

Article Review #2

Social Media and Missions

Student: Ana Oliveras

Student email: oliverasa@allianceu.edu

Program: Masters of Divinity

Alliance Theological Seminary

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Article Review

What is one concept that stood out to you in this article?

For this article review, I will mention an article that focuses on missionaries and how they are trying their best to maintain their identity during this era of social media. One concept that stood out to me in this article is learning that modern missionaries have something called a digital identity. Throughout this article, the author explains that since social media has become the norm in today's society, missionaries are using these tools to update their church organization and supporters on their mission work (Nehrbass,188). In turn, they created a digital identity that represents themselves as missionaries. Some of these missionaries have to post on their social media accounts on a daily basis to have a continuous engagement with their audience (Nehrbass,186). While other missionaries had to "diversify" their communication to spread their message to the widest potential audience (Nehrbass,186). In order to maintain this identity, missionaries have to be strategic in their postings. For example, a missionary would post an in-depth update of their family on their blog site; from there they would post a teaser link on Facebook, tweet the link on Twitter and post a "new blog post" on Instagram (Nehrbass,186). The main reason why missionaries are using social media more frequently is the free accessibility and they can share as much information as they want, as often as they want with no limitations (Nehrbass,187).

What implications does this concept have for Missions?

The multiple consequences of this concept for Missions are that social media can be used to reach many people and even link strangers together (Nehrbass,187). Missionaries' postings on social media are a form of storytelling on how they are being "agents of change" and their "followers" see what their mission work is like on a regular basis (Nehrbass,188). They can even post prayer requests for the people they are ministering to on their mission trips. Sometimes

individuals jot down prayers in the comments area, while the missionaries give updates on their accounts of the prayer requests (Nehrbass,192). But one of the negative consequences is the fact that missionaries have to be very cautious about what they post. There are some individuals in different countries who do not want their pictures to be posted on any social media account for safety reasons. While other people feel that they are being exploited and taken advantage of (Nehrbass,193).

What needs to change in your life as a result?

As a follower of Jesus Christ, I have learned that my testimony speaks volumes about who I am to every single person I meet. With that said, reading this article has helped me understand that I would need to be very careful about what I post on my social media accounts. Since social media is here to stay, it can be used as a tool to reach other people with the gospel. But like the author stated that we need to be wise about how we use it (Nehrbass,194). If a missionary is traveling to a place where the culture is different, it is better for that person to do research ahead of time to see if it is okay to post certain pictures (Nehrbass,194). This is something that I myself need to work on. Sometimes I do get excited about visiting a new place and start taking pictures without giving much thought to the people around me. Now I am extra careful about what I post by researching first what communicates better to my audience. If I am sharing my thoughts on a bible passage, I double-check and make sure that my thoughts are in alignment with the scriptures through prayer and see if it is in context. If I am sharing a news article on my social media account, I check its sources first and see if the news is true and not an option. These are some of the things that I have changed after reading this article.

References:

Nehrbass, K. (2018). Managing missionary identity in the digital age: How missionaries utilize digital media among multiple social groups. *Missiology*, 46(2), 183–195. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.nyack.edu/10.1177/0091829617748939>