing on the Adventist message.

In the context of a postmodern or a secular world, simply spreading the Gospel isn't enough anymore. Most of the Christian churches have realized this reality which is in fact an enormous challenge. The contextualization of the Gospel or the message seems to be, for some religious groups, a big compromise or a conflict with their religious values. Jesus' disciples succeeded in reaching the whole known world with their faith or message. From this point of view, the NICT seem to be like a new world ready to be conquered by religion or religious doctrine. Does religion have the appropriate means to penetrate this vast territory represented by the Internet? Jennifer Cobb, an American theologian who has been an IT professional for more than 15 years, writes in her book, *Cybergrace: "The Search for God in the Digital Space (1998)* interprets cyberspace as an unlimited space for the development of the intellectual, spiritual and emotional potentials of humanity."⁴⁰ Thus, the respondents of this survey were asked to answer if they agree or disagree with the statement according to which the NICT allow the Seventh Day Adventist faith to adapt to the contemporary culture: to some extent all respondents agree with this statement.

Speaking of the use of the NICT and their conflict with the religious values, the respondents were asked if they consider that Internet is distracting believers from their faith: only 17% disagree with the possibility.

Our survey is also tackling the aspect of the relationship between pastors, based on the assumption that the quality of that relationship would soon reflect in the strength of the organization and the coherence of the regional projects. Even if in practice pastors have authority only in their own parishes, Apostle Paul has a different description of the *Corpus Christi*: "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular" (1 Corinthians 12:27, KJV). The next section of the survey analysed the relationships between pastors and the relationships between pastors and their parishioners, and it revealed some interesting aspects:

- 38 % of the respondents have between 1-50 pastors as friends on social media networks, 34.5 % have between 51-100 pastor friends while 27.6 % have between 101-250 pastor friends.
- 44.8 % of the respondents have over 500 Adventist friends on social media networks, 17.2 % have between 251-500

Adventist friends, 17.2 % have between 101-250 Adventist friends, while 13.8 % have just between 1-50 Adventist friends.

- The connection with the Adventist community abroad is also tested: 79.3 % of the respondents declared they have between 1-20 pastors from diaspora as friends/contacts on social media while 13.8 % have over 20 colleagues from diaspora as friends.
- In parallel, 34.5 % of the respondents have between 1-50 Adventist friends from diaspora, 20.7 % have between 51-100 Adventist friends from diaspora, 17.2 % have between 101-250 Adventist friends from diaspora, 13.8 % have between 251-500, while 13.8 % have over 500.
- Regarding the communication channels between pastors, 100 % of the respondents communicate with their colleagues through emails, 53.3 % are using Facebook and 36.7 % are using Whatsapp.
- When they communicate online with other Adventist believers, 89.7% of the interviewed pastors use Facebook, 82.8 % say they use emails and 24.1 % use other channels.
- When they communicate online with their parishioners, 95.8 % of the interviewed pastors use Facebook, 33.3 % use the official website of the church, while 54.2 % use other means as well.

There is a protestant heritage in making God more accessible to people by breaking the barriers between clergy and laity. One of the ways this was accomplished was by making liturgy available in the language of the people, by making the Bible available in common language and by making pastoral visits; the neo-protestant denominations still have this protestant legacy. Therefore, besides preaching, teaching and performing the “sacraments”, pastors are close to their parishioners through personal visits and dialogue. To what extent this dialogue is made through NICT, we explore through the next section of the survey: 22% of the respondents use online channels very often in contacting their congregations in addition to the 39% of them that do it often; 25% of the pastors rarely use online channels to communicate to their congregations, and only 14% say never make use of online channels.

Although we have established that all the respondents have access to Internet, most of them use it daily for various tasks, and for various purposes, what we are interested in finding out is whether NICT are perceived to be useful in the pastoral ministry, as an innovative tool. Thus, 70 % of the respondents find the Internet quite useful for their ministry, while 26.7% find it less useful. At the same time, more than half of the respondents find the Internet an efficient tool in their communication with the parishioners. In terms of the communication

with their colleagues, 73.3 % of the pastors find the Internet very efficient, 13.3 % find it quite efficient and only 13.3 % don't make much use of it. A cumulated 80% share of the respondents find social media, as a NICT channel, efficient in improving communication.

In the SDA Church, the duties of proclaiming the Gospel, of sharing religious beliefs are believed to be equally shared by pastors and church members. The survey interrogates the perceived contribution of NICT in sharing the Gospel.

Less than half of the pastors, 43%, believe that NICT manage to increase the engagement of church members in general in sharing the Gospel to the society.

While the activity of the pastors and of the Church (from an institutional point of view) largely depends on the understanding of their/its members, we are now interested in seeing whether NICT are useful in this regard. More than half (55%) of the respondents believe that NICT are useful to a very small extent in understanding their church members.

According to Jennifer Cobb⁴¹, the cyberspace can turn into "cybergrace". With certainty, the Internet is perceived and defined as a cosmos of possibilities. But are the various religious groups willing to dig in much deeper in this vast dominion of NICT?

With the example of the Seventh Day Adventist Church in Romania, we are interested to notice a few elements:

- Do pastors consider the use of NICT an innovative means for ministry or a great source for new ideas? 69 % of them believe so, while 24 % are less convinced.
- What do the pastors believe about the interest of the Church regarding the NICT? 62.1 % of the respondents are moderated about this aspect, while 24.1 % of them believe very much in the interest of the Church in using the resourcefulness of the NICT.
- The general perception is that the SDA Church (institutionally) is preoccupied with NICT (Internet, social media), and 93.1% of the respondents rely on the official websites of the Church as main Internet-content generators, alongside the content created by the websites of local churches and educational institutions (82.8% and 35% respectively).
- Other institutions of the Church that generate content for the Internet include SDA TV channels, SDA magazines, SDA printing house, and other websites.

Discussion

Communication of doctrines, religious and spiritual teachings, in written or verbal form is one of the main activities of the pastoral activity. As representatives of the church, acting as teachers of the Word of God for the members of their congregations and administrators of their parishes, pastors are constantly involved in various types of relationships with people around them, whether they are officials of the society, peers or parishioners, and these relationships require communication via different media. Moreover, as in all Christian Churches, the activity of spreading the Gospel makes communication (in the form of preaching, teaching, counselling, explaining difficult Bible subjects, writing articles, presenting public seminars, presenting evangelistic series, organizing inter-denominational communication sessions, hosting TV debates or discussion groups, etc.) a very important item in the pastoral job description. In this context, the uses that this group negotiates according to the “enriched logic of the availability and appropriation of contents” correspond to diverse practices. The pastor is the connected user in a hypermodern society whose experience unfolds according to these diverse and heterogeneous practices: “*zapping* (pro-active attitude to find maximum exchange and possible benefits opportunities); *filtering* (critical attitude to restore an autonomy of action) and *preservation* (defensive attitude to institute protections between itself and those who control the telecommunications systems)”⁴².

Our study highlights that negotiating with the use of digital technologies fits in a prescriptive and validation tendencies. Indeed, on one hand, the use expresses the position of the SDA General Conference to the use of digital technologies in terms of *e-Evangelization*⁴³. The pro-technology discourse as a tool for spreading the Gospel is obvious: “Through a wide range of media-programs, including TV, Radio, Internet, etc., Media Centers want to encourage people, through an understandable and modern way, to read the Bible and to find their faith. All the programs presented are aimed at helping people to learn more about Jesus Christ and to build up a real relationship to God”⁴⁴. On the other hand, the interviewed pastors are *connected* to projects that are the expression of the counterculture orientations, based on the affirmation of an identity, which is specific to the emerging churches with eclectic spiritualities in the context of medialization⁴⁵. It is the case of Jesus Market, a transmedia platform, and the most watched project available on Internet, on new media platform, on online Adventist TV channel Hope TV-Speranta TV.

Jesus Market (<http://jesusmarket.org>) is a virtual organization which experiments with new ways of practicing connected church. *Jesus Market* is an illustration of a *decomplexed religious usage* of the Internet and digital media. It was created in November 2015 in Buford, Georgia in the United States of America as a transmedia religious platform of an SDA church and

carried by a Romanian-American evangelist (Nicu Butoi) with the following objectives: “to promote the Christian faith without denominational color and the apostolic proclamation of salvation through Jesus Christ” (an *decomplexed kerygma*), to promote a Christocentric preaching and an “odorless and colourless Gospel” (fragments from the personal interview with the founder Nicu Butoi). This transmedia platform, integrating Internet and new media (websites, blogs, Facebook, twitter, web TV, etc.), brings together a spiritual community of faith (it counts hundreds of thousands of e-believers and adepts), geographically dispersed around the world, but connected via the Internet and digital media. Although this platform seeks to transcend traditional limitations imposed by the Adventist establishments by creating religious networks, worship events, much precisely a virtual church for communication of the faith without denominational colour, it is nevertheless connected to the establishment since a number of its productions are set by the Adventist television Hope Channel-Speranta TV Romania (www.sperantatv.ro). This paradox is comprehensible within the framework of “enriched logic of the availability and appropriation of contents” since it makes possible the coexistence, without cognitive dissonance, of a double negotiation of meaning: prescriptive and validating (in Heidi Campbell’s perspective). There is indeed a strong commitment to use the transmedia platform Jesus Market and a low confidence level made to the “clean”, “proper use” policy (Internet and new media as mission field for instance) present in the guidelines of the official discourse of the General Conference and the Adventist Romanian Union. It is effectively a question of a strong pastoral commitment in terms of use with the transmedia platform Jesus Market and of a low level of trust in the politically correct use of Internet and new media prescribed by the official discourse of the SDA General Conference and the Romanian Adventist Union.

Conclusion

This preliminary survey has shown that Internet and new media are used in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church from Romania by pastors for various pastoral activities such as: sharing spiritual messages, watching evangelistic series and communicating with fellow pastors or parishioners. The most used NICT are: emails, Facebook and the official websites of the church. At the same time, our findings reveal some shortage in the usage of the NICT by pastors. Thus, the NICT are poorly exploited in preparing sermons, gathering materials, online prayers, online spiritual sessions, teaching pre-baptism classes, accessing online daily devotionals, and so on. The survey also reveals the fact that the respondents are reserved when it comes to the effective preoccupation of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church from Romania regarding the usefulness

of the NICT.

Notes

¹ Heidi Campbell, *When Religion Meets New Media* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

² Newspapers, publishing houses, audiovisual, Internet and new media. For a historical perspective see Campbell, *op. cit.*, 2010, 134-136.

³ A division is a form of organization of the SDAC which brings together unions and federations. The Adventist churches Inter European division consists of 20 countries: Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Slovakia, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Italy, Germany, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Switzerland, cf. <http://eud.adventist.org/en/territory/>

⁴ For more details on symbolic aspect of the communication see Lars Thøger Christensen Mette Morsing and Ole Thyssen. "The polyphony of values and the value of polyphony", *Essachess - Journal for Communication Studies*, vol. 8, no. 1(15) / 2015: 9-25.

⁵ Cf. Michel De Certeau, *L'invention du quotidien. Arts de faire*. (Paris: Gallimard, 1980)

⁶ Stefan Bratosin and Mihaela-Alexandra Tudor, "Technologies digitales et religion : logiques enrichies de mise à disposition et d'appropriation", conférence donnée à l'ouverture du 4^e workshop Essachess-Iarsic, CEREFREA-Villa Noel (Université de Bucarest : Bucarest, 2015)

⁷ Patrick-Yves Badillo, "Usagers et socio-économie des médias", *Revue française des sciences de l'information et de la communication*, (6 | 2015), mis en ligne le 02 mars 2015, : <http://rfsic.revues.org/1251> ; DOI : 10.4000/rfsic.1251

⁸ Jay G. Blumler and Elihu Katz, *The Uses of mass communications : Current perspectives on gratifications research*. (Beverly Hills : Sage Publications, 1974)

⁹ Stuart Hall, "Codage/décodage", *Réseaux*, volume XII, n° 68, (1994): 7-39.

¹⁰ Michel De Certeau, *op. cit.*

¹¹ Jean-Claude Baboulin, Jean-Pierre Gaudin and Philippe Mallein, *Le magnétoscope au quotidien*. (Paris : Editions Aubier Montaigne/INA, 1983).

¹² Serge Proulx, "La sociologie des usages, et après ?", *Revue française des sciences de l'information et de la communication*, (6 | 2015), mis en ligne le 23 janvier 2015, <http://rfsic.revues.org/1230> ; DOI : 10.4000/rfsic.1230.

¹³ Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations* (4th ed). (New York : Free Press, 1995).

¹⁴ Madeleine Akrich et al, *Sociologie de la traduction. Textes fondateurs*. (Paris : Presses des Mines de Paris, 2006)

¹⁵ Josiane Jouët, Retour critique sur la sociologie des usages". *Réseaux* 100 (18), (2000) : 487-521. DOI : 10.3406/reso.2000.2235

¹⁶ Bernard Conein, "Cognition distribuée, groupe social et technologie cognitive". *Réseaux* 22 (2004) : 124, 53-79. DOI : 10.3917/res.124.0053.

¹⁷ A. Vitalis (Ed.), *Médias et nouvelles technologies. Pour une sociopolitique des usages*. (Rennes : Éditions Apogée, 1994).

¹⁸ Francis Jauréguiberry and Serge Proulx, *Usages et enjeux des technologies de communication*. (Toulouse: Érès, 2011); Julie Denouel and Fabien Granjon, *Communiquer à l'ère numérique : Regards croisés sur la sociologie des usages*. (Paris : Transvalor-Presses des Mines, 2011).

¹⁹ Alina-Elena Romascu, "Le signe multimédia comme usage : interprétation d'un enchevêtrement des circonstances", *Essachess - Journal for Communication Studies*,

vol. 1, no 1-2, (2008) : 131-139.

<http://www.essachess.com/index.php/jcs/article/view/38/23>.

²⁰ Michel De Certeau, *op. cit.*, 13.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

²² *Ibid.*, 14.

²³ *Op. cit.*, 136.

²⁴ *Idem.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 151.

²⁶ See Stefan Bratosin and Mihaela-Alexandra Tudor, "Technologies digitales et religion : logiques enrichies de mise à disposition et d'appropriation ", conférence donnée à l'ouverture du 4^e workshop Essachess-Iarsic, CEREFREA-Villa Noel (Université de Bucarest : Bucarest, 2015)

²⁷ Michel De Certeau, *L'invention du quotidien. Arts de faire.* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990) 55-57.

²⁸ The Seventh day Adventist Church is a neoprotestant denomination officially created in the United States of America in 1863. Currently, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has around 19 million believers globally (<http://press.adventist.org/en/#history>). Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as the only source of their beliefs (according to the Protestant Principle *Sola Scriptura*), and they currently hold 28 fundamental beliefs, that can be organized into six categories – the doctrines of God, man, salvation, the church, the Christian life and last day events. From an organizational perspective, the structure of the SDA Church is multi-level or pyramidal. With a General Conference (US-based) at the top, the Church is served through its administration of 13 world divisions and two attached fields. Each world division (e.g. Inter-American Division, Inter-European Division, Northern Asia-Pacific Division, etc.) oversees the work of the SDA Church in its countries. At the level of each country, the SDA Church is led through a National Union of churches; in its turn, the national Union is formed of various regional Conferences, of which local churches are part of. The General Conference coordinates the global ministry of the SDA Church worldwide, and is responsible for the spiritual and developmental plans of the church around the world (*idem*).

²⁹ "Romania is a predominantly Orthodox country, 86.5% of Romanian declaring themselves Orthodox Christians. 4.6% of the population is Roman-Catholic, 3.2% Reformed, 1.9% Pentecostal, 0.8% Greek Catholic, 0.6% Baptist and 0.5% Seventh Day Adventists according to the results reported by the National Statistical Institute of Romania (INS) following the last census campaign that took place in 2011 (INS, July 2013). The rest of the respondents declared themselves atheists or other religions" (see Tudor, 2015, p. 22).

³⁰ Thus, according to existing statistics (<http://www.internetworldstats.com/europa.htm>), "of the 19,86 mil. inhabitants of Romania, 11,2 mil of them (that is a 56.2% penetration) are Internet users, and there are 8,1 mil. Facebook accounts. Also, it is important to mention that Romania is a front runner in European and World statistics when it comes to Internet speed; Bucharest is well ahead of Tokyo, Seoul, New York with its 95.18 Mbps average download speed provided by fixed broadband connection" (<http://www.romania-insider.com/broadband-internet-romania/147305/>). This shows that indeed, Internet is an efficient communication channel in Romania, where it to be used. See also about cultural consumption Anda Georgiana Becut

and Carmen Croitoru, "The Cultural Consumption Barometer. A case study of communication in statistics in Romania", *ESSACHESS. Journal for Communication Studies*, vol. 9, no. 1(17) / 2016: 53-65,

<http://www.essachess.com/index.php/jcs/article/view/320/371>.

³¹ The Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Romania is organized into 6 regional Conferences, each with its own leadership group, reporting to the national leading Committee. Also, Muntenia Conference is located in the proximity of the capital, Bucharest (www.adventist.ro, www.muntenia.adventist.ro)

³² All pastors of the SDA Romanian Union have Internet access, have official email addresses and the experience to make sermons transmitted on the Internet through the official channel of the churches.

³³ A district is a geographical area of activity of a pastor and includes towns, villages, etc.

³⁴ Official Statement to Follow, *Women's Ordination Not Approved*. July 08, 2015 San Antonio, Texas, USA/ANN/Adventist Review staff. "At the 60th General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists delegates considered the following question regarding the ordination of women to the gospel ministry:

"Is it acceptable for division executive committees, as they may deem it appropriate in their territories, to make provision for the ordination of women to the gospel ministry? Yes or No" At the conclusion of the vote the count was as follows":

1) No: 1381

2) Yes: 977

3) Abstain: 5

Total: 2363

www.adventist.org accessed on April 03, 2016.

³⁵ http://www.pictureproject.info/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/PICTURE_report_europe_20100604.pdf.

³⁶ Oliver Kruger, "Gaia, God, and the Internet – Revisted, The History of Evolution and the Utopia of Community in Media Society", *Online Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet*, Le religieux sur Internet/ Religion on the Web, Volume 08, (2015), 57.

³⁷ Stefan Bratosin, "La médialisation du religieux dans la théorie du post néo-protestantisme", *Social Compass*, 63 (September 2016): 405-420, DOI:10.1177/0037768616652335.

³⁸ Oliver Kruger, *op.cit.*, 58.

³⁹ *Idem.*

⁴⁰ Oliver Kruger, "Gaia, God, and the Internet – Revisted, The History of Evolution and the Utopia of Community in Media Society", 62.

⁴¹ *Idem.*

⁴² Francis Jauréguiberry and Serge Proulx, *Usages et enjeux des technologies de communication*. (Toulouse: Érès, 2011), 106.

⁴³ "The primarily aim of the Seventh-day Adventists is to transmit in any possible way the message of the Gospel highlighted to the Second Coming of Jesus. Even though the natural channel of the transmission of this message remain the personal approach, it is necessary to take account of the use of the Media resources. Printing, Radio, Tv, Web, and other possible communication means aim to capture, emphasize, and reproduce the message of God's Word for broadcast across the airwaves and the web", <http://eud.adventist.org/en/institutions/>.

⁴⁴ <http://eud.adventist.org/en/institutions/media/>.

⁴⁵ Stefan Bratosin, "La médialisation du religieux dans la théorie du post néo-protestantisme", *Social Compass*, 63 (September 2016): 405-420, DOI:10.1177/0037768616652335.

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