

An Analysis of Christian Content Creators' Influence on Ugandan Christian Youth from the Christian Spirituality Perspective

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Abstract

This article examines the influence of Christian content creators (CCCs) on the spirituality of Ugandan youth. The research explores how CCCs influence identity construction and spirituality within a non-Western developing culture. The study focuses on CCCs' online presence on social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram to gain insights into their strategies for attracting and engaging individuals, particularly the youth, in the digital space. It investigates how CCCs present themselves online, construct their identity, and influence youth spirituality. This influence is evident through their self-descriptions, positive and negative influences, and the question of authenticity. By challenging the perspectives and convictions of their followers, CCCs actively shape their online identity and attract like-minded individuals, thereby fostering para-social relationships.

Key words: *Digital religion, Christian content creators, Identity construction, Youth spirituality, Para-social relationships*

1.0 Introduction

The digital age has profoundly reshaped religious engagement on a global scale, with online platforms becoming key spaces for spiritual interaction, authority, and identity formation. Scholars such as Rheingold (1993) initially framed virtual communities as spaces where individuals form meaningful relationships beyond physical constraints (Rheingold, 1998, p. 3), while later research highlights how digital media reconfigures religious authority (Cheong, 2014, p. 75). Religious influencers now occupy a central role in shaping belief systems, often bypassing traditional institutional structures (Berger & Ezzy, 2004, p. 175; Herring, 2005, p. 149). This phenomenon, termed “digital religion” (Campbell, 2013), reflects the growing intersection between online and offline spiritual practices, raising critical questions about authenticity, doctrinal integrity, and the future of religious communities.

In Africa, digital media has become a vital arena for religious expression, particularly among youth who increasingly disengage from conventional institutions (Moyo, 2019). The continent's rapid internet penetration has facilitated the rise of religious content creators who

blend faith with digital culture, offering accessible yet often informal spiritual guidance. While this shift fosters new forms of religious participation, it also risks diluting traditional theological depth in favor of personalized, entertainment-driven content (Givens et al., 2019). Uganda exemplifies this trend, where Christian content creators (CCCs) have emerged as influential figures in reshaping youth spirituality. Through dynamic sermons, interactive discussions, and faith-based storytelling, CCCs redefine religious identity for a generation deeply immersed in digital spaces.

The emergence of Christian Content Creators (CCCs) in Uganda has significantly reshaped religious engagement, particularly among youth, by using digital platforms to deliver accessible and culturally relevant spiritual content. Through dynamic sermons, faith-based discussions, and relatable narratives, CCCs have redefined religious identity for a generation deeply immersed in online spaces (Givens et al., 2019, p. 112). Their ability to address contemporary struggles—such as identity, purpose, and societal pressures—has positioned them as influential figures in youth spirituality. However, their emphasis on personalization and engagement blurs the line between, biblical truth and individual interpretation (Campbell, 2020, p. 47). As Uganda’s internet accessibility expands, CCCs wield increasing influence, raising critical questions about their theological coherence and long-term impact on spiritual formation.

The rise of Ugandan CCCs uncovers a paradox of digital faith. This paper examines the complex influence of CCCs on the spirituality of Ugandan youth, assessing their alignment with the core principles of Christian faith and practice. By engaging with the theological and cultural dimensions of this phenomenon, the study seeks to provide a balanced critique, exploring both the opportunities for fostering faith through digital means and the challenges posed by potential distortion of Christian teachings.

2.0 Literature Review

Howard Rheingold’s *The Virtual Community* (1993) marked a foundational moment in the study of online interactions, proposing that digital networks facilitate meaningful relationships beyond geographical constraints. His assertion that participants “leave our bodies behind” (Rheingold 1993, p.3) underscores the disembodied nature of early virtual communities. While his insights remain crucial for understanding digital social spaces, the rapid evolution of online dynamics—particularly in religious contexts—necessitates a critical reassessment of his early

internet-era observations. Contemporary scholarship has expanded upon Rheingold's work, particularly in examining how digital spaces shape religious authority, identity, and influence, with growing attention to African contexts.

Heidi Campbell (2005) shifts the analytical focus from physical location to relational networks, arguing that online communities should be studied through their sustaining interactions rather than their spatial configurations. This framework proves especially useful in examining Ugandan Christian Content Creators (CCCs), whose digital engagements foster spiritual influence among youth. Pauline Cheong (2014) further refines this perspective by identifying three logics governing religious authority in digital spaces: disjuncture and displacement, continuity and complementarity, and dialectics and paradox. These logics help explain how CCCs challenge traditional religious hierarchies in Uganda while simultaneously raising questions about authenticity and legitimacy in digital spiritual leadership. Cheong's observation that online moderators often displace clergy as gatekeepers of religious knowledge (Cheong 2014, p.78) aligns with Berger and Ezzy's (2004) concept of "instant experts"—individuals who gain religious authority through perceived online aptitude rather than formal training. Debbie Herring (2005) extends this argument, noting that the internet enables individuals to challenge institutional religious hierarchies by enacting new forms of authority.

However, this shift does not render traditional religious institutions obsolete. Eileen Barker (2005) demonstrates that institutions increasingly co-opt digital tools to reinforce authority, monitoring online activities and infiltrating digital discussions. This tension between individual influencers and institutional control reflects Cheong's dialectical model, where technology both undermines and reinforces religious authority. Hazel O'Brien (2020) observes that religious influencers now operate with commercial-like sophistication, necessitating systematic categorization to assess their impact. Jon Anderson (1999) provides an early typology of digital religious actors—creole pioneers, spokesperson-activists, and reformer-critics—which Heidi Campbell (2020) later refines into digital entrepreneurs, spokespersons, and creatives. These categorizations illuminate the diverse ways religious authority manifests online, with CCCs exemplifying unaffiliated digital strategists who operate outside institutional accountability.

Understanding the motivations behind CCCs' digital engagement is crucial. Crystal Abidin (2013) identifies three key drivers: professional obligation, societal pressure, and personal

satisfaction. These motivations intersect with self-presentation strategies, as Adriana Manago et al. (2008) note that social media profiles allow curated identity projection. Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical theory further contextualizes this phenomenon, suggesting that digital environments shape self-expression, with influencers carefully crafting their online personas to cultivate authority. Mia Lövheim and Evelina Lundmark (2019) argue that such self-performances foster a relational authority, where credibility stems from audience engagement rather than institutional endorsement. However, Lorne Dawson critiques the lack of empirical studies on digital religious identity, urging research into how online practices reshape spiritual self-conception—a gap particularly evident in African contexts.

The influence of CCCs on followers can be further understood through media dependency theory (Ball-Rokeach&DeFleur 1976), which posits that reliance on media alters cognition and behavior. Gunn Enli (2005) adds that authenticity in digital spaces is negotiated through trustworthiness and spontaneity, while Audrezet et al. (2020) identify passionate and transparent authenticity strategies among influencers. Para-social relationships (Horton & Wohl 1956) further explains that one-sided bonds followers form with digital personalities, a dynamic that Maltby et al. (2005) warn can negatively affect youth, particularly in shaping self-perception and spiritual identity.

In Africa, digital religious influencers wield significant cultural and spiritual influence. Anita Cloete (2015) highlights digital media as a fertile ground for theological reflection, while Kevin Ndereba (2023) notes its role in fostering nonreligious identities among youth. Bala Musa and Agnes Lando (2022) argue that digital media simultaneously reinforces and disrupts traditional African religious and communal life, a tension mirrored in the rise of Muslim influencers who blend religious and lifestyle content (Scharnick-Udemans 2023). Despite these developments, LanoïMaloiy and Jocelyn Cranfield (2022) identify a critical gap in African-based studies on youth and online communities, underscoring the need for localized research on CCCs' impact.

While Rheingold's work laid the groundwork for understanding virtual communities, contemporary scholarship reveals a far more complex digital religious landscape. The rise of CCCs in Uganda exemplifies the interplay between individual authority and institutional adaptation, mediated through self-presentation, para-social relationships, and authenticity strategies. Yet, the lack of empirical studies on African digital religious communities remains a significant limitation. Future research must adopt localized, qualitative approaches to explore

how CCCs shape youth spirituality, addressing Dawson's call for deeper investigation into digital religious identity formation. Such studies will not only enrich academic discourse but also inform broader conversations about the role of digital media in shaping religious and cultural life in Africa.

3.0 Methodology

A qualitative approach is ideal for this study because it allows for an in-depth exploration of the lived experiences of youth and the theological dynamics of digital religious content. The research combines semi-structured interviews and content analysis to critically assess the ways digital platforms are reshaping youth spirituality in Uganda.

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with two main groups: Ugandan youth aged 18–30 who regularly engage with Christian digital content and prominent Ugandan Christian content creators. These interviews aim to uncover youth perspectives on how this content impacts their spiritual practices and to understand the motivations, strategies, and theological approaches of the creators. In addition, the study will analyze digital content from selected creators, focusing on recurring themes, theological depth, and alignment with traditional Christian teachings. This dual approach will provide both contextual insights and a critical analysis of the content consumed by youth.

The data will be analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns related to spiritual engagement, theological alignment, and the influence of social media culture on faith formation. Purposive sampling will be employed to select diverse participants and creators, ensuring a broad representation of perspectives. Ethical considerations, including informed consent and confidentiality, will guide the research process, while limitations such as the fast-evolving nature of digital trends will be acknowledged. By integrating these methods, the paper provides a comprehensive critique on the interplay between Christian content creators, youth spirituality, and digital media in Uganda.

4.0 Results

a) Self-descriptions of CCC

CCCs describe themselves on their pages/ accounts, selecting words which create a certain

impression about who they are. For example, In the case of Fiona Ato, her self-description as an evangelist, blessed mother, loving wife, hustle addict and people lover showcases various aspects of her identity and interests. This combination of words conveys her passion for spreading the Gospel, her commitment to her family, her dedication to hard work and her genuine love for connecting with others. Mukimba Grace's use of words and emojis like "God can't be mocked man reaps what he sows love, forgive, be patient 2 Sam 22:2" creates an impression of someone who believes in divine justice and emphasizes the importance of love, forgiveness, and patience. The selection of specific Bible verses adds depth to her message, indicating her reliance on Scripture to guide her beliefs and actions. Catherine Aketch's choice of words, "Bible discussion with Catherine Aketch, Let's learn more from each other about the Bible. Ask only questions," portrays her as someone who is eager to engage in conversations about the Bible and foster a learning environment. Her invitation to ask questions suggests an open-minded and interactive approach to discussing religious topics. Patience Akwi's statement, "My trust is in Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour only," demonstrates her unwavering faith and reliance on Jesus as the central figure in her life. By highlighting her trust in Christ, she conveys her commitment to following Him and likely seeks to attract individuals who share similar beliefs and values. Musisi Enock's words "We answer frequently asked questions about the Christian faith, relationships and Marriage, encourage you," indicates their role as a resource for addressing common inquiries and concerns related to the Christian faith. By positioning themselves as a source of guidance and encouragement, they attract individuals seeking reliable information and support on these topics. This portrayal of their ministry aims to project an authentic identity as a trusted source of advice and inspiration. In summary, the words and expressions used by these individuals in their self-descriptions serve to shape their online identity and attract like-minded individuals who resonate with their beliefs, values, interests, and desired interactions.

In terms of the nature of content created, CCC typically focuses on creating and developing original content in areas such as family, marriage, and spirituality. They often consciously avoid delving into sensitive topics like politics, especially within the context of Uganda's churches. This approach is likely rooted in the understanding that political discussions can easily become divisive and potentially detract from the primary purpose of their content—providing guidance and support in matters related to faith and personal development. By steering clear of political topics, CCCs aim to create a safe and inclusive

space for their audience to explore their spirituality, strengthen their relationships, and seek personal growth without being entangled in potentially polarizing debates. This intentional focus on topics like family, marriage and spiritual growth allows CCCs to provide relevant and relatable content to their followers while fostering a positive and uplifting community.

CCCs use various ways to describe themselves online, reflecting their unique perspectives and goals. Many CCCs emphasize their Christian identity, describing themselves as CCCs, faith-based influencers, or ambassadors of Christ. They often articulate their purpose and mission, aiming to inspire, educate and encourage others in their faith journey. CCCs focused on specific topics such as bible study, Christian lifestyle, worship, or theology and may highlight their preferred creative mediums like writing, video, podcasting, or social media. Sharing personal stories and experiences helps establish authenticity and relatability. Each CCC brings a unique perspective and approach, allowing for a different and vibrant online Christian community.

b) Followers' Description of CCCs

The responses to this question were drawn from the responses the CCCs received from their followers. While CCCs preferred to be called by their name, followers also didn't like this idea rather followers called the CCC based on how the CCC had made or satisfied their needs. As such, followers appointed CCCs titles like; pastor, apostle, evangelist, mentor, elder, counsellor etc. The titles varied based on the content the CCCs created. While some CCCs felt uncomfortable with such titles, they empathized with the fact that that is how the followers has chosen to view and they cannot change their perceptions importantly, these titles had given the CCC a level of authority and influence that he had on the followers.

The contents of the CCCs were accepted by followers on their terms; they appropriated and reused them. They did that because CCC caused them to shift their perspective. According to the study, for followers to allow influencers to interact with them, they must first identify with them. They needed to feel a connection to them and a similarity with them. As a result of this identification, they accepted and listened to what CCC had to say, (Basil 1996, 478). Many followers created para-social associations with the powerhouses, envisioning that they need to draw in with them, (Davis, 2010, 145). Because of this, their ideas and content had a greater

impact on them. Some followers went ahead to share the content that had impacted them in other communities.

CCCs admitted that they received a lot of feedback from their followers. “You have to receive feedback, good or bad. This way you know that you are making an impact” (Belinda Achiro, 2023). “It’s from feedback that you can sometimes create content, ” (Musisi Enock, 2023). The feedback was both positive and negative. The negative feedback was mainly from those that were not in support of the content that they create and sometimes the negative comments from the Muslim community but also from those who don’t agree with the belief of a CCC. They also received positive feedback from followers informing of testimonies for those the content has had a positive influence. The views expressed by followers to the CCCs in the criticism were significant since it formed the perspective on the CCC and gave them a viewpoint on what they do. According to what they were told, CCCs were seen as pastors by their followers. There are two sides to a CCC and while CCCs felt honored that they could be perceived as spiritual authorities and mentors, they also felt a sense of obligation. Some people believed that their followers elevated them, putting pressure on them. If they promised their followers something, influencers were expected to keep their word and they were also expected to offer reliable biblical advice.

c) Followers’ Inquiries to CCCs

Although the inquiries that CCCs received were about their niche as content creators, they also received questions related to other areas. CCCs freely shared how their youthful followers asked them questions concerning Christian dating, false prophecies and confusing bible Scriptures that needed to be elaborated. The CCCs believe that the followers asked these questions because they perceive the CCC as a credible source, the followers may have asked to get their perspectives on a certain topic but also the question was asked because the followers trusted the CCC and accepted the content they present and interact with.

The followers’ motivation to ask these questions extends beyond seeking the CCCs’ perspectives on particular topics. While they may seek valuable insights and advice from the creators, the underlying trust in the CCCs plays a significant role in their decision to turn to them for guidance. This trust is fostered through consistent engagement with the content presented by CCCs, leading to a strong connection and acceptance of the information shared. The followers’ acceptance of the creators’ content and their active interaction with it further

solidify the perception of CCCs as credible sources of spiritual knowledge and guidance.

The dual role of CCCs as content creators and trusted sources of spiritual guidance highlights their influence and impact on their youthful followers. By establishing themselves as credible authorities, CCCs hold a unique position of authority and responsibility in shaping the spiritual beliefs, values and practices of their audience. This dual role also underscores the importance of content creators' ethical responsibility in providing accurate and biblically sound information, as their influence extends beyond their niche content. As CCCs continue to play a significant role in shaping the spiritual lives of their youthful followers, their ability to foster trust, credibility and authenticity becomes paramount in promoting a holistic and well-informed Christian experience.

d) Christian Practices of CCCs

CCCs admitted that while they make content to increase their viewership and followers, their responsibility is also huge. “The more content you make, the more views,” (Ntandy Abraham, 2023) “It’s the content that sale you” (Henry Bandi, 2023) “Followers have to feel your presence” (Patience Akwi,n 2023) So as CCCs, they are icebreakers for spiritual questions and debate, but the ounce is also on their followers. CCCs provide teaching and reflections on biblical passages, guiding their followers in understanding and applying the word of God in their daily lives. This sometimes involves sharing sights, personal experiences and practical examples that relate to the message of the bible while connecting their daily lives.

In addition, CCCs acknowledged that they promote and introduce spiritual practices and disciplines that deepen one’s relationship with God. Prayer, meditation, Bible study, fasting, worship and gratitude are all examples of this. When it comes to incorporating these disciplines into one’s daily routine, they can offer direction, resources, and useful advice. CCCs additionally give teaching and mentorship amazing open doors through web-based stages. Offering resources for spiritual development, one-on-one mentoring, or structured discipleship programs are all examples of this. They can give direction, responsibility and customized help to people trying to extend their relationship with God. However, in as much they try to help youth deepen their relationship with God, the youth need to have a personal relationship with God. Mukimba Grace a Facebook CCC summed it up in a Luganda statement literally translated as If you send me to bring you milk, I will add water. Rather the CCC encourage youth ought to meditate on the word of God by themselves other than deepening on the CCC.

They accomplish this by exhibiting authenticity, which is of utmost importance to them, (Andrew Tolson, 2010, p. 278).

In Uganda, online communities can be used in a variety of ways to support Christian practices, such as providing daily devotionals: people can utilize online communities to share everyday reflections, Scripture verses and prayers that encourage followers to remain associated with God during the day. These posts can easily be shared, liked, and commented on, which helps followers feel connected and accountable. Also, sharing testimonies, on how prayer and bible reading has impacted individual lives. Such testimonies can inspire others to engage in these practices and provide hope and encouragement to those who are struggling. Thirdly, hosting bible studies online: Online Bible studies can be held on platforms for online communities, giving people a chance to study the Bible together and gain knowledge from one another. Members can seek clarification on some pressing issues, share bits of knowledge and support each other as they concentrate on the bible together. Fourth, forming prayer online communities: Online prayer communities that allow members to share prayer requests and pray for one another can be created using online communities. People can get a sense of community and support from these groups, making them feel like they are cared for and connected. By making use of the power of online communities to influence people, CCCs can support and encourage Christian practices like reading the Bible and praying. They can also create a sense of community and make followers feel like they are accountable to each other and provide valuable resources and help for spiritual development.

e) Influence of CCCs on Followers' Identity and Spirituality

CCCs craft and shape their online identities through self-presentation, (Adriana M. Manago, 2008, 446). The key aspect of self-presentation is building a reputation within a specific social environment. To effectively influence how youth perceive them, CCCs carefully manage the information they choose to showcase. (Schlenker, 492). CCCs have to find a balance between positivity and accuracy in their online self-presentation and content creation to come across as desirable spiritual leaders/directors, (Nicole, 2006, p. 415). Although CCCs typically assert that the content they post online is authentic, objective evaluations indicate that the content posted may be slightly exaggerated at the expense of truth, (Catalina, 2011, 41). CCCs are particularly motivated "to manage their content when the presentation helps to gain rewards and construct identities," (Leary and Kowalski, 1990, p. 34) it's therefore likely that

CCCs “would be more intentional in their self-presentation when they enter online spaces and are eager to know and be known by others,” (Schlenker, 492).

In the process of self-presentation, CCCs face the challenge of striking a balance between maintaining a positive image and ensuring accuracy in their content creation. They aim to appear authentic and relatable while still presenting themselves as authoritative figures in matters of faith. However, objective evaluations showed that the content they post is exaggerated or tailored to create a more appealing image at the expense of complete truth. More to this, the CCCs present themselves as the expert on certain topics. This tension between authenticity and maintaining a favorable perception underscores the complexities of online identity management for CCCs.

The motivation for careful self-presentation becomes particularly pronounced when CCCs seek rewards and aim to construct specific identities within the online community. When they desire recognition and validation from their audience and actively engage in online spaces to be known by others, CCCs are more intentional in managing their content and image. This strategic self-presentation is driven by the desire to establish a strong following and maintain influence over their youthful audience. It also reflects their awareness of the impact their online identity can have on their followers’ perceptions and attitudes towards their spiritual guidance.

5.0 Discussion

i) Self-Description (of CCCs)

Christian Content Creators (CCCs) construct digital selves that reflect both spiritual purpose and curated authenticity. As Akpabi (2016, p. 97) asserts, authentic Christian identity begins with self-knowledge, integrating personal experience, cultural heritage, and spiritual consciousness. Many Ugandan CCCs align with this by seeing themselves as vessels of divine purpose in the digital age. For instance, CCCs like Mukimba Grace and Henry Bandi describe themselves as essential to their followers’ spiritual growth, suggesting an internalized identity of digital shepherding: “People are waiting daily for me to preach to them.” This self-description indicates a sense of divine responsibility, echoing Akpabi’s call for cultural relevance in Christian expression.

Further, CCCs like Sandra Akello and Catherine Aketch present their material

success—cars, homes—as visual testimonies of divine favor. These expressions become part of their digital identity, shaping how they define spiritual success. Their “showing up” for followers is both performative and pastoral, blending the sacred with spectacle in constructing an influential digital self.

ii) Followers’ Descriptions of CCCs

Followers view CCCs not merely as influencers but as spiritual authorities and mentors. Many ascribe transformative power to them, describing CCCs as people “God is using to change their lives.” This characterization reflects a shift from communal or institutional spiritual reliance to individualized, personality-centered spirituality. The CCC is often seen as the embodiment of divine intervention, and this perception elevates them to near-clerical roles in the minds of their audiences. Such veneration reveals a double-edged dynamic: while followers feel spiritually uplifted, they also risk equating the CCC with divine authority. The CCC becomes a living parable—part teacher, part testimony—whose life is scrutinized as both spiritual example and aspirational model.

iii) Followers’ Inquiries

Followers regularly seek personalized spiritual counsel from CCCs, which positions the latter as interpreters of Scripture. Belinda Achiro admitted, “*When someone asks me a question, I find a verse to answer.*” While this may reflect pastoral attentiveness, it also risks misinterpretation or reductionist theology. The ad hoc nature of such biblical engagement can lead to cherry-picking and deviation from core Christian doctrines. These inquiries reflect the hunger among youth for relevant, immediate answers—something digital CCCs are uniquely positioned to provide. However, this also exposes followers to potentially shallow or distorted theology, particularly when no formal theological training or accountability structures are in place.

iv) Christian Practices of CCCs

CCCs shape and model specific Christian practices in the digital sphere. This includes spiritual disciplines like preaching, sharing testimonies, engaging in prayer, and heart

contemplation. Heart contemplation, rooted in biblical traditions of *lev* and *kardia*, offers deep spiritual connection and inner transformation. CCCs—whether intentionally or not—have become mediums through which young Ugandan Christians practice and experience these inner disciplines. However, digital liturgies (Asmolov & Asmolov, 2009) influence these practices. CCCs introduce patterns of engagement—regular uploads, motivational speech, and curated authenticity—that become ritualized. Their spiritual practices are therefore embedded in media logic: constant output, audience engagement, and self-presentation. Over time, these digital rituals influence the spiritual rhythms of their followers.

v) Influence of CCCs on Followers

The influence of CCCs is profound and multi-layered. Drawing on McLuhan's statement, "the medium is the message" (1964, p. 21), the digital environment and its personalities do not merely convey Christian messages—they shape the identity and spirituality of the users themselves. Followers often begin to mirror the behavior, theology, and even material aspirations of their CCC mentors.

This influence is both spiritual and psychological. CCCs' presentation of material blessings as signs of divine favor may shift youth toward a prosperity-centric view of faith. Additionally, followers' dependency on CCCs for biblical interpretation and guidance weakens personal scriptural engagement, discipleship, and critical discernment. As Groothuis (1998) argues, prolonged digital engagement changes cognitive and behavioral patterns—followers become what they consistently behold. Further, the potential for idolatry emerges large. As Birkerts (1995) and Clarkson (2006) explain, when any person or object replaces God at the center of one's devotion, idolatry ensues. CCCs can unwittingly become idols—especially when they lack accountability and present themselves as spiritual authorities. The digital medium encourages repeated exposure and parasocial intimacy, making this risk even greater.

Spirituality-Related Response to CCCs

The spiritual-related response to CCCs is examined by considering concepts of Christian spirituality, devotional spirituality, and monastic devotional spirituality. This provides insights and guidance for individuals seeking to navigate their spirituality and identity within online spaces.

a) Christian Spirituality

Daniel J. Kim defines spirituality as the essence of life, encompassing relationships with God, self, others, and creation (Kim 2011, p.178). Christian spirituality, rooted in Christ's life, death, and resurrection (Tucker, 2006, p.4), involves devotion to God through prayer, worship, and communal practices, reflecting Judaic traditions (Cheslyn Jones et al., 1986, p.3). Jesus emphasized worship in "spirit and truth" (Jn 4:23-24), highlighting devotion as both personal and relational.

Derived from the Roman *devovere* ("to vow"), devotion signifies a sacrificial commitment (Waaijman, 2002, p.233). In Christianity, it embodies fidelity to Christ's sacrifice, marked by interiority and service (Johnson, 1990, p.40). Jesus' humanity mediates this divine-human relationship (Johnson, p.42), making devotion inherently relational (Wilken, p.66; Staab, 2022, p.30). David exemplified this through prayer, obedience, and repentance (1 Sm 13:14; 2 Sm 7), modeling heart-centered faith.

Late medieval devotion included prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, uniting society across classes (Kieckhefer, 1988, p.81; Swanson, 1995, p.177). Early desert ascetics pursued solitude and contemplation (Zerbolt, 1988, p.245), emphasizing inner transformation. Monasticism, or anachoresis ("withdrawal"), evolved from physical retreat to spiritual dedication (Colombas, 1964, p.2-3). Monks (*monachos*, "solitary") lived communally or as hermits, prioritizing prayer and Gospel radicalism (Chrysavgis, p.16-17).

Medieval monasticism diversified into Benedictine (*ora et labora*), Franciscan (poverty/joy), and Jesuit (discernment/justice) traditions (Casey, 2005, p.10; Endean, 2011, p.40). All shared a commitment to Scripture, holiness, and service. Monasticism embodied Jesus' call to renunciation (Lk 14:33; Mt 19:24), aiming for "purity of heart" (Hunt, 2001, p.169).

In the digital age, digital monks balance technology with intentional spirituality (Brown & Kuss, 2020). They use apps for meditation, practice mindfulness online, and detox periodically (Smith, p.38-39). By prioritizing presence and accountability, youth can avoid idolizing CCCs and cultivate authentic faith.

Christian content creators prevent self-idolatry by modeling humility and God-centeredness (Ps 115:1). They consistently redirect praise toward God, demonstrating that God alone deserves glory. This mindset helps audiences focus on God rather than the creator. By centering their message on divine truth, CCCs facilitate meaningful encounters with God that

inspire complete dependence on His grace in daily life.

Authentic vulnerability helps CCCs connect genuinely with their audience. When creators openly share their weaknesses, they highlight dependence on God's strength rather than personal perfection. This transparency builds trust and empathy while directing attention to God's sufficient grace. Such vulnerability embodies Christ's teachings about humility, showing how human limitations become opportunities for divine transformation.

CCCs can cultivate direct spirituality by urging followers to develop personal relationships with God. They emphasize prayer, Scripture study, and Holy Spirit guidance - redirecting focus from human leaders to divine connection. This approach empowers individuals to pursue independent spiritual growth, fostering transformative faith that extends beyond any earthly influencer.

The findings of the study indicated that CCCs had a notable influence on youth's identity and spirituality through their intention and motives, positive and negative influences and projection of authenticity. CCCs challenged their followers' perspectives and beliefs through their self-presentation motives. CCCs presented themselves online, attracting followers with similar beliefs and creating para-social relationships. However, there was a risk of idolatry when youth became excessively reliant on CCCs for spiritual guidance. To address this risk, the study suggests that youth embrace a monastic devotional spirituality that emphasizes the heart while remaining engaged in society. This approach encourages periodic breaks from digital media, personal Bible study, accountability and community involvement and spiritual discernment. By removing distractions and fragmented connections, youth can cultivate an authentic identity in their relationship with God. Intentional detachment, combined with community participation, accountability and personal devotion, fosters discipline and enables youth to prioritize spiritual practices and exercise self-control. Emphasizing authenticity and sincerity, this approach encourages individuals to present their true selves before God. By adopting a 'digital monk' mindset, youth can nurture a genuine and transformative relationship with God. This is done by establishing intentional and meaningful connections with others and God. This approach promotes spiritual growth and helps youth avoid idolatry's potential pitfalls.

In conclusion, this study has expounded the dual-edged nature of Christian Content Creators' (CCCs) influence on Ugandan youth spirituality, demonstrating how digital platforms

simultaneously democratize religious engagement and challenge traditional structures of spiritual authority. The research reveals that while CCCs effectively foster accessible, culturally relevant faith communities through strategic self-presentation and para-social relationships, their influence risks promoting superficial spirituality when followers substitute creator-dependent habits for personal spiritual disciplines. These findings underscore the urgent need for theological frameworks that help digital-native believers navigate online faith spaces with discernment, preserving the core of Christian devotion while engaging creatively with new media. Future research should longitudinally track how sustained CCC engagement shapes youth theology and church participation patterns over time, employing mixed methods to measure both qualitative spiritual experiences and quantitative behavioral changes. Another critical avenue would be comparative studies examining how different African cultural contexts mediate CCCs' authority and reception, particularly investigating how post-colonial religious histories and local media ecosystems shape digital discipleship models across the continent. Such research would not only deepen academic understanding of digital religion's global-local dynamics but also equip churches and faith leaders to cultivate digitally resilient spiritual formation practices for Africa's connected generation.

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