

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH: A SCOPING REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

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The growing presence of Catholic priests and nuns on social media reflects the increasing importance of this social practice, which has interdisciplinary implications in religion, media communication, and education. To help determine new research directions to aid in deepening the understanding of this phenomenon, this scoping review explores what is known so far about the intersections of social media and the Catholic Church's evangelical mission. Adopting the PRISMA-ScR reporting framework, 43 English-language journal articles published in selected research databases from 2014 to 2024 were systematically selected and reviewed. The research questions, contexts, frameworks, methods, data and social media platform sources, and key findings were extracted in an Excel matrix to map patterns in the literature, major evidence gaps, and future research directions. Findings show that studies are predominantly situated in European contexts, focus on Facebook and Twitter, use qualitative modes of analysis, and examine practices, purposes, products, and prescriptions of the Catholic Church in relation to social media. To broaden scholarship, future research can explore contexts outside Europe and emerging social media platforms like TikTok, employ mixed method approaches, and probe various critical issues arising from prevailing social media practices. Extending research in these directions is essential to deepen understanding of the complex discourse on religion within the digital sphere.

Keywords: Catholic Church; social media; communication; evangelization; digital religion

1. INTRODUCTION

During a TikTok doom-scrolling session, the first author came across a screen recording of a live broadcast of a social media comedian responding to a series of comments left by a certain user whose bio read, "First Catholic Priest on TikTok." Many of the comments affirmed the entertainment value of the online banter between the priest and the comedian. Bringing this topic up to other Catholic friends (including the second author), we soon discovered that there were other self-identified Catholics on TikTok, creating evangelizing content and actively interacting online. Seeing more Catholic priests, nuns, and seminarians active on the platform, sharing snippets of homilies, posting daily devotions, answering both church and non-church-related queries, and even participating in various TikTok trends grew our research interest in the social media participation of religious figures.

The presence of Catholic priests on TikTok, in fact, is not new. It became increasingly common during the COVID-19 pandemic, when numerous institutions were forced to conduct their activities online, with religious communities being no exception (Gauxachs et al., 2021). This greatly challenged the Church's concept of corporeal presence, forcing its leaders to capitalize on Web 2.0 technologies to remain connected to their followers (Ballano, 2021). Local churches soon found themselves in the middle of a "virtual religious community" (Parish, 2020), relying on technology and online spaces to maintain this community during lockdown. With TikTok now being one of the most used social media applications by young people globally (McCashin & Murphy, 2023), it is not surprising that Catholic evangelizers opted to leverage social media platforms as tools for evangelization. To this day, social media platforms such as TikTok are becoming even more relevant in faith communities as a tool to help serve religious and related purposes.

The growth of this social practice heightens its potential to open new opportunities as well as challenges, making it an important topic for research. Scholars have long taken an interest in the role of social media in Catholic evangelization (Banaszak, 2022; Nduka & McGuire, 2017). However, its fluidity and complexity call for a deeper dive into the explorations conducted and questions both answered and unanswered. To help map current scholarship on social media in religious contexts, this scoping review explores what is known so far about the intersections of social media and the Catholic Church's evangelical mission. In this review, the *Catholic Church* denotes the worldwide Christian denomination headed by the Bishop of Rome (the Pope). Its membership is typically understood to include clergy (ordained ministers), members of religious institutes who profess public vows, and lay persons, with baptism serving as the customary rite of initiation (Catechism of the Catholic Church, Article 9, Paragraph 3). Within the context of social media, these individuals may act as communicators, influencers, or digital content creators who contribute to the Church's evangelizing mission online.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows: We describe how we conducted the scoping review, detailing the selection process. Then, we discuss salient patterns in extant studies about social media and the Catholic Church. Finally, in the conclusion, we identify meaningful ways to extend this socially relevant area of research.

2. METHODS

A scoping review is a type of evidence synthesis that aims to answer a broader research question (Pham et al., 2014; Rodger et al., 2024). In comparison to a systematic review which accounts for the quality of individual papers and the evidence it synthesizes in answering specific research questions, a scoping review does not require quality appraisal and is instead exploratory in nature. Its purpose is to "explore the breadth of available evidence" on a certain topic (Tricco et al., 2016). Although this methodology is primarily utilized in health and medical research (Rodger et al., 2024), it was adopted by the current study to address its objective. This scoping review is based on the framework outlined by Arksey and O'Malley (2005), which prescribes five key stages: (1) identifying the research question, (2) identifying relevant studies, (3) selecting studies, (4) charting the data, (5) collating, summarizing, and reporting the results.

Our question is: What is known so far about the social media practices of the Catholic Church? Anchored on this inquiry, the review we conducted aims to map the literature on social media and Catholic evangelization to identify key concepts, gaps, and possibilities for future research. Our first step was to conduct an online search of articles from September 9 to 18, 2024, in Scopus, Web of Science, and EBSCOhost. The search strategy was implemented separately across all three databases. While some search strings were configured differently to accommodate the functionalities of each database, they were consistently guided by the study's general research question and maintained the same core concepts and eligibility criteria. The results from all database searches were exported and merged into one Excel sheet on which duplicate records were manually identified and removed before undergoing the PRISMA-ScR selection process. Table 1 shows the full Boolean search strings used and filters applied for each database to search relevant articles for this scoping review.

Table 1: Search strings and limits per database

Database	Search string	Limits/Filters applied
EBSCO	Social media and Catholic evangelization; Social media AND Catholic Evangelization; Catholic church AND Social media	Date range: August 2014–August 2024 Location: All Expanders: Apply related words; Also search within the full text of the articles; Apply equivalent subjects

Table 1: Search strings and limits per database (continued)

Database	Search string	Limits/Filters applied
Web of Science	Social media and catholic evangelization; social media and catholic church; digital evangelization	Date range: August 2014–August 2024 Document Types: Article Search in: All databases Collections: All Languages: English
Scopus	Social AND media AND Catholic AND evangelization; social media AND Catholic church	Search within: Article title, Abstract, Keywords Date range: 2014–2024 Editions: All Document type: Article Source type: Journals

See Appendices C, D, and E for the complete search strategies for EBSCO, Web of Science, and Scopus, respectively.

To be eligible for inclusion, the paper had to be a journal article in English, published between 2014 and 2024. All methodologies (qualitative, quantitative, mixed) were considered for inclusion in the review. Utilizing the advanced search option in the databases and applying relevant filters according to the preliminary search protocol, the screening proceeded in the following sequence. Title and abstract screening was initially conducted by the first author and subsequently reviewed by the second author. Articles retained after this stage were divided between the two authors for manual, full-text review. We created a literature matrix to extract and organize key study characteristics that included and expanded upon the PRISMA-ScR checklist, particular those concerning the introduction, methods, results, and discussion. The extraction tool initially included the research question, context or location, theoretical framework (if applicable), method, participants, and key findings. We piloted the data extraction tool by independently reviewing 22 and 21 papers, respectively, from the same set of 43 references and subsequently discussing the results. Recognizing that some studies do not specify a locale, as well as human participants, we modified the table to also include social media platforms and data sources as alternatives to participants. With this revision, the full details were charted in the data extraction template created in Microsoft Excel to facilitate the screening process.

Any discrepancies were discussed by the reviewers, who revisited the relevant articles to determine the most accurate matrix entry. Inter-rater reliability was not calculated. For studies that lacked a clearly defined context, for instance focusing on Vatican documents (e.g., Vitullo & Mastrofini, 2023; Wyrostkiewicz et al., 2024; Zavadilová, 2022), the context or locale is marked as ‘N.S.’ meaning ‘not specified’. For studies without a theoretical framework, the chart is marked ‘N/A’ (not applicable). For those without an explicitly stated social media platform, the cell is marked ‘General’.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Study selection

In selecting relevant studies to be examined in this review, we used the advanced search option and applied relevant filters according to the preliminary search protocol described earlier. Duplicate sources were removed manually in an Excel file and then compared for validation. This yielded a total of 372 unique journal articles. To further narrow down the study set, the two authors sequentially reviewed the titles and abstracts for relevance and ended up with 46 papers. After a comprehensive full-text review of these articles, only 25 studies remained. Subsequently, a backward citation search was manually conducted on all 25 articles. This procedure was done non-iteratively. In total, 1,333 references from the eligible articles were compiled in Microsoft Excel and were subjected to a thorough manual screening process. First, duplicate records were removed, resulting in 1298 unique sources. The same inclusion and exclusion criteria were then applied, eliminating sources outside the specified time frame, non-English publications, and non-journal articles (e.g., websites, books, and blogs). This process reduced the number of sources to 291. Next, the remaining sources were collected from Google Scholar and underwent title and abstract screening, retaining only 27 articles. Finally, after a full-text screening, 18 articles from the backward citation search were included in the final list of eligible studies. It should be noted that the articles collected through the backward citation search are not necessarily cited in the original research databases included in the search protocol. Overall, 43 articles from both database and citation searching were included in the final analysis. This systematic study selection process, which is guided by the PRISMA-ScR guidelines (<https://www.prisma-statement.org/>), is illustrated in Figure 1. (See Appendix A for the PRISMA-ScR Checklist, Appendix B for the summary of studies included in the review.)

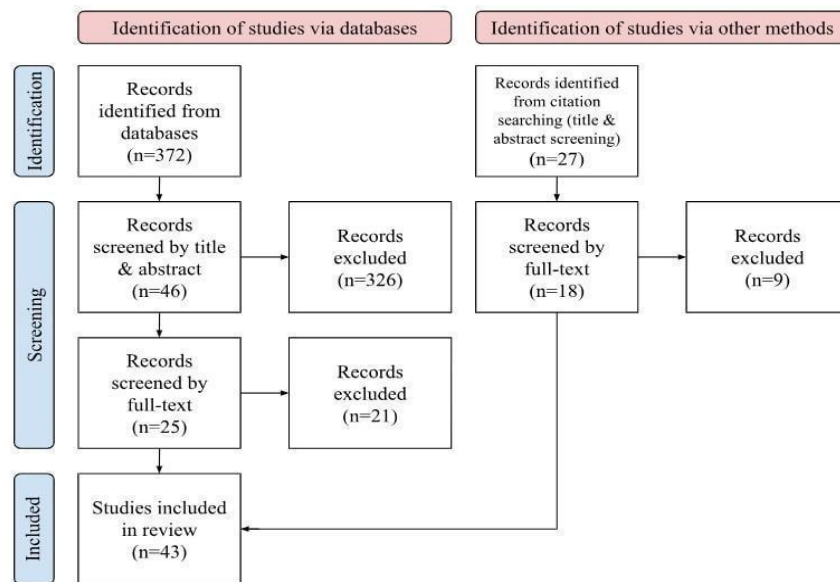


Figure 1: PRISMA flow diagram
Source: Page et al. (2021)

3.2 Trends in scholarship about social media and the Catholic Church

To identify potential new directions in this area of research, we examine patterns in the objectives, methods, and findings of scholars whose publications are included in our literature dataset. We discuss publication trends in the past 10 years, highlighting what areas have been explored and which areas remain under explored. In doing so, we provide a picture of the knowledge gap, which future research in Catholic religion and social media communication can address.

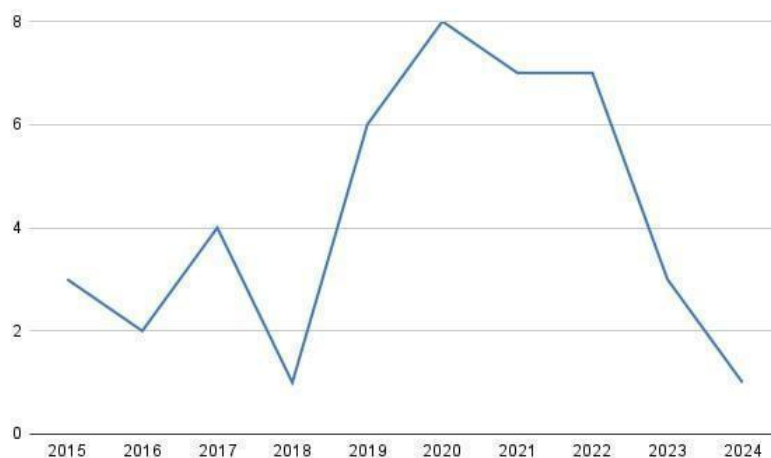


Figure 2: Publication year of studies on Catholic social media practices

Figure 2 indicates a growing research interest in Catholic social media practices between the years 2019 and 2022, reaching a high point in 2020. The timing coincides with the COVID-19 pandemic, which is repeatedly mentioned in the studies as an impetus for the increased relevance of online religious practices. Live streaming of the Holy Mass, building parish websites, and papal communication through social media are among the digitized religious practices that have reportedly become more commonplace and “extremely necessary” (Turchyn & Zdoroveha, 2020) to sustain the faith-based community while complying with mandatory social distancing health protocols. The upsurge in these online religious practices appears to have inspired scholarly interest in how they could (re)shape the Catholic faith theoretically and practically, well past the pandemic era. While the post-pandemic years of 2023 and 2024 show a dramatic decrease in research included in the scope of this review, the drop does not necessarily mean a decline in its relevance. In fact, synthesized evidence reveals less explored areas needing more scholarly attention.

3.2.1 Social media platforms used for Catholic purposes

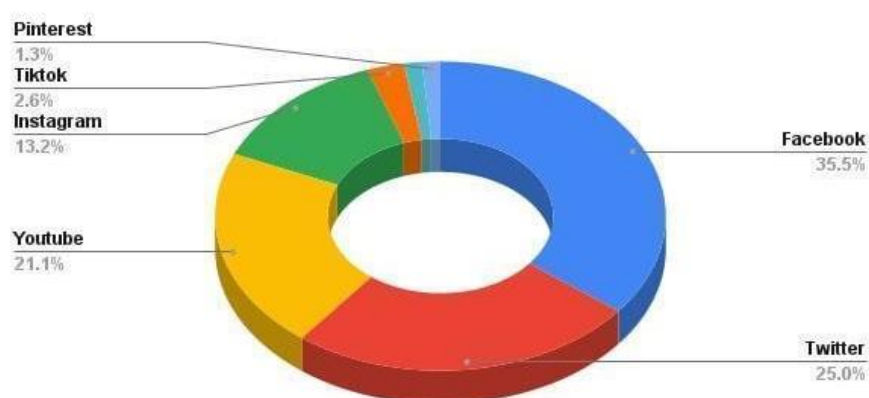


Figure 3: Studied social media platforms used for Catholic purposes

In terms of social media platform use (Figure 3), most of the studies have investigated Facebook (27 out of 76). Significantly less work, however, has been done on other popular platforms such as Instagram (10 out of 76) and TikTok (only 2 out of 76). Interestingly, there has also been mention of Pinterest—which is more of a visual search engine—and LinkedIn—a professional networking site. Both platforms were mentioned once across the studies analyzed in this review.

3.2.2 Contexts of research on Catholic social media use

Besides social media platforms, another research factor considered in this review is the locale where social media use of Catholics is studied. Table 2 summarizes the contexts that have been explored so far.

Table 2: Contexts where Catholic social media has been studied

Country/Continent	Studies in the scoping review
America	Nduka and McGuire (2017)
Brazil	Sbardelotto (2016)
Canada	Johnson (2020)
Europe	Kratochvíl (2021)
Germany	Kołodziejska and Neumaier (2017), Wiesenber (2020)
Holy Land (Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Nazareth)	Golan and Martini (2019)
India	Stanislaus (2022)
Italy (Lazio, Rome)	Giorgi (2019), Zavadilová (2022), Mutangala and Cantoni (2023)
Philippines	Bartolome (2022)
Poland	Mandes (2015), Kołodziejska and Neumaier (2017), Chmielewski (2020a, 2020b), Jupowicz-Ginalska et al. (2020), Leonowicz-Bukała et al. (2021), Przywara et al. (2021), Stępnik (2020), Kasowski et al. (2022), Wyrastkiewicz et al. (2022), Koszembar-Wiklik and Osika (2024)
Spain	Baraybar-Fernández et al. (2020)
Vatican	Sbardelotto (2016), Zavadilová (2022)

It must be noted that Table 2 shows only 22 studies included in the review. Two of these studies are situated in multiple contexts, and hence are mentioned twice in the table. One is Kołodziejska and Neumaier (2017), whose study is situated in Germany and Poland. The other is Sbardelotto (2016), whose study covers Brazil and the Vatican. The remaining 21 studies included in the review (not shown in the table) either did not report a geographic context or focused on online spaces that are not location-specific.

3.2.3 Methods in researching Catholic social media use

The approach to studying this social phenomenon is another research consideration examined in this review. Table 3 summarizes the methods applied in examining Catholic social media use.

Table 3: Methods used in studying Catholic social media use

	Method	Studies in the scoping review
Qualitative (mono-method)	Documentary method	Egere (2015), Campbell and Vitullo (2019), Hunt (2019), Graczyk (2020), Parish (2020), Turchyn and Zdoroveha (2020), Sánchez-Camacho (2022), Wyrostkiewicz et al. (2024)
	Case study	Mandes (2015), Kołodziejska and Neumaier (2017), Koszembar-Wiklik and Osika (2024)
	Content analysis	Guzek (2015), Banaszak (2022), Wyrostkiewicz et al. (2022)
	Critical reflection	Nabożny (2022)
	Ethnography (digital, fieldwork)	Giorgi (2019), Johnson (2020)
	Interview	Nduka and McGuire (2017), Bartolome (2022)
	Ideological analysis	Kratochvíl (2021)
	Survey	Brubaker and Haigh (2017)
	Textual analysis	Müllerová and Franc (2023)
Qualitative (multi-method)	Documentary method, Observational study	Mikuláš and Chalányová (2017)
	Documentary method, Survey	Przywara et al. (2021)
	Documentary method, Focus group discussion	Stępnik (2020)
	Documentary method, Historical and socio-qualitative perspective	Vitullo and Mastrofini (2023)
	Content analysis, Ethnography	Golan and Martini (2019)
	Content analysis, Discourse analysis	Cardoso and Barraco (2019)
	Content analysis, Case study	Leonowicz-Bukała et al. (2021)
	Survey, Interview	Isetti et al. (2021), Mutangala and Cantoni (2023)
	Survey, Descriptive and quasi-experimental research	Stanislaus (2022)
	Interview, Case study	Sbardelotto (2016)
	Magisterial method, Sub Ratione Dei method of interpretation, Critical analysis, Comparative synthetic method	Chmielewski (2020a, 2020b)
	Sentiment analysis, Network analysis	Gaweł et al. (2021)
Quantitative (mono-method)	Text analysis	Genovese (2019)
	Quantitative content analysis	Zavadilová (2022)
Qualitative and quantitative (mixed method)	Documentary method, Descriptive historical analysis, Interview, Quantitative method	Baraybar-Fernández et al. (2020)
	Literature review, Case study, Content analysis (quantitative, qualitative, and comparative)	Jupowicz-Ginalska et al. (2020)
	Comparative case study based on a multi-level mixed method design	Wiesenberg (2020)

Table 3 immediately shows the dominance of the qualitative method as a mode of analysis in studies exploring Catholic social media use, with both quantitative and mixed methods being comparatively less represented. Moreover, most of the studies largely collected secondary data in the form of documents, literature, and other archival sources.

3.2.4 Objectives and findings of Catholic social media studies

Finally, we synthesize the objectives and findings reported by the studies in this scoping review. We found that research in this area has generally explored four questions: (1) What are the social media practices of Catholics? (2) Why do Catholics use social media? (3) What are the effects of social media practices

of the Catholic Church? (4) How should social media be used by the Church? Dominant findings in relation to these questions of Catholic social media practice, purpose, product, and prescription are now discussed in turn.

3.2.4.1 Practice

Studies that delve into the Church's social media practices highlight leaders' attempts to create an ideal persona online. For instance, studies on Pope Francis, in particular, show that he uses social media to veer away from an "inaccessible leader" image (Cardoso & Barraco, 2019) and adapt to digital trends (Campbell & Vitullo, 2019). This can be observed in his participation in online political discourse, especially during international crises (Genovese, 2019). This use of social media, along with the increasing prevalence of image-mediated content, fosters a sense of closeness between viewers and the Pope or the Church because of their accessibility (Golan & Martini, 2019).

Literature also documents attempts by the Catholic Church to further strengthen its connection with the laity. This includes publishing more inspiring content, such as biblical narratives to engage younger audiences (Golan & Martini, 2019), and employing more inclusive language to foster the creation of online communities (Müllerová & Franc, 2023). However, despite these developments, evidence indicates that the Church remains anchored in traditional religious structures, utilizing religious texts to maintain authority (Kołodziejska & Neumaier, 2017) and aligning social media strategies with the Church's traditions and values (Baraybar-Fernández et al., 2020).

While many studies highlight the collaborative dynamic enabled by social media (Mutangala & Cantoni, 2023) and its ability to foster community beyond physical interactions (Bartolome, 2022), reports also reveal some conservative attitudes toward adopting these social media practices. For instance, research shows that some parishes primarily use social media as a tool for merely disseminating information rather than creating a more interactive community with the faithful (Guzek, 2015; Isetti et al., 2021) and using it as a supplement to more traditional means of communication (Baraybar-Fernández et al., 2020; Jupowicz-Ginalska et al., 2020; Leonowicz-Bukała et al., 2021). Smaller congregations are also reportedly lagging behind in adopting digital tools for church activities and evangelization (Przywara et al., 2021), opting to focus on traditionally mediated communication (Wiesenberg, 2020).

Additionally, scholarship has highlighted the growing participation of priests and other church authority figures in sharing evangelization content through social media and leveraging influence through online platforms. Wyrastkiewicz et al. (2022) shed light on the rise of Catholic influencers who try "to help people understand what it means to 'live the Gospel'" (p. 92). Overall, the reviewed studies suggest that the Church's social media practices mainly focus on creating a more accessible and inclusive space while remaining faithful to tradition.

3.2.4.2 Purpose

Studies that explore why Catholics use social media largely recognize online religious practices as a means to participate in new evangelization, which aims to increase the attraction of Christianity (Sánchez-Camacho, 2022; Turchyn & Zdoroveha, 2020). An example of this is the virtualization of pilgrimages or the phenomenon of e-pilgrimages, which enables Christians to enter traditionally valued religious sites without the physical restrictions of time and travel, albeit with critical implications of geopolitical and ideological nature (Kratochvíl, 2021).

Social media networks, like Facebook and YouTube, are acknowledged in literature as platforms that enable the Church to reach more people, especially the previously unreachable or unreached (Banaszak, 2022). This includes younger believers (Gralczyk, 2020; Nduka & McGuire, 2017) and those who experience differential detachment from community life because of sickness, limitations in mobility, physical distance (Johnson, 2020) or 'othered' identities. For example, Giorgi (2019) spotlighted the experience of members of the LGBT+ group, whose use of social media has become a way to re-embed themselves in the religious community.

In addition to broadening the reach of the Catholic evangelical project, studies suggest that online platforms are tapped to encourage and empower participation. Catholics are described as participating online through discourse consumption or by viewing religious content created and curated online (Nduka & McGuire, 2017). They are also seen as participating through discourse creation—an activity notably done by both clergy and lay members of the Church (Sbardelotto, 2016). By enabling participants to both consume and co-create content, social media is depicted as constructing a broader, more inclusive sense of community.

Overall, the overt purpose of Catholic-related use of social media is linked to evangelization and empowerment of active, as well as peripheral members of the faith community. These goals are facilitated by the participation affordances of this interactive technology, which are then seen as "a gift" (Johnson, 2020) or a stage to spotlight church leaders' charisma (Vitullo & Mastrofini, 2023). Yet, this recognition comes with a caveat: that virtual participation in the Catholic faith should not be treated as a substitute for in-person participation in the faith (Banaszak, 2022). As Wyrastkiewicz et al. (2024) strongly pointed out, "Ecclesiastical relationships are always interpersonal relationships: human-human and Divine-human. The Church—even a synodal one—is a community of persons, not an online discussion group."

3.2.4.3 Product

As reflected in the studies, one effect of the Catholic Church's use of social media is its increased influence on people's decision-making even on issues outside the Church's usual scope of influence (Gaweł et al., 2021). This may be attributed to the wider reach that social media has afforded the Church and its attempts to establish relevance and authority over secular discourses (Genovese, 2019). Consequences beyond the evangelical intent have also been discovered. For instance, the "celebritization" of Catholic leaders, especially the Pope, is recognized as a double-edged sword in that it allows for the promotion of religious values but also commodifies religiosity (Mikuláš & Chalányová, 2017). Aside from this, the rise in "Catholic influencers" or laypeople who try to evangelize others online has been noted. This rise has been presented to have both positive and negative effects. On the one hand, these influencers are portrayed as simple Gospel explainers rather than fame seekers (Wyrostkiewicz et al., 2024). On the other hand, there is concern that the Internet has distorted the communication strategies of the Catholic Church with the interpretation and sharing of religious texts—previously reserved for religious authority—now being made broadly accessible to public discourse creators (Mandes, 2015).

3.2.4.4 Prescription

Finally, examined research has also recognized the dangers of unbridled engagement with social media, providing impetus for prescriptions on how to practice Catholicism online in a "dignified and correct manner" (Banaszak, 2022). A popular recommendation is to incorporate critical media education in the seminary curriculum to ensure that future priests know how to 'properly' use social media to evangelize (Kasowski et al., 2022). An example found is a course on Communication Theology, convened as part of the formation of the "digital shepherds of the Church" (Stanislaus, 2022). Media educational interventions like this are seen as necessary in forming media-literate evangelizers, who are able to creatively, critically, and actively design social media strategies of the Catholic Church (Chmielewski, 2020a, 2020b; Sánchez-Camacho, 2022).

Other studies recommend a policy-based approach to moderate evangelical activities on social media. Nabożny (2022) recommended setting guidelines to help ensure that practitioners remain "true and complete within the confines of justice and charity." Others propose areas of focus for Catholic content creators, through both curricular and policy approaches. Egere (2015) argued for "packaging" religious messages in a modern global language fit for the digital media channel while carefully maintaining faithfulness to Church doctrine. Hunt (2019) contended that a better approach to digital discipleship, particularly among the younger members of the community, involves presenting digital content that resonates with the views of outsiders (i.e., non-believers or nominal Catholics) instead of veritably preaching to the choir.

4. CONCLUSION

This scoping review synthesized the social media platforms, contexts, research methods, and dominant questions and findings of studies exploring the intersection of social media and the Catholic faith. The synthesized evidence is based on a comprehensive manual full-text review of 43 articles, published within a 10-year period (from 2014 to 2024) indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, or EBSCOhost, and focused on the Catholic Church's use of social media within a research framework. As such, this review does not encompass studies published outside the scope of its selection criteria. To address this limitation, future reviews should expand their coverage to include additional databases and non-English publications, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of scholarly discussions on social media use in Catholic evangelization.

Several important patterns emerged from our review. Existing scholarship is concentrated primarily in European contexts, particularly Poland, Italy, the Vatican, and Germany. Studies have focused predominantly on Facebook and Twitter/X and have relied largely on qualitative approaches, including documentary methods and content analysis, often using secondary data to examine the practices, purposes, products, and prescriptions associated with the Catholic Church's engagement with social media. Addressing the contextual and methodological gaps identified in this review—such as the limited attention to emerging platforms like TikTok and the need for broader geographical and linguistic representation—would contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the evolving relationship between religion and digital media.

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DECLARATION

1. Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

2. Generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

The authors declare that no generative AI or AI-assisted technologies were used in the writing of this manuscript.

3. Data availability statement

The data that support the findings are made available in the supplementary tables of this manuscript.

4. Ethics statement

Not applicable. The study is based exclusively on published literature and does not include human participants.

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6. Contributor Role Taxonomy

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: PRISMA-ScR Checklist

Section	Item	Prisma-ScR checklist item	Reported on page #
Title			
Title	1	Identify the report as a scoping review.	1
Abstract			
Structured summary	2	Provide a structured summary that includes (as applicable): background, objectives, eligibility criteria, sources of evidence, charting methods, results, and conclusions that relate to the review questions and objectives.	1
Introduction			
Rationale	3	Describe the rationale for the review in the context of what is already known. Explain why the review questions/objectives lend themselves to a scoping review approach.	2
Objectives	4	Provide an explicit statement of the questions and objectives being addressed with reference to their key elements (e.g., population or participants, concepts, and context) or other relevant key elements used to conceptualize the review questions and/or objectives.	2
Methods			
Protocol and registration	5	Indicate whether a review protocol exists; state if and where it can be accessed (e.g., a Web address); and if available, provide registration information, including the registration number.	N/A
Eligibility criteria	6	Specify characteristics of the sources of evidence used as eligibility criteria (e.g., years considered, language, and publication status), and provide a rationale.	2–3
Information sources	7	Describe all information sources in the search (e.g., databases with dates of coverage and contact with authors to identify additional sources), as well as the date the most recent search was executed.	2–3
Search	8	Present the full electronic search strategy for at least 1 database, including any limits used, such that it could be repeated.	27
Selection of sources of evidence	9	State the process for selecting sources of evidence (i.e., screening and eligibility) included in the scoping review.	2–3
Data charting process	10	Describe the methods of charting data from the included sources of evidence (e.g., calibrated forms or forms that have been tested by the team before their use, and whether data charting was done independently or in duplicate) and any processes for obtaining and confirming data from investigators.	3
Data items	11	List and define all variables for which data were sought and any assumptions and simplifications made.	3
Critical appraisal of individual sources of evidence	12	If done, provide a rationale for conducting a critical appraisal of included sources of evidence; describe the methods used and how this information was used in any data synthesis (if appropriate).	N/A
Synthesis of results	13	Describe the methods of handling and summarizing the data that were charted.	3–9

Appendix A: PRISMA-ScR Checklist (continued)

Section	Item	Prisma-ScR checklist item	Reported on page #
Results			
Selection of sources of evidence	14	Give numbers of sources of evidence screened, assessed for eligibility, and included in the review, with reasons for exclusions at each stage, ideally using a flow diagram.	4
Characteristics of sources of evidence	15	For each source of evidence, present characteristics for which data were charted and provide the citations.	4
Critical appraisal within sources of evidence	16	If done, present data on critical appraisal of included sources of evidence (see item 12).	N/A
Results of individual sources of evidence	17	For each included source of evidence, present the relevant data that were charted that relate to the review questions and objectives.	16
Synthesis of results	18	Summarize and/or present the charting results as they relate to the review questions and objectives.	4–9
Discussion			
Summary of evidence	19	Summarize the main results (including an overview of concepts, themes, and types of evidence available), link to the review questions and objectives, and consider the relevance to key groups.	4–9
Limitations	20	Discuss the limitations of the scoping review process.	9
Conclusions	21	Provide a general interpretation of the results with respect to the review questions and objectives, as well as potential implications and/or next steps.	9
Funding			
Funding	22	Describe sources of funding for the included sources of evidence, as well as sources of funding for the scoping review. Describe the role of the funders of the scoping review.	9

From: Tricco, A. C., Lillie, E., Zarin, W., O'Brien, K. K., Colquhoun, H., Levac, D., Moher, D., Peters, M. D. J., Horsley, T., Weeks, L., Hempel, S., Akl, E. A., Chang, C., McGowan, J., Stewart, L., Hartling, L., Aldcroft, A., Wilson, M. G., Garritty, C., ... Straus, S. E. (2018). PRISMA extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR): Checklist and explanation. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 169(7), 467–473. <https://doi.org/10.7326/M18-0850>

Appendix B: Summary of studies included in the review

Author/s	Title	Year	Objective	Context	Framework	Method	Participants/ Data sources	Social media platform	Key findings
Banaszak	Evangelization through social media — opportunities and threats to the religious life of an individual and community	2022	To indicate the necessity of the presence of the Gospel in the digital world, including social media	N.S.	N/A	Content analysis	Secondary data from digital (https://datareportal.com) for the years 2015, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022	Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok	Evangelizing through the media must be taken seriously. Rules and norms should be defined to manage its correct and dignified use. Church community members should also be aware that it is not a substitute to in-person participation in religious life.
Baraybar-Fernández et al.	Religion and social media: Communication strategies by the Spanish Episcopal Conference	2020	To describe and analyze the organization's digital communication processes and tools, and to identify the organization's capacity to influence how followers live out their religious experience	Spain	N/A	Documentary method, Interview, Descriptive historical analysis, Quantitative analysis	FB (number of likes and publications' scope), Twitter (number of likes, responses, and retweets), YouTube (number of subscribers)	Twitter, Facebook, YouTube	Social media have become relevant but still not primary sources of information and interaction on religious issues in the Spanish case. Religious contents and experiences attempt to shape or adapt topics and genres according to popular desires and demands. Being a part of the cultural and social strategies led by the institution, they reinforce CEE's communication actions, not only by providing spiritual and moral guidance, but also by celebrating important dates that take place throughout the liturgical year, and producing a community of belonging.
Bartolome	Communication leading to communion: Social communications in the digital culture through the Catholic Church's engagement in social media during the COVID-19 pandemic	2022	To probe how select parishes engaged their parishioners online in light of the quarantine restrictions	Selected Parishes in the Diocese of Malolos, Bulacan, Philippines	Social communication (Eilers), Participatory culture (Jenkins), COBRA typology (Muntinga et al.)	Qualitative focus interviews, Quantitative content analysis	Social media managers of Facebook pages of three parishes (one priest, two lay persons), 12 parishioner-followers of selected parish Facebook pages, Facebook insights of the top 100 performing posts of three parishes	Facebook	The parishes took a proactive social media strategy by regularly posting content such as live streaming of Masses and Gospel reflections. This provided parishioners an avenue to continue engaging with their parish in lieu of physical presence in the Church and allowed the Church to utilize social media as a potent tool to disseminate and reinforce teaching, traditions, and authority.

Appendix B: Summary of studies included in the review (continued)

Author/s	Title	Year	Objective	Context	Framework	Method	Participants/ Data sources	Social media platform	Key findings
Brubaker and Haigh	The Religious Facebook Experience: Uses and Gratifications of Faith-Based Content	2017	To explore Christians' primary motivations for using Facebook for religious purposes and whether the frequency of engagement with religious information, the intensity of religious Facebook use, the degree of one's religiosity, and other demographic factors can predict the use of Facebook for religious purposes	N.S.	N/A	Survey	335 Christians on Facebook	Facebook	Facebook use for religious purposes is primarily motivated by the need to minister to others. Users do this by sharing faith-based beliefs and emotional guidance and support. The frequency and intensity of use, and degree of religiosity also predicted seeking religious information by recognizing the valuable resource these networks provide for religion.
Campbell and Vitullo	Popes in digital era: Reflecting on the rise of the digital papacy	2019	To investigate the claim that the current papal office has instituted a new approach to media in a digital age	N.S.	N/A	Documentary method	Documents produced by the Pontifical Council for Social Communications; Transcripts of sermons/speeches given by each of three popes on Word Communications Day	Twitter	While the current media work of Pope Francis can be described as a digital papacy, it is only because of the way it emulates and operates within a broader theological strategy grounded in six or more decades of theological teaching on Social Communication within the Church.
Cardoso and Barraco	Media and society: The private and public sphere in social networks – analysis of the communication of Pope Francis in Instagram	2019	To analyze the form of communication of Pope Francis, in the era of social networks, especially on Instagram	N.S.	N/A	Qualitative content analysis, Discourse analysis	Photos, slides, videos, comments, and hashtags	Instagram	Pope Francis is presented online as authentic, conservative, firm, affectionate, empathic, humble, and sensitive. His online publications use a persuasive discourse, presenting a spontaneous, humble, sincere, and close-to-all persona.

Appendix B: Summary of studies included in the review (continued)

Author/s	Title	Year	Objective	Context	Framework	Method	Participants/ Data sources	Social media platform	Key findings
Chmielewski	Media education and the new evangelization. Part One: media components and challenges	2020	To argue that pursuing the new evangelization in the Church demands the media education of the evangelizers and their cooperation with leaders in media education	N.S.	N/A	Magisterial method, Sub ratione Dei method of interpretation, Critical analysis, Comparative synthetic method	Church teachings and relevant literature in the field of media research and the new evangelization	General	Media education is an essential tool to empower the effective new evangelization. The outline of the selected components of the medial context of the new evangelization proves a need for introducing media literacy formation on a permanent basis in the various stages of forming the new evangelizers.
Chmielewski	Media education and the new evangelization. Part Two: Pastoral postulates and educational proposals	2020	To formulate pastoral postulates and educational proposals based on the issues concerning the formation of lay people and future clergy for evangelization work in the Church	Poland	N/A	Magisterial method, Sub ratione Dei method of interpretation, Critical analysis, Comparative synthetic method	Church teachings and relevant literature in the field of media research and the new evangelization	Facebook	The crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic strengthens the need for media education in the Church and at the same time spurs further research and the formulation of new pastoral and educational postulates. The goal is to form evangelizers who can understand the language of the media message, selectively choose sources of information, critically evaluate the media image of the world, and creatively and actively participate in the media sphere.
Egere	Social media and mission-based marketing approach for new evangelization in the digital age	2015	To examine how social media, as a channel, and marketing, as an approach, can inform some Church-based communication structures in evangelization	N.S.	N/A	Documentary method	Related studies and documents by the Catholic Church on new evangelization	Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Pinterest	The dynamic nature of human life and the environment makes it necessary that the Church customizes its specific products and services to the present trends, thought patterns and needs by “packaging” the message in a modern global language of the digital media while remaining faithful to its doctrine.
Gawel et al.	Effects of Pope Francis’ religious authority and media coverage on Twitter user’s attitudes toward COVID-19 vaccination	2021	To determine whether, and to what extent, statements issued by a religious authority can be used as an argument in the COVID-19 vaccination campaign	N.S.	N/A	Sentiment analysis, Network analysis	1803 tweets	Twitter	Pope Francis’ voice on the COVID-19 vaccination has registered worldwide. However, compared to the regularities known from political marketing, it could be assumed that his statements would not convince firm opponents of vaccination.

Appendix B: Summary of studies included in the review (continued)

Author/s	Title	Year	Objective	Context	Framework	Method	Participants/ Data sources	Social media platform	Key findings
Genovese	Politics @Pontifex: international crises and political patterns of papal tweets	2019	To explore the political tones of the social media communication of the Pope	N.S.	N/A	Quantitative content analysis	1142 tweets from the @Pontifex account	Twitter	The analysis indicates that the Pope is more likely to release political tweets during international crises, thus targeting issues that otherwise belong to other secular authorities. This allows the Pope to maintain the Vatican's long tradition of safeguarding peace and protecting vulnerable populations.
Giorgi	Mediatized Catholicism—Minority voices and religious authority in the digital sphere	2019	To explore how Christian LGBT+ digital voices discursively engage with the official religious authority of the Catholic Church	Italy	Typology of religious authority (Campbell)	Digital ethnography, Case study	402 discussions, 5344 comments	Facebook, Twitter	The community praised religious figures and alternative spaces that recognized LGBT+ Catholics. In terms of theology, love and faith held important positions in the online discussion. What emerged was the need for inclusion, recognition, and open discussion.
Golan and Martini	The Making of contemporary papacy: manufactured charisma and Instagram	2020	To examine how online religious authority is constructed, re-affirmed and implemented by religious organizations	N.S.	Construal theory	Qualitative content analysis	429 images	Instagram	Through online means, religious organizations construct a charismatic public image to attract attention towards institutional leaders. The strategic management of social, spatial, affective and hypothetical distance, simultaneously corresponds with uncovered facets: hierarchical positioning, geographical locales, haptic engagement, and leaders' visual focus.
Golan and Martini	Religious live-streaming: constructing the authentic in real time	2019	To explore how religious institutions act to shape users' worldviews and negotiate meanings via live-streaming-mediated communication	Holy land (Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Nazareth)	N/A	Ethnographic fieldwork, Case study of in-depth interviews	Observation of ceremonies in prominent holy sites in the Holy Land with significant video production activity, 25 in-depth interviews with Franciscan and Canção Nova members who serve as webmaster production staff, on topics relating to live-streaming productions	Facebook	By fostering an aura of holiness, religious institutions draw their authority from scriptural reference. The holiness of the central place reverberates outward and downward to other levels ultimately leading towards an audience of digitally connected believers.

Appendix B: Summary of studies included in the review (continued)

Author/s	Title	Year	Objective	Context	Framework	Method	Participants/ Data sources	Social media platform	Key findings
Gralczyk	Social media as an effective pastoral tool	2020	To examine whether religious activity aimed at young people via social media is indeed effective	N.S.	N/A	Literature synthesis, Critical analysis	Posts in selected social media platforms	Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram	Facebook as a popular tool among young network users can be an effective tool for evangelization. You Tube is an effective pastoral tool. Instagram, like other social media, collects user feedback. It is a place of interaction that can result in the expansion and strengthening of the Church's teaching.
Guzek	Discovering the digital authority: Twitter as reporting tool for papal activities	2015	To examine whether computer-mediated communication creates some special features of papal authority and to determine the Pope's Twitter use strategy	N.S.	Religious social-shaping of technology (Campbell), Grounded theory	Content analysis	135 tweets	Twitter	The Papal Twitter account is mainly addressed to Catholic believers; explores religious and social topics. Whilst social media has been proven to be an instrument of social change, the study shows that there is no strong alternative operator that could replace the papal authority.
Hunt	The digital way: Re-imagining digital discipleship in the age of social media	2019	To propose a re-imagination of how digital discipleship can press forward positive social change from within the borders of Catholic youth ministry	N.S.	Catholic church teachings on human dignity, Shared Christian praxis (Groome)	Documentary method, Critical analysis	Catholic church documents related to digital discipleship	Facebook	To do "right" in youth ministry, the field must refocus itself on (re)lighting the "digital Way," giving a path for youth and young adults to make the connection between what they are learning at "youth night" and what they are doing outside of them.
Isetti et al.	Pastoral care at the time of lockdown: An exploratory study of the Catholic Church in South Tyrol (Italy)	2021	To investigate the delivery of pastoral care, changes in the use of ICT within religious activities, and the vision of the future for the Church in a mediatized world	N.S.	N/A	Survey, Qualitative telephone interviews	164 participants (116 presidents of parish councils and 48 priests)	Facebook, YouTube	Respondents believe that: (1) pastoral activities have slowed down, even though contact with the faithful was kept up through the Internet; (2) the level of digitalization of the parishes has increased; however, the communication was mostly one-way and top-down. Finally, results show that (3) attitudes towards digital media are divergent: seen as having the potential to either strengthen or weaken the relationship between the Church and the faithful.

Appendix B: Summary of studies included in the review (continued)

Author/s	Title	Year	Objective	Context	Framework	Method	Participants/ Data sources	Social media platform	Key findings
Johnson	Online communion, Christian community, and receptive ecumenism: A holy week ethnography during COVID-19	2020	To explore the ways in which community is demonstrated and effected in online communion practices	Canada	N/A	Participant observation	12 worship services in Free Church, mainline Protestant, Anglican, and Roman Catholic settings	Facebook, YouTube	Online communion and community take many forms, opens new spaces for ecumenical encounter and dialogue, allows for more empathy, and reveals the incompleteness of every celebration of communion.
Jupowicz-Ginalska et al.	Polish nationwide Catholic opinion-forming weeklies on Facebook—A marketing perspective	2020	To analyze how the selected media use Facebook to create a media product, distribute, price and communicate its content	Poland	N/A	Literature review on marketing use of Facebook by traditional media, Case study, Content analysis (quantitative, qualitative, and comparative)	Related studies	Facebook	Facebook is used merely to supplement the printed weekly and the website. Facebook is treated as a marketing tool rather than a potential evangelizing one. Its systemic and functional features are not maximized.
Kasowski et al.	Media education in the formation of candidates for priesthood in the context of the new “Ratio Fundamentalis” and Polish Seminaries	2022	To propose a new programme of media education in the seminaries	Poland	N/A	Critical analysis	Related studies	General	Media education for individual clergymen and institutions could benefit from principles and rules of social media activity, such as those issued by the German Bishops’ Conference in 2012, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2014, and the Diocese of Warsaw-Praga in Poland in 2018.
Kołodziejska and Neumaier	Between individualisation and tradition: Transforming religious authority on German and Polish Christian online discussion forums	2017	To examine how religious authority is created and maintained on German and Polish Christian online discussion forums and to analyze how this process can be linked to general theories about the transformations in the field of contemporary religion	Germany, Poland	Religious transformation, individualism, and religious authority; Campbell’s (2007, 2010b) framework of the authority of structures, texts, hierarchy, and ideology	Joint analysis of two case studies	German Christian and Polish Catholic Internet forums	General	In a transnational comparison, the findings show similar tendencies of individualisation and emerging communities of choice, as well as a lasting significance of textual religious authorities, although different levels of authority are negotiated and emphasised to a varying extent. However, in both cases critique of the Church and religion usually emerges offline, and is then expressed online. While the forums do not have a subversive potential, they facilitate adopting a more independent, informed, and reflexive approach to religion.

Appendix B: Summary of studies included in the review (continued)

Author/s	Title	Year	Objective	Context	Framework	Method	Participants/ Data sources	Social media platform	Key findings
Koszembar-Wiklik and Osika	The use of social media in a religious communication strategy: A case study on the example of Poland	2024	To examine the online presence of Catholic dioceses and archdioceses in Poland and to determine which social media channels of communication are more dominant to the faithful	Poland	N/A	Case study	Social media profiles of Catholic dioceses in Poland	Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok	A relatively high percentage, 93%, have websites and 71% of dioceses maintain social media accounts. The most popular sites are Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram—in that order.
Kratochvíl	Geopolitics of Catholic pilgrimage: On the double materiality of (religious) politics in the virtual age	2021	To explore geopolitical aspects of Catholic pilgrimage in Europe	Europe	Turner & Turner, 2011	Ideological analysis	Four (4) Catholic Facebook groups	Facebook, YouTube	The increasing influence of the virtual is accompanied by a particular reassertion of the material aspects of pilgrimage. The first type is predominantly politically conservative, but also spatially static. The second type is politically progressive, but also spatially dynamic. The classic Turnerian conceptualization of a pilgrimage as a three-phase kinetic ritual thus falls apart. This shows how pilgrimage becomes a geopolitical reflection of the broader ideological contestation both within Christianity and beyond.
Leonowicz-Bukała et al.	Twitter in marketing practice of the religious media. An empirical study on Catholic weeklies in Poland	2021	To present the results of the study on the use of Twitter as a marketing tool by Polish nationwide Catholic opinion-forming weeklies concerning the extent of utilizing the platform by the magazines' editors to create and distribute the content of their media product, maintain and develop brand communication and self-promotion.	Poland	N/A	Case study, content analysis of the Twitter accounts of three Polish Catholic weeklies	Twitter accounts of three (3) magazines	Twitter	There are three different ways in how the editors of the magazines understand the role of the Twitter account of the title they represent—as an 'active communicator', 'active communicator and community supporter' or 'community supporter'. The conclusions show that the studied media fairly efficiently use the visual and distributional potential of the platform as well as some of its features, at the same time missing the chance to build a brand-loyal community. They also limit the role of Twitter to that of a supplement for the main communication channel, which is the printed weekly and its website.

Appendix B: Summary of studies included in the review (continued)

Author/s	Title	Year	Objective	Context	Framework	Method	Participants/ Data sources	Social media platform	Key findings
Mandes	The internet as a challenge for traditional Churches: The case of the Catholic Church in Poland	2015	To investigate the impact of Internet on church issues	Poland	Theory of religion by Luhmann	Case study	Grassroots movement of lay Catholics	YouTube, Twitter, Facebook	Forms of communications enabled by the Internet distort the communication strategies of the Catholic Church, developed on the basis of its experience with traditional media. Much like print, the Internet subverts communication based on sacred texts. What used to be the domain of academics and religious virtuosos who had access to the printing press has now become accessible for anyone.
Mikuláš and Chalányová	Celebritization of religious leaders in contemporary culture	2017	To examine whether religious leaders can be understood as celebrities and which discourses of religion-celebrity relationship circulate in our culture, and to determine the connections between the use of social sites by religious leaders and their celebrification	N.S.	Typology of celebrity	Related studies, Documentary method, Observational study	Public blogs and the Pope's account	Facebook, Twitter	While celebrification is inherent for typical areas of pop-culture it is a double-edged sword for religious personas. On the one hand, it helps them to promote the values of the religious stream; yet on the other, it also brings a tension between religious values and the commodifying logic of the culture industry that manufactures celebrities. However, the Church has to face this relatively new challenge, as it can be clearly demonstrated that personalization and celebrification of its representatives is a rational way to gain popularity and therefore it is effective for spreading religious ideas in contemporary culture.
Müllerová and Franc	What is changing in papal communication with the rise of social media?	2023	To clarify how the communication of the highest representative of the Roman Catholic Church with the community is changing with the onset of digital media and at the same time how this community is changing.	N.S.	N/A	Textual analysis	Popes' World Communications Day messages	Instagram	The approach of the popes as the ecclesiastical authorities to the community is changing, and the community itself is also changing. For instance, the word 'must,' which was widely used in messages until the rise of social networks, has completely disappeared from the texts in the last few years. Our study leads us to posit that not only is there a change in how the popes address the Catholic community, but there is also a paradigm shift in society and culture.

Appendix B: Summary of studies included in the review (continued)

Author/s	Title	Year	Objective	Context	Framework	Method	Participants/ Data sources	Social media platform	Key findings
Mutangala and Cantoni	Managing digital media during the lockdown: The case of sanctuaries in Lazio, Italy	2023	To analyze the management of communication during the pandemic period in some sanctuaries of the Lazio Region in Italy during the first general containment	Lazio, Italy	N/A	Survey, Interview	Rectors of sanctuaries of Lazio	YouTube, Facebook, Instagram	They organized activities using applications for online meeting with their collaborators as well as with Christians of their shrine and their contacts from beyond the area of the sanctuary. They used streaming applications to share different moments with the entire community. This gave those shrines the dimension of distanced but present church during a period of pandemic restrictions.
Nabožny	The Catholic Church and media: Promoting the Church's presence in social media	2022	To promote the Church's presence in Social Media	N.S.	N/A	Critical reflection	Official accounts that the Vatican Dicastery for Communications	Facebook, Twitter, Instagram	Going beyond only having a parish website where Mass can be uploaded and where the faithful can attend Mass online, parishes should include social media accounts in a broader communication plan to reach those who cannot be there in person.
Nduka and McGuire	The effective use of new media in disseminating evangelical messages among Catholic college students	2017	To explore the impact of new media on college students with regard to their Catholic faith	America	Uses and gratifications theory	Qualitative semi-structured interview	15 college students (active members of the Catholic Church)	YouTube, Facebook, Twitter	Catholic college students noted that their desire for religious content was obtained through new media.
Parish	The absence of presence and the presence of absence: Social distancing, sacraments, and the virtual religious community during the COVID-19 pandemic	2020	To analyze the different understandings of religion, church, and community in the period of a pandemic	N.S.	N/A	Literature review, Documentary method	Literature, Office documents	Twitter, Facebook, Instagram	The challenge that faces religion in its complex relationship with social media is the absence of physical presence in collective worship, juxtaposed with the psychological presence of that absence. However, if it is religion, and the religious community, that provides humanity with its narrative structure, then the interaction of faith and community with social media, social distancing, and sacramental theology during the COVID-19 pandemic will surely be an important part of that history.

Appendix B: Summary of studies included in the review (continued)

Author/s	Title	Year	Objective	Context	Framework	Method	Participants/ Data sources	Social media platform	Key findings
Przywara et al.	Online live-stream broadcasting of the holy mass during the COVID-19 pandemic in Poland as an example of the mediatization of religion: Empirical studies in the field of mass media studies and pastoral theology	2021	To discuss the scale and nature of the practice of transmitting Holy Mass by parishes of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland through online live-streaming in spring 2020	Poland	Mediatisation of religion	Literature review, Documentary method, Survey	Literature, Official Vatican documents, 1533 Roman Catholic parishes from 41 dioceses	YouTube, Facebook	There is a statistically significant correlation between online Mass broadcasting and the region of Poland. Further, the larger the parish is, the more encouraging bishops are, and the more a parish has a website, the more these broadcasts are performed. The conduct of online Mass broadcasting also depended on the type of parish.
Sánchez-Camacho	The approach of Pope Benedict XVI to media and digital culture in Catholic social thought	2022	To analyze the content in which the German Pope has addressed the media and digital culture.	N.S.	Theology of communication	Documentary review	Official documents of Pope Benedict XVI	General	Through different documents during his Pontificate, Pope Benedict XVI has addressed the media and digital culture, exploring Information Ethics on the background of the theology of communication. In his reflection, the German Pope focuses on the implications of the media and the new digital technology for the human being, the environment, society, and the Catholic Church.
Sbardelotto	"And the word became network": An analysis of the circulation of the "Catholic" in online communicational networks	2016	To analyze the organization of the mediatic circulation of the "Catholic" in socio-digital platforms as Facebook	Vatican & Brazil	Mediatisation of Religion	Case Study, Semi-structured interviews	Catholic Facebook page, Catholic Communication Professionals	Facebook	The study identifies a social process of reconstruction of Catholic meanings that emerges from a socially shared symbolic-religious know-how and power-of-doing, going beyond the action of the institutional Church or media corporations.
Stanislaus	Forming digital shepherds of the Church: evaluating participation and satisfaction of blended learning course on communication theology	2022	To evaluate the participation and satisfaction of a blended learning course on communication theology as a new teaching-learning modality for teaching communication theology	India	N/A	Survey	21 first-year Theology students	Facebook, YouTube	This research found that a high level of participation augmented satisfaction among the students during the implementation of the blended learning modality. The positive results revealed that future shepherds in the Catholic Church could effectively integrate information and communications technologies (ICTs) in their life and mission and serve digital citizens.

Appendix B: Summary of studies included in the review (continued)

Author/s	Title	Year	Objective	Context	Framework	Method	Participants/ Data sources	Social media platform	Key findings
Stepniak	Advertising in communication of the Catholic Church. The case of Poland	2020	To present studies on religious advertising, its definition and typology and reception by select social groups	Poland	Hjelm's Concept of the Visibility of Religion, David Herbert's Concept of Republicisation, Stig Hjarvard's process of mediatization of religion	Literature review, Focus-group discussion	Literature, four (4) selected groups	General	The members of the focus groups emphasize that such advertising refers to everyday life. Increasingly, internet-based commercials feature political actors or celebrities openly speaking about their faith and calling for participation in religious events. Without a shadow of doubt, such visible religion in the public sphere in Poland is well served by religious advertising.
Turchyn and Zdroveha	The new evangelization of the Catholic Church in the context of modern socio-cultural changes	2020	To identify the concept of new evangelization as a missionary activity of the Roman Catholic Church given the modern socio-cultural changes, Catholic Pontiffs' attitudes toward implementation of new evangelization as well as using of social media platforms within the church due to corresponding increase in the number of Internet and social network users around the world	N.S.	N/A	Literature and documentary review	Official papal and Vatican documents	YouTube, Twitter	New evangelization is a good approach within its missionary efforts aimed at proclaiming the Gospel especially given the current world trends, however in order to achieve main goals as predetermined by Supreme Pontiffs much more efforts are needed than the usual church activities. Further implementation of new evangelization of the church would be aimed at improving its efficiency, quality of presenting main values as well as ease of perception by target audience.

Appendix B: Summary of studies included in the review (continued)

Author/s	Title	Year	Objective	Context	Framework	Method	Participants/ Data sources	Social media platform	Key findings
Vitullo and Mastrofini	Catholic Church's communication in the era of Bergoglio: Balancing tradition and a new leadership	2023	To determine how and why Bergoglio end up becoming a religious "celebrity" and to understand and frame his media influence today	N.S.	N/A	Documentary review	Official papal and Vatican documents	General	Bergoglio's visibility relies on a long history of engagement and theological reflection on media technology by the Catholic Church, which oscillates between the awareness of the potential offered by new media and the cautious push toward innovation. During Bergoglio's era, this doctrinal approach encountered the resonance of a new charismatic leadership, which is sometimes more disruptive in its form rather than in its content.
Wiesenberg	Authentic church membership communication in times of religious transformation and mediatization	2020	To provide new empirical evidence on the institutionalisation of membership communication of German Christian denominations on national, regional and local church levels	Germany	New Institutionalism Theory	Online survey	Catholic and Protestant clergy in 15 large German cities	Twitter, Facebook	There is a clear shift from face-to-face to mediated communication at the upper church levels while smaller congregations concentrate on traditional modes of communication. The results indicate large differences between how dioceses deal with membership communication.
Wyrostkiewicz et al.	The Catholic Church in the digital age: theory - practice - perspectives	2024	To synthetically organize and present knowledge about how the Church entered the Digital Age and how it functions in the digital world, emphasizing the related challenges seen from a theological perspective	N.S.	N/A	Documentary review	Documents from the Magisterium Ecclesiae, writings of the Fathers of the Church and other serious theological treatises	Twitter	Church hierarchy and theologians have encouraged people not to be afraid of cyberspace. However, when we talk about the participation of ICT in creating an ecclesial community, it is not about creating a group on the Internet, but about the media supporting a real community.

Appendix B: Summary of studies included in the review (continued)

Author/s	Title	Year	Objective	Context	Framework	Method	Participants/ Data sources	Social media platform	Key findings
Wyrostkiewicz et al.	The Catholic influencer as a challenge for spiritual leadership in the age of social media	2022	To determine the characteristics of Catholic influencing and whether this is a challenge for traditional spiritual counselling direction	Poland	N/A	Content analysis	YouTube videos of Polish Catholic clergy influencers	YouTube	Catholic clergymen comprise the professional Catholic influencers in the Polish-language realm of YouTube. Most of them were micro and nano- influencers. It was concluded that the Catholic influencer is not only a leader and an influential person, but also an authority in matters of faith and morals and a formator who helps change lives. A Catholic influencer, therefore, is an appropriate person to guide spiritual direction. The challenge, then, is to prepare Catholics to act as influencers.
Zavadilová	Catholic media in the hands of Laics: Case study of Vatican communication chiefs' Twitter activities	2022	To analyze and interpret Ruffini's and Tornielli's style of work with Twitter accounts or the role of several topics in their production, the number of followers, comments, likes, or retweets	Vatican, Rome	N/A	Quantitative content analysis	Twitter accounts of Ruffini and Tornielli	Twitter, Facebook	New journalistic genres were detected in the social media space, vast popularity of Pope Francis, and success of his own Twitter activity or, contrarily, the omission and inconsistency when introducing uneasy themes to the public. There was also the surprising realization that Ruffini is more popular in the Twitter milieu than Tornielli.

Appendix C: EBSCOhost search strategy

Search string ID	Search string	Filters/Limits	Number of hits
S1	Social media and Catholic evangelization	Date range: August 2014–August 2024 Location: All	2,193
S2	Social media AND Catholic Evangelization	Source type: Academic Journal Expanders: Apply related words; Also search within the full text of the articles;	2,193
S3	Catholic church AND Social media	Apply equivalent subjects	34,251

Appendix D: Web of science search strategy

Search string ID	Search string	Filters/Limits	Number of hits
S1	Social media and catholic evangelization	Date range: August 2014–August 2024 Document Types: Article	12
S2	social media and catholic church	Search in: All databases Collections: All	169
S3	digital evangelization	Languages: English	14

Appendix E: Scopus search strategy

Search string ID	Search string	Filters/Limits	Number of hits
S1	Social AND media AND Catholic AND evangelization	Search within: Article title, Abstract, Keywords Date range: 2014–2024 Editions: All	105
S2	Social media AND Catholic church	Document type: Article Source type: Journals	3,154