Cultural Transformation through Contextual Mission Approach in the Digital Age

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Abstract

Cultural transformation in today's global society brings both challenges and opportunities for the implementation of contextual mission, especially in the digital era. Cultural contexts influenced by globalization and technological advances demand missiological strategies that are able to adapt to the changing dynamics of society. Digitalization creates new spaces for cross-cultural interaction, but also introduces complexities such as changing cultural identities, weakening traditional values, and increasing secularism. This research aims to analyze the main challenges facing contextual missions in the digital age, including the technology gap, the diversity of cultural interpretations, and the need for more inclusive dialogue. It also highlights opportunities such as increased access to communication, the potential of global networks, and the formation of digital communities that support spiritual and social transformation. This research utilizes a qualitative-descriptive approach with a literature study data collection method that contributes to the development of missiology discourse by offering a conceptual framework for contextually relevant missions in the digital age. The research results provide new insights for practitioners and academics in responding to contextual needs through a more creative, inclusive, and technology-based approach. With this transformation of understanding, contextual mission can play a more effective role in building cross-cultural relationships, supporting social change, and creating spiritual significance.

Keywords: Cultural Transformation; Contextual Mission; Digital Age.

Abstrak

Transformasi budaya dalam masyarakat global saat ini membawa berbagai tantangan sekaligus peluang bagi penerapan misi kontekstual, terutama di era digital. Konteks budaya yang dipengaruhi oleh globalisasi dan kemajuan teknologi menuntut strategi misiologi yang mampu beradaptasi dengan dinamika masyarakat yang terus berubah. Digitalisasi menciptakan ruang baru untuk interaksi lintas budaya, tetapi juga memperkenalkan kompleksitas seperti perubahan identitas budaya, melemahnya nilai-nilai tradisional, dan meningkatnya sekularisme. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis tantangan utama yang dihadapi misi kontekstual di era digital, termasuk kesenjangan teknologi, keragaman interpretasi budaya, dan kebutuhan akan dialog yang lebih inklusif. Selain itu, penelitian ini juga menyoroti peluang seperti meningkatnya akses komunikasi, potensi jejaring global, dan pembentukan komunitas digital yang mendukung transformasi spiritual dan sosial. Penelitian ini memakai pendekatan kualitatif-deskriptif dengan metode pengumpulan data studi pustaka yang berkontribusi pada pengembangan diskursus misiologi dengan menawarkan kerangka konseptual untuk misi kontekstual yang relevan di era digital. Hasil penelitian memberikan pandangan baru bagi praktisi dan akademisi dalam merespons kebutuhan kontekstual melalui pendekatan yang lebih kreatif, inklusif, dan berbasis teknologi. Dengan transformasi pemahaman ini, misi kontekstual dapat berperan lebih efektif dalam membangun hubungan lintas budaya, mendukung perubahan sosial, dan menciptakan spiritual yang signifikan.

Kata Kunci: Transformasi Budaya; Misi Kontekstual; Era Digital.

1. Introduction

In the digital age, cultural transformation through contextual mission faces complex challenges. Rapid technological advancements affect the way we communicate, social values, as well as individuals' understanding of spirituality. Churches and missionary communities need to adapt to these changes without losing sight of the core Christian teachings. The main challenge is how to convey the gospel in a relevant way in a digital world without compromising theological truth. In addition, there is the threat of secularization as well as the spread of inauthentic teachings through digital platforms. Cultural diversity in cyberspace also demands an adaptive approach so that the mission message can be effectively received by different groups of people with diverse backgrounds.

Cultural transformation in the context of missiology refers to the changes that occur in the culture of a community due to interaction with religious missions. This process not only impacts the people to whom the mission is directed, but can also bring about changes in the missionaries themselves. For example, research on *Assemblies of God* (AG) missionaries shows that interactions with postcolonial societies often result in missionary conversion, which is a personal change in the missionary that then influences the approach to missiology and

theology.[1] This reveals that mission not only produces external impact, but also creates deep internal transformation.

A contextual approach to church ministry is key to ensuring that religious messages and practices remain relevant to local culture and the needs of local communities. In the postcolonial era, mission that ignores the local cultural context is often considered a form of imperialism or religious colonialism.[2] Effective mission must be carried out through a missionary church that is rooted in *missio Dei* (God's plan) and able to understand the local context.[3] With this approach, churches not only avoid negative perceptions, but also increase the impact of more meaningful missions in society.

The digital age has brought significant changes in various aspects of life, including culture and the way people interact. Digital technology opens up new opportunities for churches to reach more people through social media, online broadcasts and other digital platforms.[4] However, this era also presents challenges, such as the spread of hammer information and the declining quality of face-to-face interactions, which can affect congregational relationships.[5] Therefore, churches need to adapt to these developments, using technology wisely to support their mission and ministry.

Cultural transformation in missiology not only has an impact on the communities, but also on the missionaries involved. Interaction with postcolonial communities often results in changes in the missionaries' mindset and approach, which then contributes to the development of their missiology and theological theories.[6] This transformation confirms that mission is a two-way process that involves learning and change on both sides.

A contextual approach remains an important element in church ministry to ensure the relevance of the gospel message in the local cultural context. In the postcolonial era, culturally sensitive mission can avoid accusations of religious imperialism and build more effective relationships. Correspondingly, the digital age paves the way for churches to utilize technology to expand mission outreach, although it is necessary to remain vigilant of the challenges that arise. Wise adoption of technology enables the church to deliver messages in a way that is relevant and brings about meaningful change in society.

This research aims to identify a contextualized mission model that fits the demands of the digital age. The focus will be on exploring the various existing digital maturity models and

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[1] Josh Brahinsky, "Missionary Conversions," *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 10, no. 3 (December 1, 2020): 828–43, https://doi.org/10.1086/711882.
[2] Phemelo O. Marumo, "The State of the Church in a Postcolonial Era from Newbigin's Perspective: Challenges and Opportunities for Mission," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 39, no. 1 (September 13, 2018), https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v39i1.1862.
[3] Marumo.
[4] J. E Nendissa, "Kajian Teologis Kristis Terhadap Pelayanan Online Di GMIM Syaloom Karombasan Pada Masa Pandemi Covid-19," *Jurnal Teologi Cultivation* 5, no. 2 (2021): 141–58.
[5] J. E Nendissa, "Pentingnya Partisipasi Pemuda Dalam Pembangunan Jemaat: Studi Kasus Pada Gereja Masehi Injili Minahasa Syaloom, Karombasan," *Kharismata: Jurnal Teologi Pantekosta* 5, no. 1 (2022): 66–80.
[6] Brahinsky, "Missionary Conversions."

how they can be adapted to meet the specific needs of organizations in a digital context. This research will also emphasize the importance of organizational culture in supporting digital transformation, given that many current digital maturity models do not fully consider the cultural aspects that are crucial to the success of such transformation. Therefore, this research seeks to develop a more comprehensive and contextual framework to help organizations effectively plan, manage and evaluate the digital transformation process.

Through the search, the author found several journals that are almost similar to this research, namely from Delpi & Alon who examined how digital such as social media, *online* platforms, and modern communication tools can be used as a means of transforming Christian mission.[7] In addition, Samuel & Rami developed a relevant mission strategy for the millennial generation by utilizing the metaverse platform as a ministry space.[8] Meanwhile, Belly offers a missiological strategy to address contextual issues such as social change, environmental crisis, and cultural conflict.[9] The three previous studies above only examined in terms of using technology as a tool for Christian mission transformation in the context of the digital era with an emphasis on adaptation. Through the three previous studies above, there are differences and *novelty* offered by this research, namely emphasizing the impact of global culture and technology on mission strategies. Another novelty is that the cultural and technological aspects of digitalization are not limited to one particular platform or demographic group. In addition, the influence of digitalization and globalization on cultural transformation in the context of contextual mission. Therefore, this research centers on the relationship of culture and digital technology in mission.

2. Method

This study uses a qualitative-descriptive approach, which aims to provide comprehensive and easy-to-understand facts about the phenomena being studied.[10] Qualitative-descriptive research allows researchers to stay focused on the data and directly understand the words and events observed, resulting in in-depth descriptions.[11] This approach is also very suitable for youth researchers because it can be combined with various theoretical approaches, sampling techniques, and data collection methods.

Data was collected through literature studies, namely by reviewing relevant journals, books and articles. Literature studies help researchers obtain information from various trusted sources such as *google scholar*, *semantic scholar*, and *EBSCO* so that they can compile a

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[7] Delpi Novianti and Alon Mandimpu Nainggolan, "Bermisi Dalam Basis Digital Sebagai Transformasi Misi Kristen Di Era Revolusi Industri 4.0," *Tepian Jurnal Misiologi & Pendidikan Kristen* 2, no. 1 (2022): 29–43.
[8] Samuel Hutabarat and Romi Lie, "Membangun Strategi Misi Kontekstual Bagi Generasi Milenial Memanfaatkan Metaverse," *GENEVA Jurnal Teologi Dan Misi* 5, no. 1 (2023): 19–35.
[9] Belly Johanis Bolung, "Misi Gereja Dalam Menghadapi Tantangan Global Dan Lokal," *THRONOS Jurnal Teologi Kristen* 4, no. 2 (2023): 193–201.
[10] Hyejin Kim, Justine S. Sefcik, and Christine Bradway, "Characteristics of Qualitative Descriptive Studies: A Systematic Review," *Research in Nursing & Health* 40, no. 1 (February 2017): 23–42.
[11] John Creswell, *Research Design: Pendekatan Kualitatif Dan Mixed* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Belajar, 2017), 5.

comprehensive picture of the research topic.[12] In qualitative-descriptive research, data collection is usually conducted in natural situations without any manipulation of the data. This flexible approach allows the researcher to customize the data collection methods to suit the purpose of this study.

Data analysis was done descriptively to reveal the phenomenon and its characteristics in depth. Data was analyzed qualitatively with the aim of understanding individual perspectives, opinions and experiences. Researchers ensured the accuracy of the results by applying techniques such as data validation and discussion.[13] Transparency in the data analysis process is an important aspect to increase the credibility and validity of the research findings.

3.   Findings and Discussion
3.1. Cultural Transformation Model through Contextualized Mission

Cultural transformation through a contextual mission approach shows that mission strategies that take into account local culture tend to be more successful in building strong relationships and expanding influence. Contextual mission emphasizes a deep understanding of local values, traditions, and language, so that the mission message can be authentically delivered and better received by the community.[14] This approach helps to reduce local resistance as mission is not seen as a threat to indigenous culture. Cultural transformation through contextual mission emphasizes the importance of sensitivity to local mindsets and customs as the foundation for integrating the gospel message.[15] The mission aims not to erase local culture, but rather to harmonize it with universal spiritual values. This process involves open dialog with local communities to understand their needs and concerns.

Contextualized mission implementation also reflects adaptability to integrate gospel values with relevant local cultural elements. For example, in some indigenous communities, the gospel message is conveyed through local arts such as dance, folklore, or symbols familiar to the people.[16] This strengthens the emotional and spiritual connection between missionaries and the communities they serve. However, this cultural transformation is not free from challenges, especially the risk of excessive cultural assimilation, where fundamental theological elements can be displaced by local cultural influences.[17] Therefore, missionaries

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[12] Hengki Wijaya, "Metode-Metode Penelitian Dalam Penulisan Jurnal Ilmiah Elektronik," in *Strategi Menulis Jurnal Untuk Ilmu Teologi*, ed. Sonny Eli Zaluchu, 1st ed. (Semarang: Golden Gate Publishing Semarang, 2020), 23–42.

[13] Hengki Wijaya, *Analisis Data Kualitatif Ilmu Pendidikan Teologi* (Makassar: Sekolah Tinggi Theologia Jaffray, 2018), 19.

[14] Firman Panjaitan and Hendro Siburian, "Misi Kristologi Dalam Konteks Kebudayaan," *Logia* 1, no. 1 (2019): 44–61.

[15] Hendra Aritonang, "Prinsip Misi Trans Budaya Menurut Kisah Para Rasul 17:16-34," *Jurnal Ilmiah Tafsir Alkitab* 1, no. 1 (April 30, 2024): 71–80.

[16] David Eko Setiawan, "Menjembatani Injil Dan Budaya Dalam Misi Melalui Metode Kontekstualisasi," *Fidei: Jurnal Teologi Sistematika Dan Praktika* 3, no. 2 (December 18, 2020): 160–80.

[17] Junio Richson Sirait, Kristin Harefa, and Astria Gempita Fau, "Perintisan Gereja Melalui Kontekstualisasi Pemberitaan Injil Pada Suku Nias," *Apostolos: Journal of Theology and Christian Education* 4, no. 1 (April 22, 2024): 47–54.

need to balance respect for the local culture with maintaining the authenticity of the gospel teachings.

Finally, the contextualized mission-based approach to cultural transformation underscores the importance of respecting cultural diversity to create inclusive and supportive communities. This approach not only aims at spiritual change, but also at social empowerment that is relevant to the needs of the local community. Cultural elements that are perceived to be contrary to gospel values may be difficult to let go of, especially if they have deep historical roots.[18] In this case, evangelists need to assist communities to find ways to integrate new teachings without completely rejecting their cultural identity. On the other hand, successful cultural transformation will show that missions can be a bridge that brings local traditions together with global values, creating a harmony that supports the social and religious sustainability of the community.

Contextual mission has a strong theological foundation in the Bible. One prime example is the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The Word made flesh and dwelt among men (John 1:14) shows how God is pleased to be present in the context of people's lives, speaking their language, understanding their struggles, and bringing salvation in a way that they can understand. Paul also applied the principle of contextual mission in his ministry, as he stated, "So to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win the Jews; to those under the law I became as one under the law, though I myself am not under the law, that I might win those under the law." (1 Corinthians 9:20). This approach is also evident in the way Jesus interacted with various groups of people. In his ministry, Jesus not only spoke to the Jews but also to Samaritans, Greeks, and Gentiles. For example, when He met the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well (John 4:7-26), Jesus did not pass judgment immediately but built a conversation relevant to her life, touching on aspects of her culture and beliefs before introducing the truth about the Messiah.[19] In addition, contextual mission also involves tangible acts of love. James asserts that faith without works is dead (James 2:17). In the context of mission, this means that the preaching of the gospel must be accompanied by concern for the social, economic, and spiritual needs of the community. Jesus himself exemplified this by feeding the multitudes (Matthew 14:13-21), healing the sick (Mark 1:40-42), and liberating the oppressed (Luke 4:18-19).[20] Mission is not just about talking, but also about bringing the kingdom of God into the reality of everyday life.

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[18] Susilo Susanto, "Kajian Misi Kontekstual Terhadap Spiritualitas Dalam Budaya: Budaya Mabak Sabek Di Dusun Gun Jemak - Kalbar," *Real Didache: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen*, 2019, 4, 2, 77-88.
[19] Ridwan Henry Simamora, Dewi Magdalena Rotua, and Julio Eleazer Nendissa, "Jesus as the Fulfillment of Salvation Symbolism: Theological Study of John's Gospel," *TELEIOS: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen* 4, no. 2 (December 28, 2024): 199–211, https://doi.org/10.53674/teleios.v4i2.197.
[20] Hizkia Joel Kambong et al., "Makna Teologis Bahtera Nuh Ditinjau Dari Ibrani 11:7 Serta Relevansinya Terhadap Pertumbuhan Iman Pada Jemaat GESBA Shaloom Kaima," *Jurnal Teologi Dan Pelayanan Kerusso* 9, no. 2 (October 6, 2024): 339–54, https://doi.org/10.33856/kerusso.v9i2.405.

In the context of today's church, contextual mission can be realized in various forms, such as culture-based evangelism, social services, education, and advocacy for the oppressed.[21] By understanding and respecting the local culture, the church can be more effective in delivering the gospel without causing misunderstanding or unnecessary resistance. However, it is important to stick to the truth of God's word so as not to get caught up in syncretism or compromise that weakens the core of the gospel. As followers of Christ, we are called to carry out the Great Commission with wisdom and sensitivity to the context in which we serve. Jesus said, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19-20). This command contains the essence of contextual mission, which is to make disciples of all nations in a way that is appropriate to their context, so that God's word can be understood, accepted, and lived out in daily life.

3.2. Mission Practices in Different Cultural Contexts

The practice of mission in diverse cultural contexts demonstrates the need for careful adaptation to local values and norms. For example, among indigenous communities, a community-based approach that utilizes folklore to illustrate Christian teachings is more successful than a direct approach that focuses on doctrine.[22] The practice of church mission opens up cultural truth transparently and at the same time maintains cultural identity in every theological reflection and mission.[23] This method enhances community play while avoiding cultural potential. Missions in traditional societies often face resistance due to the perception that missions are a form of foreign cultural domination. In these cases, a contextualization approach is the solution, where Christian teachings are linked to local values. For example, traditional songs or rituals are modified to convey spiritual messages.

In urban areas, mission strategies adapt to modern lifestyles, such as through seminars or social activities, including free health services to attract public attention. However, socio-economic disparities in cities often pose a challenge, especially in reaching marginalized groups who are often skeptical of the church's goals.[24] Meanwhile, in cultural contexts plagued by religious conflict, the mission approach requires interfaith dialogue to build harmonious relationships before introducing Christian values. These practices emphasize that the success of missions is largely determined by a deep understanding of the local culture, including the customs, social structures and political dynamics that influence receptivity to the mission

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[21] Julio Eleazer Nendissa, Febri Kurnia Manoppo, and Dedy Efendy Mongkau, "Tersembunyi Tapi Nyata," *KARDIA: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Kristiani* 2, no. 2 (August 20, 2024): 71–82, https://doi.org/10.69932/kardia.v2i2.27.

[22] Sigit Wijoyo, "Pelaksanaan Misi Allah Dalam Konteks Keberagaman Budaya Di Indonesia," *HUPERETES: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Kristen* 2, no. 2 (June 30, 2021): 134–150.

[23] Daud A Ngamon, Julio Eleazer Nendissa, and Freby M. Rares, "Tradisi Perkawinan Adat Suku Sahu Dalam Perspektif Teologi Kristen Di Jemaat GKPMI, Halmahera Barat," *Studia Philosophica et Theologica* 24, no. 2 (October 30, 2024): 231–246.

[24] Setinawati Setinawati, Yudhi Kawangung, and Agus Surya, "Praksis Misiologi Masyarakat Perkotaan," *DUNAMIS: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Kristiani* 6, no. 1 (October 30, 2021): 251–261.

message.[25] In urban areas that tend to be plural and modern, other challenges arise in the form of anonymity and lack of community. Here churches that use community service-based approaches such as the provision of social assistance become an effective entry point for building connections with congregations or other communities.

On the other hand, societies with majority religious dominance such as Islam or Hinduism often have challenging legal and social restrictions. For example, missionaries in India report that they have to deliver the message of Faith in a non-frontal context to avoid conflict. However, this practice still requires continuous evaluation to ensure that the strategies used are not only numerically effective but also aligned with Christian values that respect religious freedom.

3.3. The Role of the Digital Age in Contextual Mission

The digital age opens up great opportunities for contextual mission through the use of digital platforms such as *online* churches and social media.[26] The digital era will continue to develop along with human thought power, as will creativity and the message of the Gospel.[27] With these platforms, the gospel message can be delivered to a wider congregation/community without being hindered by geographical boundaries. For example, *online* churches provide opportunities for those who cannot physically attend to still join the worship service and connect spiritually. Social media such as *Facebook*, *Instagram*, and *YouTube* have also become important tools for building communities of faith. Through creative content of short videos, podcasts, and interactive discussions, religious organizations can tailor their messages to be more relevant to specific demographics and cultures. This approach allows for a more flexible contextualization process in the digital space.

The use of digital technology for this mission also faces a number of challenges. Inequality in access to technology in various regions, low digital literacy, and potential misuse of platforms for unspiritual purposes are the main obstacles.[28] In addition, issues such as data security and privacy protection also need to be considered in the implementation of digital missions. To overcome these challenges, sustainable strategies such as digital literacy training, development of user-friendly applications, and a focus on building genuine relationships in online interactions are needed. With this approach, the digital age can be a key driver for cultural transformation through contextualized missions.

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[25] Rannu Sanderan et al., "Paradigma Misi Kristen Dalam Era Plural," *Melo: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama* 3, no. 1 (June 15, 2023): 39–50.

[26] J. E. Nendissa, "Peran Orang Tua Kristen Dalam Mencegah Anak Yang Kecanduan Game Online Dikaji Dari Perspektif Fondasi Pendidikan Kristen," *Jurnal Teologi Praktika* 5, no. 1 (2024): 18–30.

[27] Editha Soebagio, "Kebenaran Dalam Media Digital," *Studia Philosophica et Theologica* 20, no. 2 (September 23, 2020): 127–141.

[28] J. E Nendissa, "Pemuda Gereja Di Tengah Pandemi Covid-19 Suatu Analisis Dasar Terhadap Pelayanan Pemuda Gereja Di Tengah Pandemi Covid-19," *Mello: Jurnal Mahasiswa Kristen* 3, no. 2 (2022): 1–10.

3.4. The Position of Mission's Encounter with Culture and its Implications for the Church

The main challenge in church mission is how interaction with culture can shape and change both the church and the society it serves. Cultural transformation through a contextualized mission approach in the digital age has become very important in facing the dynamics of the times.

Since the beginning of church history, mission's encounter with culture has been part of an ongoing theological struggle. In the New Testament, for example, Paul used different strategies when speaking to the Jews than when dialoguing with the Greeks. In Acts 17, Paul presented the gospel at the Areopagus by quoting Greek poetry and philosophy to make it more understandable to the congregation. This shows that from the beginning, Christian missions have tried to find the best way to communicate the gospel in various cultural contexts without losing its essence.

The impact of the interaction between mission and culture for the church is far-reaching. First, the church must have a deep understanding of the culture it serves. Culture includes not only traditions and customs, but also value systems, mindsets, and social practices that shape the way people view life and spirituality. By understanding the culture thoroughly, the church can avoid ethnocentric approaches that could potentially hinder the delivery of the gospel message. Secondly, churches need to develop a contextualized approach to mission so that the gospel can be accepted as relevant in a particular culture without losing its truth. This approach requires the church to understand the symbols, language, and cultural practices that can be used as a means of delivering the gospel message effectively.[29] Contextualization is not just adjusting the way of communicating, but also translating theological concepts to make them understandable in the local social and cultural context. Third, to remain relevant, the church must utilize digital technology as a means of mission. Social media, streaming platforms, and mobile apps can be used to spread the gospel and build faith communities in various places. However, churches also need to be aware of the negative impacts of digitalization, such as misinformation, excessive individualism, and the challenge of maintaining deeper congregational engagement.

One concrete form of cultural transformation through contextual mission in the digital age is the church's utilization of social media to reach the younger generation. Many churches have begun to adapt digital communication strategies by presenting engaging and relevant content, such as sermons in short video format on TikTok or Instagram. In addition, Bible apps and online learning platforms allow people to explore their faith flexibly. Therefore, churches need to balance digital presence with real community engagement, for example through a combination of online and offline meetings in discussion groups and corporate worship.

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[29] Simamora, Rotua, and Nendissa, "Jesus as the Fulfillment of Salvation Symbolism: Theological Study of John's Gospel."

The mission of the church in the digital era is not just the utilization of technology, but more than that, it is to present Christ in the lives of digital society. A successful church in contextual mission is one that is able to combine deep cultural understanding, wise use of technology, and faithfulness to the gospel. Thus, true cultural transformation can be realized, where the values of the kingdom of God are increasingly evident in the lives of individuals and communities, both in the physical world and in the digital realm.

3.5. Case Study of Digital Platform Utilization

Digital platforms such as *online* churches and social media have revolutionized traditional approaches to mission. *Online* churches enable worship without geographical boundaries, reaching people in remote areas that were previously difficult to access. However, the lack of in-person interaction is a major challenge in building a close-knit and meaningful spiritual community. Social media such as *Instagram*, *Facebook*, *TikTok* have been utilized to deliver spiritual messages in creative formats, such as short videos and infographics. This strategy attracts the younger generation, although its effectiveness is often questioned in creating a deep understanding of the faith. *Online* churches have revolutionized the way congregants participate in worship. For example, some churches now provide interactive services through platforms such as *Zoom*, *Youtube*, and *Facebook* that allow congregants to interact directly with the pastor.[30] This approach does increase accessibility, but for some congregants, the spiritual experience feels less authentic than in-person worship.

In this regard, technology training for missionaries is an urgent need, given that many of them are less familiar with the use of digital platforms. Large churches have even established specialized teams to produce high-quality digital content to expand the reach of their ministries.[31] While digitization provides great opportunities, face-to-face interactions still play an important role in building strong and deep relationships with the congregation. On social media, algorithms play a significant role in the dissemination of missional content.[32] Bible quotes or inspirational videos, often reach a wider congregation or public beyond the traditional church community. However, this approach sometimes simplifies deep theological messages into something easier to consume.

In addition, there is a need to create digital communities that are capable of providing spiritual depth, not just superficial interactions.[33] For example, large churches can facilitate virtual discussion groups as a space to build more personalized relationships. However, the utilization of digital technology for mission faces challenges such as privacy concerns and the

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[30] Nendissa, "Kajian Teologis Kristis Terhadap Pelayanan Online Di GMIM Syaloom Karombasan Pada Masa Pandemi Covid-19."

[31] Margareta Margareta and Romi Lie, "Pelayanan Misi Kontekstual Di Era Masyarakat Digital," *Jurnal Ilmu Teologi Dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen* 4, no. 1 (June 2, 2023): 44-55.

[32] Tony Salurante, "Misional Eklesiologi Budaya Digital: Mengurai Tantangan Gejala Transhumanis Dan Cyborg," *Phronesis: Jurnal Teologi Dan Misi* 6, no. 2 (December 22, 2023): 292–303.

[33] Habibi Malik, "Cyber Religion Dan Real Religion Di Tengah Masyarakat Digital," *KOMUNIKA* 4, no. 1 (June 21, 2021): 63–78.

risk of inappropriate information dissemination, which need to be addressed to ensure the use of these platforms remains effective and responsible.

3.6. Culture Transformation Challenges and Strategies

Cultural transformation through contextual mission faces various challenges, such as resistance to cultural change, gaps in access to technology, and differences in theological views.[34] In some cases, deeply rooted local traditions often hinder the acceptance of new values offered through missions.[35] For example, customs that contradict biblical teachings can lead to value conflicts within communities. Technological limitations are also a significant obstacle, especially in regions that do not have adequate access to digital infrastructure.[36] In addition, differences in theological interpretation among church denominations can create tensions, hindering cooperation in mission.

To overcome these barriers, strategies such as cross-cultural dialog, inter-church synergy, and community-based approaches are needed. In the digital realm, building a more inclusive technological infrastructure and providing digital skills training for mission ministers are strategic steps that need to be taken. Through collaborative approaches and the utilization of technological innovations, contextual missions can continue to thrive, despite being faced with complex cultural, theological, and technological challenges.[37] Through collaborative approaches and the utilization of technological innovations, contextual missions can continue to thrive, despite being faced with complex cultural, theological, and technological challenges.

Technological challenges are also significant, especially in rural areas that are not yet covered by the internet or digital devices. In such contexts, conventional approaches are often the only option, which limits the potential for effective messaging. In addition, the digital literacy gap among the evangelical community itself can be an obstacle. From a theological standpoint, different interpretations between denominations can hinder collaboration that would otherwise strengthen mission.[38] These differences often create debates that divide communities.

Strategies to overcome these challenges involve cross-cultural approaches based on respect and dialog. In the face of technological barriers, collaboration with institutions that support the development of digital infrastructure can be a solution. Meanwhile, theological

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[34] Debertje Setriani Manafe, Tekies Morib, and Risart Pelamonia, "Kontekstualisasi Misi Terhadap Budaya Bakar Batu Suku Lani Dan Implementasinya Bagi Gereja Injili Di Indonesia (GIDI) Jemaat Jigunikime Puncak Jaya Papua," *Makarios: Jurnal Teologi Kontekstual* 1, no. 1 (May 30, 2022): 111–36.

[35] Rosdinar Pangaribuan and Jelty Juriaty Rumetor, "Peran Remaja Dalam Pertumbuhan Gereja Lokal," *Proskuneo: Journal of Theology* 1, no. 1 (October 19, 2024): 46–57.

[36] Naomi Diah Budi Setyaningrum, "BUDAYA LOKAL DI ERA GLOBAL," *Ekspresi Seni* 20, no. 2 (November 1, 2018): 102.

[37] Margareta and Lie, "Pelayanan Misi Kontekstual Di Era Masyarakat Digital."

[38] Leo Imannuel, Demsi Yanto Sinlae, and Riko Silaen, "Teologi Komunikasi Dan Misi Kristen: Strategi Efektif Untuk Menjangkau Generasi Penerus Di Era Digital," *Manna Rafflesia* 10, no. 2 (May 11, 2024): 450–462.

differences can be overcome by building inter-church cooperation networks that focus on common goals rather than differences in dogma.

3.7. Cultural, Technological, and Theological Barriers

Cultural barriers often arise in the form of stereotypes that view missions as "religious colonization," especially in kumintas with colonial histories or religion-related trauma. Overcoming these perceptions requires an approach that is inclusive and respectful of local traditions. In terms of technology, the digital divide is a challenge in certain regions, where limited access to internet infrastructure hinders the utilization of digital platforms such as *online* churches. As a result, missions in internet-limited regions still have to rely on traditional methods.[39] Cultural barriers are often exacerbated by missionaries' lack of sensitivity to local traditions. In some countries, this has led to the marginalization of the local church. In contrast, missionaries who work closely with local community leaders are more likely to successfully overcome such challenges.

Theological barriers also often arise due to differences in interpretation between missionaries and local communities. Theology that is perceived as foreign tends to be rejected if it contradicts deep-rooted beliefs. To bridge these differences, dialogue and education are important strategies in creating theological harmony. These three challenges emphasize the importance of a holistic approach that includes cultural sensitivity, technological development, and theological adaptation for effective mission. The incompatibility between Christian teachings and local philosophies is a challenge in itself. To overcome these obstacles, integrated measures are needed that include education, training, and the development of an inclusive theology without compromising the core teachings of Christianity.

3.8. Contextualized Mission Sustainability Strategies in the Digital Age

The sustainability of contextual mission in the digital age requires an adaptive and inclusive approach. One key step is to provide training for evangelists to make optimal use of digital technology. With these skills, they can reach more people and create deeper interactions through *online* platforms.[40] In addition, it is important to develop digital content that fits the local cultural context. For example, presenting sermons or *online* discussions that use language and symbols that are relevant to the local community. With this approach, the gospel message can be delivered effectively without losing its meaning.

Another step is to build a solid network of online communities, which serve as a place for sharing experiences, spiritual support, and communal prayer. These communities can also be inclusive by involving individuals from different cultural backgrounds, thus strengthening the impact of the mission. Mission sustainability requires periodic evaluation of the impact of

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[39] Agrindo Zandro, "Peran Gereja Partikular Dalam Konteks Misi Evangelisasi Di Era Digital," *SAPA - Jurnal Kateketik Dan Pastoral* 8, no. 1 (May 27, 2023): 10–24.

[40] Fransiskus Irwan Widjaja and Harls Evan R. Siahaan, "Misi Dan Dialog Iman Pada Ruang Virtual: Sebuah Model Reflektif Yohanes 3:1-21," *THRONOS: Jurnal Teologi Kristen* 2, no. 1 (December 19, 2020): 40–48.

digitization on the community.[41] By listening to feedback from congregations or communities and using data to refine strategies, contextualized missions can remain relevant and make a positive impact in the digital age.

Some of the strategies that need to be implemented are:

3.8.1. *Digital Skills Training and Upgrading*

Improving digital literacy for evangelists is an essential first step to support missions in the digital age. This training includes the use of technologies such as social media, communication applications, and content management software.[42] With adequate digital skills, evangelists are able to deliver messages that are relevant, engaging, and meet the needs of the congregation or community. In addition to the technical aspects, training should also include an understanding of digital ethics, including how to maintain the privacy of congregants and avoid spreading inaccurate information. This ability makes technology not just a communication tool, but also a tool that strengthens mission effectiveness.

3.8.2. *Production of Relevant and Contextual Content*

Presenting content that resonates with the local culture and context is essential for engaging the congregation or community and building deeper relationships. This strategy involves producing sermons, discussions, or teaching materials that use local language, symbols, and stories.[43] By doing so, the congregation or community feels more valued and the gospel message is more easily received. The use of digital platforms such as *Youtube*, *TikTok* and podcasts enables the delivery of content in formats that suit the preferences of the digital generation. This approach not only increases engagement, but also strengthens the contextualized delivery of spiritual values.

3.8.3. *Strengthening the Online Community*

Building and strengthening *online* communities is key to mission success. Discussion forums on social media, virtual prayer groups, or Faith community apps can be a means to share experiences, support emotionally, and build a sense of belonging.[44] Interactions in online communities also provide insights into the needs and expectations of the congregation or community. These insights allow evangelists to adjust strategies and approaches to remain relevant and effective.

3.8.4. *Periodic Evaluation and Innovation*

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[41] Renny Tade Bengu, "Strategi Mengembangkan Pelayanan Misi Dengan Pendekatan Connecting Sebagai Role Model Pelayanan Penginjilan Bagi Remaja Di Era Digital," *Excelsis Deo: Jurnal Teologi, Misiologi, Dan Pendidikan* 7, no. 2 (December 12, 2023).

[42] Haickal Attallah Naufal, "LITERASI DIGITAL," *Perspektif* 1, no. 2 (October 31, 2021): 195–202.

[43] Sirait, Harefa, and Fau, "Perintisan Gereja Melalui Kontekstualisasi Pemberitaan Injil Pada Suku Nias."

[44] Deflit Dujerslaim Lilo, "Misi Gereja:," *Phronesis: Jurnal Teologi Dan Misi* 3, no. 2 (March 1, 2021): 204–216.

Mission sustainability in the digital age depends on regular evaluation and consistent innovation. Criticism and suggestions through social media are important tools to measure the effectiveness of strategies.[45] Evaluation results can be used to develop innovations such as the use of virtual reality technology for better spiritual experiences or the creation of specialized apps to support missions. This data-driven approach allows the mission to evolve in line with the changing needs of the congregation or community.

Based on the strategies offered above, synergizing technological skills, cultural understanding, and continuous evaluation is required. By emphasizing digital training, contextualized content, strengthening online communities, and data-driven innovation, missions can remain relevant and impactful despite changing challenges.

4. Conclusion

The contextual mission approach has proven effective in bringing about significant cultural change in communities. By exploring a deep understanding of the local context, including existing values and traditions, this strategy allows the mission message to be delivered in a relevant and meaningful way. The resulting transformation not only affects the individual's relationship with his or her faith but also brings about changes to social structures, creating harmony between local traditions and universal values.

In the digital age, mission strategy has evolved rapidly through the utilization of technology to expand its reach. Digital platforms such as social media, community applications, multimedia content accelerate the distribution of messages to a wider congregation or society. These technologies allow contextual mission to be tailored to the unique needs of each congregation or community group, creating a more personalized and interactive experience. In addition to expanding coverage, the digital age also amplifies mission impact through cross-border collaboration. Technology enables organizations and individuals involved in mission to work together globally. This accelerates the formation of digitally connected mission-based communities, increasing positive impact collectively.

Overall, the integration of cultural transformation and the digital age enriches each other in both broadening and deepening the impact of missions. With the right adaptation, these two aspects can create significant sustainable change, building a more inclusive, relevant and values-based society. This approach demonstrates the continuity between respecting local contexts and utilizing global technologies to create lasting impact.

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[45] Julio Eleazer Nendissa, Jacob Daan Engel, and Gunawan Yuli Agung Suprabowo, "Online Social Support Terhadap Penyintas Covid-19 Dari Perspektif Pendampingan Masyarakat Di Karombasan Selatan, Manado-Sulawesi Utara," *SUNDERMANN: Jurnal Ilmiah Teologi, Pendidikan, Sains, Humaniora Dan Kebudayaan* 17, no. 2 (2024): 131–143.

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