

#The Funda Thembi Trend: Social Media Sensibilities Towards Pentecostal Online Humour

Sphehile Blessing Khanyile¹ 

¹ Department of Communication Sciences, Faculty of Humanities, Central University of Technology, South Africa.



ABSTRACT

Late in 2022, the #FundaThembi video trend went viral on social media. Video footage of a heated Pentecostal service won over the hearts of South African online users, agitating droves to reciprocate in humour. A Pentecostal preacher was captured on camera fervently reading scripture before his sermonic presentation. Thembi, a female congregant, obediently and energetically reads the biblical passage in isiZulu, captivatingly. The wholly dramatic, humorous, and theatrical were consummated in Thembi's passionate read. Online Pentecostal-Christian audiences rejected the hilarious interpretation of #FundaThembi, arguing that it worked to debase the sacrosanct Christian impulse. Conversely, secular online audiences perceived #FundaThembi as amusing and refreshing. The goal of the paper is to elucidate the relationship between online humour and Pentecostal subjectivities and how this can speak to more pertinent issues about the little-explored scholarly reconciliation between humour and religion enacted on digital platforms. The methodological path employs the potency of critical discourse analysis to examine online audiences' lexical choices for excavating positionalities ideologically loaded within the virtual platform of Facebook. By examining the #FundaThembi trend's online displays in detail, the discussion underscores the paper's main finding, which illustrates that Pentecostal online subjectivities have an ideological predilection for viewing church sprouted humour negatively: evil, unholy and morally atavistic. The study contributes to the impoverished body of scholarly literature reconciling humour and pentecostalism and attempts to critically comprehend Pentecostal sensibilities toward humour as enacted on social media platforms.

Correspondence

Sphehile Blessing

Khanyile

Email:

skhanyile@cut.ac.za

Publication History

Received:

21st October, 2024

Accepted:

3rd April, 2025.

Published:

25th April, 2025.

Keywords: #FundaThembi, Humour, Audiences, Pentecostalism, Social Media

INTRODUCTION

Late in the year, 2022, a hilarious social media trend enchanted a plurality of South African publics. By online trend, scholars generically allude to social media content that garners viral attention, popular sentiment, and undeniable novelty,¹ as was prototypical of the #FundaThembi online-social media trend. Nhlapo postulates that #FundaThembi, the viral trend qualified as “trendy” because it captivated multitudes, sparked voracious national engagement and was endearingly novel.² Content-wise, the

¹ Patricia Andrew, “Laughter Is the Best Medicine: The Construction of Old Age in Ageist Humor,” *Language and Humour in the Media*, (2012): 11–24.

² N. Nhlapo, “Imvuselelo Ezinkundleni Zokuxhumana Owesifazane Efunda Izwi,” 2022, <https://www.isolezwe.co.za/izindaba/imvuselelo-ezinkundleni-zokuxhumana-owesifazane-efunda-izwi-5b043b2c-229e-4775-9a81-7fb432464620>.

#FundaThembi trending video exhibited the fiery video footage of the Resurrection Power Crusade (RPC) conducting a soul-winning crusade in East London, South Africa. In the broad sectarian nomenclature, RPC *praxis* imitates Reinhard Bonnke's famous pan-Africanist evangelistic methodology embodied in the potent *Christ for All Nations Crusade*.³ Similarly, Nicholas Bhengu's lethal *Back to God Crusade* of the 1950s, which once permeated like wildfire in numerous regions of Southern Africa, reminiscently resonates.⁴ Currently, these Pentecostal and evangelistic establishments use social media and fast-paced technologies to transport religious discourses with speed and guile.⁵ In a technologically advanced contemporary culture, pastors, evangelists, gospel teachers, and missionaries have viciously employed print and electronic media as tools for sharing the gospel.⁶ Recent scholarship has ardently appraised the missiological, sociological and pragmatic fusing of religion and social media in the African context.⁷ and its manifold machinations and manifestations to advance the gospel message.

With #FundaThembi, the social media platforms that galvanised the trend were *YouTube*, *TikTok*, and *Facebook*. The content of the trending video footage showed an animated black Pentecostal pastor commissioning a young enigmatic black Pentecostal woman, Thembi, to read the Bible before rendering a sermon in an evangelistic crusade. With unmasked enthusiasm, Thembi obliges and reads with great fervour and vitality. Thembi's spirited read generated profound moments of physical-virtual emotive appeal. In a dramatic interchange, the black Pentecostal pastor repetitively beseeches Thembi to reread the assigned scriptural portion, shouting: Funda Thembi! This statement expressly translates as "Read Thembi" in the isiZulu language. Thembi passionately complied and reciprocated.⁸ The biblical passage recited in isiZulu was Psalm 34:5, *which reads, they looked to Him and were radiant, and their faces will never be ashamed*. The humorously dramatic exchange cultivated unprecedented mainstream media and viral hype on social media. Secularly, #FundaThembi was received warmly and accepted. Conversely, Pentecostal-Christian publics related to #FundaThembi very repressively and dismissively, arguing that finding humour in the viral incident was tantamount to spiritual debauchery. By Pentecostal-Christian publics, I implicate those who believe in doctrines of salvation, speaking in tongues, charismata and the potent relationship with the Holy Spirit, as generally informed and endorsed by a plethora of early Pentecostal scholarship.⁹

#FundaThembi was received with an unmetered rebuke from the Pentecostal-Christian public on social media. Other non-Christian online publics were alive to the fact that Thembi's impassioned read possessed with soul-stirring and emotive impulses tactfully evoked joy, upliftment, and cathartic comic relief against the traumatic post-Covid context. Zahoor duly underscores this effectively sacrosanct work of humour when she foregrounded social media memes as coping aids during the ravaging COVID-19 moment.¹⁰ During this precarious moment, humour was visibly proven as an emancipatory tool for combating emotive despair and beautifully forging possibilities of psychic repair. Before that study, Kalsoom & Kalsoom singularly showcased the rationale that communicative modalities have shifted because of modern technologies.¹¹ Social media, in all its varying forms, now facilitates the conditions of possibility for the creation and dissemination of relatable content. Be it content of humour with

³ Paul Gifford, "'Africa Shall Be Saved'. An Appraisal of Reinhard Bonnke's Pan-African Crusade," *Journal of Religion in Africa*, (1987): 63–92.

⁴ Anthony Balcomb, "Nicholas Bhengu—The Impact of an African Pentecostal on South African Society," *Exchange* 34, no. 4 (2005): 337–48.

⁵ Holi Ibrahim Holi Ali and Awad Alhassan, "Fighting Contract Cheating and Ghostwriting in Higher Education: Moving towards a Multidimensional Approach," *Cogent Education* 8, no. 1 (January 1, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2021.1885837>.

⁶ Peter White and Cornelius Niemandt, "Ghanaian Pentecostal Churches' Mission Approaches," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 24, no. 2 (2015): 241–69.

⁷ Sphehile Blessing Khanyile, "The Virtualization of the Church: New Media Representations of Neo-Pentecostal Performance (s) in South Africa" (2016); Gabriel Faimau and Camden Behrens, "Facebooking Religion and the Technologization of the Religious Discourse: A Case Study of a Botswana-Based Prophetic Church," *Online-Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet* 11 (2016); Mookgo S Kgatle, "Social Media and Religion: Missiological Perspective on the Link between Facebook and the Emergence of Prophetic Churches in Southern Africa," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 39, no. 1 (2018): 1–6.

⁸ Z. Komisa, "'Funda Thembi!' - SA in Awe as Mzansi Woman Passionately Reads the Bible," 2022, <https://www.kaya959.co.za/entertainment/watch-funda-tembi-sa-in-awe-as-mzansi-woman-passionately-reads-the-bible/>.

⁹ Henri Gooren, "An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity," *Ars Disputandi* 4, no. 1 (2004): 206–9; William K Kay, *Pentecostalism: A Very Short Introduction*, vol. 255 (Oxford University Press, USA, 2011).

¹⁰ Asma Zahoor, "Linguistic Humor in Memes to Mitigate Post COVID-19 Severity," *Linguistics and Literature Review (LLR)*, 2020.

¹¹ Nazia Kalsoom and Sadia Kalsoom, "Semiotic Representation of Gender in Google Emojis," *Linguistics and Literature Review* 5, no. 2 (2019): 127–37.

multilayered themes of power and social practice, as evidenced in the #FundaThembi craze. That said, social media popularised #FundaThembi in the public sphere discourse, pulling enormous traction from multitudes of people.¹² The moment was a strategic watershed as it intricately demonstrated the interplay between humour, religion, and social media. This collaborative horizon manifests within an intellectual context that has never seriously perceived religion, humour and social media as mutually connectable.

This scholastic endeavour was qualitative in orientation. Methodologically, critical discourse analysis (CDA) was deemed expedient, as the work attempted to unravel how humour, relating to church practices, was perceived through the ideological and optical lens of Pentecostal-Christian publics and what implications Pentecostal-Christian readings of humour may render. Delving closely at lexical choices and employing CDA to denaturalise the sociolinguistics of text and talk, the paper showcases how the emergent and radically different judgments are inspired by Pentecostal worldviews, which openly render humour in ecclesiastical contexts as dismissably taboo and traditionally non-commonplace. The paper satisfies as an important contribution to the under-researched focus which intersects Pentecostal studies, social media and critical humour studies in the global south and/or countries pitched at the underside of development.¹³ Humour theory couches the theoretical underpinning of the paper to best analyse the select social media posts responding to the #FundaThembi social media craze. A summary of some relevant humour theory will be given before this study moves on to the empirical responses of Pentecostal audiences to the #FundaThembi trend.

Theorising Humour: Secularly and Religiously

Developmental theory ardently suggests that laughing is among the earliest social vocalizations that human infants make, second to crying.¹⁴ Therefore, humour's study affords, in fact, deserves seriousness and respect. Ndlovu notes that humour studies in South Africa have overarchingly entertained the stand-up comedy formality.¹⁵ These studies have evaluated the prevailing challenge and have spoken about the contemporarily prevailing discourses, narratives, standards and societal power regimes.¹⁶ Also, South African scholarship relating to humour has generously studied humour as generated on film and cinematic platforms.¹⁷ Recent studies have delved closely at how satire and humour work in the South African advertising terrain.¹⁸ However, two observations can be gleaned from the current scholastic status quo. Firstly, minimal studies have entertained the Christian tradition in South Africa and its most popular sect Pentecostalism. Secondly, minimal studies, if any, have sought to address humour that manifests on the social media terrain. Moreover, academic work married with humour, religion and social media in South Africa is limited and sketchy. Therefore, the noble charge of satisfying that near-empty repository is justifiable.

Interestingly, this scholastic limitation thrives in a context where humour and religion are actualised and mediated vigorously on social media.¹⁹ The advent of social media has allowed religious

¹² Komisa, "'Funda Thembi!'- SA in Awe as Mzansi Woman Passionately Reads the Bible."

¹³ Rijk Van Dijk, "Witchcraft and Scepticism by Proxy: Pentecostalism and Laughter in Urban Malawi," in *Magical Interpretations, Material Realities* (Routledge, 2003), 97–117; Hans Geybels, "The Redemptive Power of Humour in Religion," *Humour and Religion: Challenges and Ambiguities*. London: Bloomsbury Academic (2011): 11–21; Ebenezer Obadare, "The Uses of Ridicule: Humour, 'Infrapolitics' and Civil Society in Nigeria," *African Affairs* 108, no. 431 (2009): 241–61; I. Bunting, "The Higher Education Landscape Under Apartheid," in *Transformation in Higher Education*, ed. et al. Cloete N (Norwell, MA: Springer, 2006).

¹⁴ Paul McGhee, "The Role of Laughter and Humor in Growing up Female," in *Becoming Female: Perspectives on Development* (Springer, 1979), 183–206. 3

¹⁵ Nonhlanhla Ndlovu, "'A Nation That Laughs Together, Stays Together': Deconstructing Humour on Twitter During the National Lockdown in South Africa," *Digital Humour in the COVID-19 Pandemic: Perspectives from the Global South*, 2021, 191–212.

¹⁶ Grace A. Musila, "Laughing at the Rainbow's Cracks? Blackness, Whiteness and the Ambivalences of South African Stand-up Comedy," *Civic Agency in Africa: Arts of Resistance in the 21st Century*, 2014, 147–66; Zoe Parker, "Standing up for the Nation: An Investigation of Stand-up Comedy in South Africa Post-1994 with Specific Reference to Women's Power and the Body," *South African Theatre Journal* 16, no. 1 (2002): 8–29.

¹⁷ Giulia Bortolussi and Andrés Fernando Muro, "Advances in Understanding Disease Mechanisms and Potential Treatments for Crigler–Najjar Syndrome," *Expert Opinion on Orphan Drugs* 6, no. 7 (July 3, 2018): 425–39, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21678707.2018.1495558>.

¹⁸ Lungile Augustine Tshuma, Mbongeni Jonny Msimanga, and Bhekizulu Bethaphi Tshuma, "Laughing through the Stomach: Satire, Humour and Advertising in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 59, no. 3 (2024): 788–806.

¹⁹ Eric Weitz, "Humour and Social Media," *The European Journal of Humour Research* 4, no. 4 (2016): 1–4; Hugh Mangeya, "Mediation of the Black African Identity through Social Media Humour," *The Dyke* 16, no. 1 (2022): 1–23; Phillip Mpofu, "The Nollywood Cultural Effect in Zimbabwe: Manifestation of Nigerian Lingo in Everyday Discourses," *Journal of Multicultural Discourses* 16, no. 3 (July 3, 2021): 245–57, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17447143.2021.1941064>; Kudzaishe Peter Vanyoro and Kudakwashe Paul Vanyoro, "Exploring

practices to interact concertedly with humour. This condition of possibility sustains in a context wherein humour has been societally self-evident and influential, playing a crucial role in underscoring foolishness and encouraging critical thinking and heightened social engagement.²⁰ Most particularly, ridicule and humour have been instrumental in forging technologies of coping, hoping and social-transformative advocacy.²¹ Therefore, it would not be fallacious to suggest that laughing/humour is charged with socio-politically progressive potentialities and incisive modalities in remedying a pained soul. To announce, Mindess sees humour as a frame of mind and a manner of perceiving and experiencing life.²² It is a unique perspective with a kind of attitude that has strong healing properties that heal the distresses of the soul.

Sarah Christopher, to add, asserts that humour in moments of pain aids healing.²³ Others have suggested that humour works as a coping technique in times of stress to distress.²⁴ Indubitably, South Africa is one such vicinity imbued in conditions of stress in need of psychic reprieve. Further to that, humour, in the critical sense, assists in the laborious project of speaking truth to power.²⁵ Scholars have shared this understanding of humour as resistive and charged with revolutionary propensities.²⁶ Humour performs as subverted communication, often facilitating a bridge and/or a horizon of interface between the powerful and the powerless.²⁷ This “bridging” possibility of humour allows the latter to confront the former without trepidation. Therefore, humour is a performative tool that repositions repressive power and abuse towards the realm of precarity and isolation.

Conversely, humour can insidiously entrench power and calibrate oppressive power regimes when employed by superiors to consolidate and superimpose their dominance. Specifically in the African context, humour is multi-textured and assumes multiple forms, through stand-up comedy, mass media and interpersonal interactions. Obadare situates African humour (or humour that manifests in Africa) as commonly instrumental for getting even with elites and robustly speaking back at draconian political-social postures.²⁸ Transcribing humour as an emancipatory political tool can never be thought of as degenerate. The later critical analysis shall elucidate this fact, humour is a double-edged sword, dually destructive and constructive.²⁹ This understanding animatedly assumes that humour can heal and hurt, and its performances attract a complex duplex of sensibilities. This apparent complexity has been unwritten as the so-called paradox of humour, implying that humour can simultaneously unite and disunite.³⁰ This truth was obtained in the representational repertoire of the #FundaThembi online trend as human agents responded to its glaring humour. Therefore, humour is always effectively received yet poignantly and “differently” received.

Humour, on the political front, is often poised as agentic in fostering non-violent resistance.³¹ To best understand humour requires lateral thinking, but in the main, humour is evoked in subversive scenarios. Things against the norm and/or transgressive, evoke humour.³² Three critical theories are often underscored when studying humour, namely: *superiority*, *relief*, and *incongruity*. Western understandings of humour have significantly appraised the superiority theory.³³ *Superiority Theory* views

the Use of Humour, Vulgarly and Allegory in Social Media Discourses: The Case of Oscar Pistorius and Reeva Steenkamp,” *Africanus: Journal of Development Studies* 49, no. 1 (2019): 22.

²⁰ P. Senge et al., *The Fifth Discipline Field-Book: Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organisation* (New York: Doubleday, 1994).

²¹ Mpofo, “The Nollywood Cultural Effect in Zimbabwe: Manifestation of Nigerian Lingo in Everyday Discourses”; Caty Borum and Caty Borum Chattoo, *The Revolution Will Be Hilarious: Comedy for Social Change and Civic Power*, vol. 29 (NYU Press, 2023).

²² Harvey Mindess, *Laughter and Liberation* (Routledge, 2017), 21.

²³ Sarah Christopher, “An Introduction to Black Humour as a Coping Mechanism for Student Paramedics,” *Journal of Paramedic Practice* 7, no. 12 (2015): 610–17.

²⁴ Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (WW Norton & Company, 1960).

²⁵ R. van den Broeck, “The Concept of Equivalence in Translation Theory: Some Critical Reflections,” in *Literature and Translation*, ed. J. S. Holmes, J. Lambert, and R. van den Broeck (Leuven: Academic, 1978), 29–47.

²⁶ Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, vol. 41 (Univ of California Press, 2001); Obadare, “The Uses of Ridicule: Humour, ‘Infrapolitics’ and Civil Society in Nigeria.”

²⁷ Janet Holmes and Meredith Marra, “Over the Edge? Subversive Humor between Colleagues and Friends,” 2002.

²⁸ Obadare, “The Uses of Ridicule: Humour, ‘Infrapolitics’ and Civil Society in Nigeria.”

²⁹ Majken Jul Sorensen, “Humor as a Serious Strategy of Nonviolent Resistance to Oppression,” *Peace & Change* 33, no.2(2008):167–90.

³⁰ Sorensen, “Humor as a Serious Strategy of Nonviolent Resistance to Oppression.”

³¹ Sorensen, “Humor as a Serious Strategy of Nonviolent Resistance to Oppression.”

³² Adila Hassim, Mark Heywood, and Jonathan Berger, “Health and Democracy: A Guide to Human Rights, Health Law and Policy in Post-Apartheid South Africa,” 2014.

³³ Sheila Lintott, “Superiority in Humor Theory,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 74, no. 4 (2016): 347–58.

laughter as an indicator of superiority.³⁴ Bardon purports that humour generally thrives on ridicule and pitting others at the underside and oneself as superior.³⁵ Therefore, humour in this instance can be perceived as an intentional performance of power over others. Morreal differs slightly, arguing that the superiority notion that underpins the *Superiority Theory* does not always translate as aspired superiority over others, but can also perform as self-deprecating.³⁶

Furthermore, humour can also allude to our past selves, resulting in a type of self-deprecating humour. Other scholars underrate the fact that humour is universal, but undeniably contextual, since humour relies on time and space to resonate.³⁷ Beyond the entrenchment of the superiority of others, humour is instrumental in relieving anxieties and tension;³⁸ therefore, humour also works for purposes of *relief*. Humour can also assume an educational spin, utilised to arouse educational/scholarly potency.³⁹ In the Marxian scope, if you like, humour can lessen classist orientations, fostering a sense of community and commonality.⁴⁰ This work of humour was endearing during the COVID-19 pandemic when many made light of a very serious situation.⁴¹ Therefore, humour's instrumentality is multifaceted and diverse.

Incongruity is the final theoretical postulation often employed to understand the work of humour. The idea is that humour often emerges during incongruous situations where the equilibrium of normality or normative practice is disrupted. Dark humour, a type of incongruous humour, originates from disruptive realities such as stress, trauma, and life-threatening conditions.⁴² This type of humour latches to the deep-seated impulse of the people to rebel against society. This type of humour is classified as "Dark Humour" because it is deemed improper, unacceptable, and out of place.⁴³ Dark humour entails finding humour in the taboo and the forbidden and entails an attitude of rebellion. Dark humour is fundamentally, *incongruous* because of its improperness and unacceptability. Essentially, *Incongruity* constitutes humorous play with the forbidden.⁴⁴ Pentecostals-Christians rebuke this play with forbidden and understand laughing about, or at, spiritual topics/subjects as prohibited, as the close reading of #FundaThembi will demonstrate. For this reason, this type of humour falls into the category of dark humour. In the end, humour that crosses over into the incongruous domain is seen to be inappropriate; the religious sphere has long been regarded as this incongruous area. The intricacy of humour and the religious experience will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

Outlining the scholarly nexus between humour and the religious/Christian experience

*"Readers of the Gospels do not know how much humour there is in Jesus Christ's teaching, but they can be sure that there is far more than is normally recognized as soon as they are liberated from the assumption that Jesus Christ never joked. This relative freedom from presuppositions that Jesus Christ was always deadly serious might lead them to see that He laughed, and He expected others to laugh, and He was not always engaged in pious talks."*⁴⁵

This quotation is appended to selectively magnify the deep-seated and pious assumption of the Christian-religious impulse towards humour. This apparent piety, wittingly or unwittingly, cognitively dissonates, anything of humour, laughing and joking as irreconcilable with Christianity or more

³⁴ John Morreall, *Comic Relief: A Comprehensive Philosophy of Humor* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

³⁵ Adrian Bardon, "The Philosophy of Humor," *Comedy: A Geographic and Historical Guide* 2 (2005): 462–76.

³⁶ Morreall, *Comic Relief: A Comprehensive Philosophy of Humor*.

³⁷ Andrew, "Laughter Is the Best Medicine: The Construction of Old Age in Ageist Humor."

³⁸ Donald M Williams and Wessel Bentley, "The Need for Continued Decolonisation and Africanisation of Ordination in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa," *Theologia Viatorum* 44, no. 1 (2020): 1–10.

³⁹ Rima Aboudan, "Laugh and Learn: Humor and Learning a Second Language," *International Journal of Arts and Sciences* 3, no. 3 (2009): 90–99.

⁴⁰ Sari Alatalo and Anne Poutiainen, "Use of Humor in Multicultural Classroom," 2016.

⁴¹ Herman Wasserman, "Laughter in the Time of a Pandemic: Why South Africans Are Joking about Coronavirus," *The Conversation* 15 (2020).

⁴² Meike Lettau, Christopher Yusufu Mtaku, and Eric Debrah Otchere, *Performing Sustainability in West Africa: Cultural Practices and Policies for Sustainable Development, African Identities* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015).

⁴³ Viswanath Venkatesh and Fred D. Davis, "A Theoretical Extension of the Technology Acceptance Model: Four Longitudinal Field Studies," *Management Science* 46, no. 2 (February 2000): 186–204, <https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.46.2.186.11926>.

⁴⁴ A.R. Shade, *Licence to Laugh: Humour in the Classroom* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing, 1996).

⁴⁵ Riyadh Tariq Kadhim Al-Ameedi and Rufaidah Kamal Abdulmajeed, "Persuasion in Jesus Christ's Humour: A Linguistic Analysis," *Open Journal of Modern Linguistics* 6, no. 02 (2016): 72.

generally, religion and the spiritual. Though humour is acknowledged or acknowledgeable in practically every religion, it has surprisingly not been extensively studied in academic settings and often embodies negative, unserious connotations and associations. Some academics contend that religion and joking are two distinct human experiences, with one being an altered/heightened state of awareness and the other an emotional reaction. Gardner's study associated humour with the unserious, while religion is associated with profound seriousness.⁴⁶ Consequently, humour is positioned, through ideological squaring as being "mutually exclusive" to the normative religious purpose(s). On the other hand, scholarly concerns also arise regarding humour's transposition into religious practice and its applicability in various situations.

Morreall aptly notes that humour has a critical spirit essential towards the mission and function of religion.⁴⁷ When humour is viewed with a critical spirit or attitude, it can be imagined as inherently good, serving as a precursory foundation and conduit for significant qualities like forgiveness, humility, openness, and most cherishingly critical thinking. Humour provides opportunities for multiple readings, meaning-consolidation, contrasting perspectives, and innovative ways of comprehending our shortcomings as well as those of others. Therefore, according to earlier theories, humour does not always emerge from *incongruity*; rather, humour can also have religious, spiritual, or moralistic-virtuous implications. This point of view is furthered by McFadden who argues that comedy/humour reminds us that we are capable of overcoming adversity and helps us make sense of disparate life experiences. She strongly acknowledges humour's role as a faith expression.⁴⁸ Put another way, faith is the ultimate order that keeps us going through our darkest situations and provides the groundwork for humour.

Berger takes into consideration humour as a vehicle of transcendence and meaning-making in times of pain and/or emotive disequilibrium.⁴⁹ Expanding on the concept of transcendence, Cilliers argues that while humour often makes us laugh, it can also make us cry.⁵⁰ Having good humour is more than just being clever or humorous. Humour conveys genuine humanity and is often charged with deeper meaning. Controversially, Jónsson posits that Jesus employed humour in his storytelling and parables because humour provides a fresh unconventional outlook on life.⁵¹ Bible stories, as observed by Cilliers, are serious subjects that can be understood humorously.⁵² Humour, in the most serious sense, can be employed as a presentation to attract, and captivate the senses. Adrian Hale, studying Mormonism and humour as a homiletical tool observes how clerics use humour as the central building blocks of their sermonic development.⁵³ Pentecostals in Africa also use humour in their sermonic work, although moderately, as the church is cognitively perceived as a domain of high piety. The South African Black Pentecostal tradition has seen prominent preachers who have successfully employed humour as their homiletical edifice. Dr SD Gumbi, Evangelist MS Mpungose, Evangelist NJ Sithole, Evangelist BP Msiza, Dr Agrippa Kathide, Fisakuphi Madlala, and Bishop Dununu are some prototypes in that respect within the Pentecostal tradition.

McIntyre argues that the interconnections between humour and religion are self-evident but dangerously discouraged.⁵⁴ However, a more critical assessment does not view humour and religion as mutually exclusive but mutually intersecting. Rather than seeing humour as incompatible with practising their religion correctly, humour can be seen as a sign of a more expansive, happy, and cheerful outlook that may even assist spiritual upliftment. This paper's following section will critically examine how social media agential players responded to the #FundaThembi Trend, a moment of faith that was widely ridiculed on social media. The discussions arising from the #FundaThembi Trend will now be engaged and discussed in the last phase. In reaction to the #FundaThembi trend, the Pentecostal-Christian public on social media exhibited four prevalent thematic. First, the viral moment was perceived as a chamber

⁴⁶ Richard A Gardner, "Humour and Religion: New Directions?," *The Palgrave Handbook of Humour, History, and Methodology*, 2020, 151–72.

⁴⁷ Morreall, *Comic Relief: A Comprehensive Philosophy of Humor*.

⁴⁸ Susan McFadden, "The Paradoxes of Humor and the Burdens of Despair," *Journal of Religious Gerontology* 16, no. 3–4 (2004): 13–27.

⁴⁹ Peter L Berger, *A Rumor of Angels: Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural* (Open Road Media, 2011).

⁵⁰ J H Cilliers, "From the Ridiculous to the Sublime: Practical Theological Perspectives on the Healing Power of Humor," *Practical Theology in South Africa= Praktiese Teologie in Suid-Afrika* 24, no. 2 (2009): 18–37.

⁵¹ Jakob Jónsson, *Humour and Irony in the New Testament: Illuminated by Parallels in Talmud and Midrash*, vol. 28 (Brill Archive, 1985).

⁵² Cilliers, "From the Ridiculous to the Sublime: Practical Theological Perspectives on the Healing Power of Humor."

⁵³ Adrian Hale, "Joking, Prophetically: The Use of Humour in Mormon Leaders' Sermons," *Comedy Studies* 15, no. 1 (2024): 77–93.

⁵⁴ Elisha McIntyre, "God's Comics: Religious Humour in Contemporary Evangelical Christian and Mormon Comedy," 2013.

moment, sacred, holy, sacrosanct never warranting comedy. Second, some online participants viewed the nationwide trending of #FundaThembi and its humour-making as opportunities to reach evangelistically unreached audiences. Third, the common idea that God is not laughed at motivated most of the Pentecostal-Christian audiences. The fourth and final overarching theme took the form of an evaluation in which many internet audiences extolled Thembi's charm, endowment, and anointing, protecting her humanity and dignity in potentially violating online joke-making. The paper now moves to expound on the present empirical findings and the emergent themes.

The Chamber Moment

Pentecostal online audiences generally characterised #FundaThembi as a “chamber moment” connoting its sacrosanct nomenclature. Thembi’s pastor, the revival leader, led the online front in purporting this critical conceptualisation. Thembi’s pastor rebuked people who received the #FundaThembi trend in amusement. For him, #FundaThembi was the embodiment of deep spiritual immersion and God’s manifest presence, which some scholars have often described as a transformative necessity in the Pentecostalist church enterprise.⁵⁵ Making humour from the online trend #FundaThembi was deemed unwarranted from the perspective of Thembi’s pastor because it represented a serious time, a moment characteristic of the move of God. This animates a strong spiritual thrust and a sacred *chamber moment*. In this way, humour is perceived frivolously, while religion is an object of decorum. Seminal sociologist, Emile Durkheim, distinguishes between things *profane* and things *sacred* (holy and guarded) in his book, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Most of religious life, if not all, is characterized by Durkheim's duality of the holy and profane,⁵⁶ which also shapes our understanding of the humour-religious matrix. Based on the reasoning offered above, this trend (#FundaThembi) should have been hidden under a rug and kept out of the public eye. This positionality is obtained in the lexical selection configured as the “chamber moment.” The online Pentecostal public was persuaded that the #FundaThembi trending virtual content worked to desacralize ecclesiastical ritual moments.

The argument’s thrust highlights that spiritual matters are fundamentally supernatural. To announce this position, Thembi’s pastor berates that spiritual moments have been debased into “laughingstocks” by believers. As a result, a tremendous amount of guilt and blame is placed on the shoulders of purported Christians, who he claims act as conscious and covert conduits for the ridiculing of the Christian faith. Thembi’s pastor continues to explain that some Christians, like those participating in the #FundaThembi movement, find humour amusing because they see “drama,” “gimmicks,” and “demon-possessed people” without fully appreciating the spiritual meaning/significance of the situation. His word choices sought to emphasize the idea that spiritual issues are frequently confined to the realm of the theatrical and cinematic; a posture the pastor rejects. Other purported Pentecostal-Christian Facebook commenters who shared their thoughts on #FundaThembi also supported the chamber moment reading of the trendy episode. They speculated that the #FundaThembi movement was the result of purported Christians conspiring with atheists to intentionally disparage the holy gospel. Others gave passionately outraged responses. A certain individual said that she was angry, but that God was angrier with this generation for finding humour in the #FundaThembi online trend, which she saw as a spiritual and divine occurrence that should never be made a mockery.

By delegitimizing one’s rage and then attributing it to a higher spiritual possibility, truth, or reason, the depersonalization of linguistic technology attempted to establish a sort of spiritual gravitas that relegated #FundaThembi to a diabolical. In general, people who found humour in #FundaThembi met harsh online discrimination, scorn and contempt. This is demonstrated by the way some online actors specifically identified those who laughed as belonging to the radical out-group by labelling them as non-Christian/unchristian/not Born again. This was a manifestation of online othering. Online othering, according to Harmer and Lumsden, refers to the wide range of abusive behaviours and power struggles that take place in and through online spaces, including racism, islamophobia, sexism, misogyny,

⁵⁵ Gerrit Immink, “The Sense of God’s Presence in Prayer,” *HTS: Theological Studies* 72, no. 4 (2016): 1–7; Mookgo S Kgatle, “The Unusual Practices within Some Neo-Pentecostal Churches in South Africa: Reflections and Recommendations,” *HTS: Theological Studies* 73, no. 3 (2017): 1–8.

⁵⁶ Emile Durkheim, “The Elementary Forms of Religious Life,” in *Social Theory Re-Wired* (Routledge, 2016), 52–67.

homophobia, and discriminating against ableism.⁵⁷ These behaviours are frequently met with resistance and opposition from a variety of social actors and groups. A concept known as “online othering” can be used to analyse the different behaviours, conversations, and discourses that seek to redraw the lines inside, between, and around virtual places, establishing the parameters of who is allowed to talk and who is required to remain mute. Evidently, laughing at Christian matters located one in the realm of the precarious; however, pragmatically optimistic readings were also obtained.

Innovative Evangelism & Holy Spirit Revival

One of the distinctive characteristics of modern Pentecostalism is the use of modern media technology as part of their religious ritual practice. Pentecostals use media technologies as a tool for congregational expansion and appeal, as well as for sharing the gospel with the public. To make popular culture safe for consumption by born-again Christians, a conscious effort is being made to alter and Christianise it. Additionally, it reflects their aspirations for worldwide relevance.⁵⁸ In a similar spirit, many Pentecostal Christians believed that #FundaThembi encouraged creative evangelistic practices. Similarly, in their discussion, of the Pentecostal experience in Nigeria, Nsereka and Nwanze point out that religious institutions see the internet as a tool that may help spread the gospel.⁵⁹ Religious organizations are required to publicly share the teachings of their faith in hopes of converting other publics, regardless of their structure or form. They regret that Christian organizations have dismissed the internet as “unrighteous” and supposedly unsuitable for spreading the gospel.

As a result of their intense religious zeal, fear, or disinformation, they have effectively thrown out the good with the bad. #FundaThembi was seen by online interlocutors as promoting evangelism; in this case, they were not discarding the good with the bad. These interlocutors perceived the movement as full of evangelical potentialities and possibilities rather than as a mere display of light-hearted antics. On an empirical note, #FundaThembi online participants were aware of the reasoning of Zukowski, who asserted that conservative Christianity is confronted with an “irresistible digital culture” that permeates all facets of human life.⁶⁰ As a result, the church cannot back down while every other social group uses digital technologies to promote its religious message in an incredibly potent way.

One outspoken social media commenter wrote in IsiZulu, “*Kungcono uma ivangeli litrenda*,” which translates to mean that it is better or advantageous if the gospel message trends. The statement’s main thrust is that it does not matter whether the #FundaThembi is viewed as a joke or aberration. Instead, the only claimed possibility that is worth accepting is that, on the surface, Godly content is receiving public airtime. In the long run, this creates avenues for the gospel message to acquire the necessary public traction, exposure, and audibility. Consequently, #FundaThembi was described as a cutting-edge evangelizing opportunity. Numerous discourses emphasized that there had been a spiritual revival in South Africa. Therefore, #FundaThembi symbolized a unique spiritual moment, demonstrating the restorative resurgence of the Holy Spirit’s power contemporarily. Those who laughed at the episode were considered immature, dry, and spiritually sober. Word choices like “*Lena ifuna abakhulile enkosini*” actualize this rationalization. While immaturity was associated with embracing humour, maturity, or spirituality, it was associated with rejecting the humour emboldened in the #FundaThembi scenario. There is a prevalent stereotype that is completely at odds with spirituality and understands humour and is diametrically opposed to religion or spiritual things, a *chamber moment*.

Do not Laugh at God: UNkulunkulu Akahlekwa

Religious people typically think of religion as serious, profound, and reverent. It is customary to address God or the divine subject with dignity and reverence rather than in a light-hearted or carnivalesque way. It is never appropriate to make fun of religion or God.⁶¹ However, when it came to the #FundaThembi

⁵⁷ Emily Harmer and Karen Lumsden, “Online Othering: An Introduction,” *Online Othering: Exploring Digital Violence and Discrimination on the Web*, 2019, 1–33, 2.

⁵⁸ Walter Chikwendu Ihejirika, “Research on Media, Religion and Culture in Africa: Current Trends and Debates,” *African Communication Research* 2, no. 1 (2009): 1–60.

⁵⁹ Barigbon Gbara Nsereka and Tessy Nwanze, “Evangelism in the Era of New Media,” *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)* 5, no. 8 (2021): 643–48, 643.

⁶⁰ A Zukowski, “Communicating Faith in a Digital Culture,” *Momentum* 43, no. 3 (2012).

⁶¹ Geybels, “The Redemptive Power of Humour in Religion,” 13.

trend, shaming laughter appeared to be a common technique in social media engagements. The isiZulu statement, “*uNkulunkulu akahlekwa*,” was a daring assertion that God should never be the focus of humour and invocations of laughter and was deemed by the online public to provoke humiliation. People on the internet who thought the #FundaThembi fad was funny were labelled heretical. Some showed remorse by saying, “*Umuntu uhlekisa ngezwi likaNkulunkulu*,” suggesting that God's word was being mocked or ridiculed. According to others, any individual who thinks the trend is funny is not a true follower of Jesus Christ. Considering the trend amusing was interpreted as a sign of spiritual depravity. In addition, harsh remarks were directed at the people who took the video of the #FundaThembi occurrence, which helped spread it widely. It was generally believed to be crude to record during times of intense spiritual activity. According to someone else, these people are “*bayizwe*” in IsiZulu, which implies that they have a worldly, carnal, and unspiritual mindset—negative speech and body language. Laughing at the lighter side of #FundaThembi was associated with immaturity.

Finding humour in the trend was labelled Satanic. Those who laughed were labelled goats, while those who discouraged the trend were deemed sheep—this rationale was clearly drawn from the biblical imagery that conjures images of sin versus righteousness. Sheep, who symbolizes righteousness, is a positively affirming ascription to those not laughing, while, on the other hand, goats are classified as those who laugh/ed, the unholy cluster. The imagery further finds expression in how those who chuckled at the trend of #Funda Thembi were characterised as *mockers of grace*. By “*mockers of grace*” they are deemed to have infiltrated the Lord’s house, as imposters. With profound vulgarity, some virtual audiences agitated and labelled those who connected to the humour of #FundaThembi as “*iziphuphuku ezihamba zisineka*” which is an isiZulu expression evincing heightened condescension which denotatively speaks to someone’s profound stupidity and foolishness. Many despondently questioned how Thembi’s perceived reading of scripture could be disseminated by the so-called children of God. Some also advanced extremist views, arguing that the KwaZulu-Natal July 2022 ravenous floods were due to this kind of unspiritual episode of #FundaThembi. Others expressed in IsiZulu that “*Sekuyacaca ukuthi isikhathi sokuphika uKrestu sesifikile*,” implying that these instances of divine occurrence clearly portend the imminent denial and rejection of Christ’s sovereignty. Christians who laughed at the trend were viciously accused of lacking the Holy Spirit. A fair majority also apprised the idea that in the contemporary age, everything is humourized and that should not stir emotion because people are connected.

Thembi is Anointed: *Ugcotshiwe uThembi*

Thembi’s “anointing” was a subject of much talk of the online public. Banda educates us that the anointing is a process of gaining God’s might to accomplish the seemingly impossible, or to achieve a “*breakthrough*” or “*pull down the strongholds*” in Pentecostal parlance.⁶² The strong conviction that poverty, suffering, and failure to prosper are the product of a curse lies at the heart of the Pentecostal emphasis on anointing. As a result, the main purpose of anointing is believed to be to lift people's curses. Anointing is a way to combat poverty and misery since it is believed to provide deliverance Thembi’s powerful bible read which went viral was read in this light, appraising how her anointing changed the atmosphere and was spiritually ground-breaking. Some internet users wanted the trend to spread because they thought that the anointing would follow as the trend progressed. The language configuration “*Ufunda NgoMoya*,” which implies that Thembi was reading in the spirit, was a blatant example of this seeming public devotion. According to others, Thembi's reading of the heavenly thing came down” suggests Pentecostal charismatic manifestations. Other responses expressed that “*Siyaphila Thina*” and that Thembi's reading was therapeutic, life-affirming, and healing. Her fame, according to others, was categorised as “holy fame.” The vocabulary seems to imply that holiness and celebrity are not mutually exclusive.

The #FundaThembi event also sparked a conversation about how the world will be saved if incidents like these, which put the Christian experience at its core, become more common. Some questioned Thembi, claiming that shouting is not in accordance with God's frequency and does not signify

⁶² Felix Banda, “Translanguaging and English-African Language Mother Tongues as Linguistic Dispensation in Teaching and Learning in a Black Township School in Cape Town,” *Current Issues in Language Planning* 19, no. 2 (2018): 198–217.

anointing. Some attributed her seemingly elevated, spiritually stirring reading to prayer and fasting. Others expressed that God was speaking to the nation through the allegedly prophetic message couched in the bible verse. Furthermore, others questioned Thembi, arguing that yelling and outward displays of theatricality are not following God's frequency and do not reflect anointing. Others said that the prophetic message contained in the Bible was God's special means of speaking to the people, suggesting that South Africa needed to reflect and turn to God. A sizable online community said that people should calm down and quit reading the trend in an overly dramatic manner, which will undoubtedly prevent them from appreciating the lovely and life-affirming humour in the #FundaThembi trend.

CONCLUSION

When Christians encounter God, they dance and wait in silence, laugh and cry, grieve with joy or regret, and react powerfully to the Word's teaching. Engaging in interactive corporate worship is strongly felt, evident, and encouraged.⁶³ Pentecostals react differently to Godly encounters; however, laughter and humour have always been provincialized as a reaction suspicious and spiritually bereft. This paper sought to unravel how Pentecostal audiences reacted and engaged with the #FundaThembi trend. Theories on humour are foregrounded a critical discursive analysis is employed to understand how Pentecostals reacted to the trend of #Funda Thembi, the overarching sentiment is that Pentecostals, at least on the social media front still view humour made about the church or events concerning the church as offensively combative and overwhelmingly non-progressive. However, more studies need combating which recognise the power of humour as emancipatory, progressive and a potent homiletical tool.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aboudan, Rima. "Laugh and Learn: Humor and Learning a Second Language." *International Journal of Arts and Sciences* 3, no. 3 (2009): 90–99.
- Al-Ameedi, Riyadh Tariq Kadhim, and Rufaidah Kamal Abdulmajeed. "Persuasion in Jesus Christ's Humour: A Linguistic Analysis." *Open Journal of Modern Linguistics* 6, no. 02 (2016): 71.
- Alatalo, Sari, and Anne Poutiainen. "Use of Humor in Multicultural Classroom," 2016.
- Ali, Holi Ibrahim Holi, and Awad Alhassan. "Fighting Contract Cheating and Ghostwriting in Higher Education: Moving towards a Multidimensional Approach." *Cogent Education* 8, no. 1 (January 1, 2021). <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2021.1885837>.
- Andrew, Patricia. "Laughter Is the Best Medicine: The Construction of Old Age in Ageist Humor." *Language and Humour in the Media*, 2012, 11–24.
- Balcomb, Anthony. "Nicholas Bhengu—The Impact of an African Pentecostal on South African Society." *Exchange* 34, no. 4 (2005): 337–48.
- Banda, Felix. "Translanguaging and English-African Language Mother Tongues as Linguistic Dispensation in Teaching and Learning in a Black Township School in Cape Town." *Current Issues in Language Planning* 19, no. 2 (2018): 198–217.
- Bardon, Adrian. "The Philosophy of Humor." *Comedy: A Geographic and Historical Guide* 2 (2005): 462–76.
- Berger, Peter L. *A Rumor of Angels: Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural*. Open Road Media, 2011.
- Bortolussi, Giulia, and Andrés Fernando Muro. "Advances in Understanding Disease Mechanisms and Potential Treatments for Crigler–Najjar Syndrome." *Expert Opinion on Orphan Drugs* 6, no. 7 (July 3, 2018): 425–39. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21678707.2018.1495558>.
- Borum, Caty, and Caty Borum Chattoo. *The Revolution Will Be Hilarious: Comedy for Social Change and Civic Power*. Vol. 29. NYU Press, 2023.
- Broeck, R. van den. "The Concept of Equivalence in Translation Theory: Some Critical Reflections." In *Literature and Translation*, edited by J. S. Holmes, J. Lambert, and R. van den Broeck, 29–47. Leuven: Academic, 1978.

⁶³ Annemieke B. Nel, "South African Missions, Methodism, Identity and Agency in the Cape, with Reference to the Klipfontein Mission Station, ca. 1800s-2010s" (Stellenbosch University, 2020).

- Bunting, I. "The Higher Education Landscape Under Apartheid." In *Transformation in Higher Education*, edited by et al. Cloete N. Norwell, MA: Springer, 2006.
- Christopher, Sarah. "An Introduction to Black Humour as a Coping Mechanism for Student Paramedics." *Journal of Paramedic Practice* 7, no. 12 (2015): 610–17.
- Cilliers, J H. "From the Ridiculous to the Sublime: Practical Theological Perspectives on the Healing Power of Humor." *Practical Theology in South Africa= Praktiese Teologie in Suid-Afrika* 24, no. 2 (2009): 18–37.
- Dijk, Rijk Van. "Witchcraft and Scepticism by Proxy: Pentecostalism and Laughter in Urban Malawi." In *Magical Interpretations, Material Realities*, 97–117. Routledge, 2003.
- Durkheim, Emile. "The Elementary Forms of Religious Life." In *Social Theory Re-Wired*, 52–67. Routledge, 2016.
- Faimau, Gabriel, and Camden Behrens. "Facebooking Religion and the Technologization of the Religious Discourse: A Case Study of a Botswana-Based Prophetic Church." *Online-Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet* 11 (2016).
- Freud, Sigmund. *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*. WW Norton & Company, 1960.
- Gardner, Richard A. "Humour and Religion: New Directions?" *The Palgrave Handbook of Humour, History, and Methodology*, 2020, 151–72.
- Geybels, Hans. "The Redemptive Power of Humour in Religion." *Humour and Religion: Challenges and Ambiguities*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011, 11–21.
- Gifford, Paul. "'Africa Shall Be Saved'. An Appraisal of Reinhard Bonnke's Pan-African Crusade." *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 1987, 63–92.
- Gooren, Henri. "An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity." *Ars Disputandi* 4, no. 1 (2004): 206–9.
- Hale, Adrian. "Joking, Prophetically: The Use of Humour in Mormon Leaders' Sermons." *Comedy Studies* 15, no. 1 (2024): 77–93.
- Harmer, Emily, and Karen Lumsden. "Online Othering: An Introduction." *Online Othering: Exploring Digital Violence and Discrimination on the Web*, 2019, 1–33.
- Hassim, Adila, Mark Heywood, and Jonathan Berger. "Health and Democracy: A Guide to Human Rights, Health Law and Policy in Post-Apartheid South Africa," 2014.
- Holmes, Janet, and Meredith Marra. "Over the Edge? Subversive Humor between Colleagues and Friends," 2002.
- Ihejirika, Walter Chikwendu. "Research on Media, Religion and Culture in Africa: Current Trends and Debates." *African Communication Research* 2, no. 1 (2009): 1–60.
- Immink, Gerrit. "The Sense of God's Presence in Prayer." *HTS: Theological Studies* 72, no. 4 (2016): 1–7.
- Jónsson, Jakob. *Humour and Irony in the New Testament: Illuminated by Parallels in Talmud and Midrash*. Vol. 28. Brill Archive, 1985.
- Kalsoom, Nazia, and Sadia Kalsoom. "Semiotic Representation of Gender in Google Emojis." *Linguistics and Literature Review* 5, no. 2 (2019): 127–37.
- Kay, William K. *Pentecostalism: A Very Short Introduction*. Vol. 255. Oxford University Press, USA, 2011.
- Kgatle, Mookgo S. "Social Media and Religion: Missiological Perspective on the Link between Facebook and the Emergence of Prophetic Churches in Southern Africa." *Verbum et Ecclesia* 39, no. 1 (2018): 1–6.
- . "The Unusual Practices within Some Neo-Pentecostal Churches in South Africa: Reflections and Recommendations." *HTS: Theological Studies* 73, no. 3 (2017): 1–8.
- Khanyile, Sphesihle Blessing. "The Virtualization of the Church: New Media Representations of Neo-Pentecostal Performance (s) in South Africa," 2016.
- Komisa, Z. "'Funda Thembi!' - SA in Awe as Mzansi Woman Passionately Reads the Bible," 2022. <https://www.kaya959.co.za/entertainment/watch-funda-tembi-sa-in-awe-as-mzansi-woman-passionately-reads-the-bible/>.
- Lettau, Meike, Christopher Yusufu Mtaku, and Eric Debrah Otchere. *Performing Sustainability in West Africa: Cultural Practices and Policies for Sustainable Development*. African Identities. London:

- Palgrave MacMillan, 2015.
- Lintott, Sheila. "Superiority in Humor Theory." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 74, no. 4 (2016): 347–58.
- Mangeya, Hugh. "Mediation of the Black African Identity through Social Media Humour." *The Dyke* 16, no. 1 (2022): 1–23.
- Mbembe, Achille. *On the Postcolony*. Vol. 41. Univ of California Press, 2001.
- McFadden, Susan H. "The Paradoxes of Humor and the Burdens of Despair." *Journal of Religious Gerontology* 16, no. 3–4 (2004): 13–27.
- McGhee, Paul E. "The Role of Laughter and Humor in Growing up Female." In *Becoming Female: Perspectives on Development*, 183–206. Springer, 1979.
- McIntyre, Elisha. "God's Comics: Religious Humour in Contemporary Evangelical Christian and Mormon Comedy," 2013.
- Mindess, Harvey. *Laughter and Liberation*. Routledge, 2017.
- Morreall, John. *Comic Relief: A Comprehensive Philosophy of Humor*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.
- . *Comic Relief: A Comprehensive Philosophy of Humor*. John Wiley & Sons, 2011.
- Mpofu, Phillip. "The Nollywood Cultural Effect in Zimbabwe: Manifestation of Nigerian Lingo in Everyday Discourses." *Journal of Multicultural Discourses* 16, no. 3 (July 3, 2021): 245–57. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17447143.2021.1941064>.
- Musila, Grace A. "Laughing at the Rainbow's Cracks? Blackness, Whiteness and the Ambivalences of South African Stand-up Comedy." *Civic Agency in Africa: Arts of Resistance in the 21st Century*, 2014, 147–66.
- Ndlovu, Nonhlanhla. "'A Nation That Laughs Together, Stays Together': Deconstructing Humour on Twitter During the National Lockdown in South Africa." *Digital Humour in the COVID-19 Pandemic: Perspectives from the Global South*, 2021, 191–212.
- Nel, Annemieke B. "South African Missions, Methodism, Identity and Agency in the Cape, with Reference to the Klipfontein Mission Station, ca. 1800s-2010s." Stellenbosch University, 2020.
- Nhlapo, N. "Imvuselelo Ezinkundleni Zokuxhumana Owesifazane Efunda Izwi," 2022. <https://www.isolezwe.co.za/izindaba/imvuselelo-ezinkundleni-zokuxhumana-owesifazane-efunda-izwi-5b043b2c-229e-4775-9a81-7fb432464620>.
- Nsereka, Barigbon Gbara, and Tessy Nwanze. "Evangelism in the Era of New Media." *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)* 5, no. 8 (2021): 643–48.
- Obadare, Ebenezer. "The Uses of Ridicule: Humour, 'Infrapolitics' and Civil Society in Nigeria." *African Affairs* 108, no. 431 (2009): 241–61.
- Parker, Zoe. "Standing up for the Nation: An Investigation of Stand-up Comedy in South Africa Post-1994 with Specific Reference to Women's Power and the Body." *South African Theatre Journal* 16, no. 1 (2002): 8–29.
- Senge, P., C. Robert, R.B. Ross, B.J. Smith, and A. Kleiner. *The Fifth Discipline Field-Book: Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organisation*. New York: Doubleday, 1994.
- Shade, A.R. *Licence to Laugh: Humour in the Classroom*. Westport: Greenwood Publishing, 1996.
- Sorensen, Majken Jul. "Humor as a Serious Strategy of Nonviolent Resistance to Oppression." *Peace & Change* 33, no. 2 (2008): 167–90.
- Tshuma, Lungile Augustine, Mbongeni Jonny Msimanga, and Bhekizulu Bethaphi Tshuma. "Laughing through the Stomach: Satire, Humour and Advertising in Sub-Saharan Africa." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 59, no. 3 (2024): 788–806.
- Vanyoro, Kudzaishe Peter, and Kudakwashe Paul Vanyoro. "Exploring the Use of Humour, Vulgarity and Allegory in Social Media Discourses: The Case of Oscar Pistorius and Reeva Steenkamp." *Africanus: Journal of Development Studies* 49, no. 1 (2019): 22-pages.
- Venkatesh, Viswanath, and Fred D. Davis. "A Theoretical Extension of the Technology Acceptance Model: Four Longitudinal Field Studies." *Management Science* 46, no. 2 (February 2000): 186–204. <https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.46.2.186.11926>.
- Wasserman, Herman. "Laughter in the Time of a Pandemic: Why South Africans Are Joking about Coronavirus." *The Conversation* 15 (2020).

- Weitz, Eric. "Humour and Social Media." *The European Journal of Humour Research* 4, no. 4 (2016): 1–4.
- White, Peter, and Cornelius J P Niemandt. "Ghanaian Pentecostal Churches' Mission Approaches." *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 24, no. 2 (2015): 241–69.
- Williams, Donald M, and Wessel Bentley. "The Need for Continued Decolonisation and Africanisation of Ordination in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa." *Theologia Viatorum* 44, no. 1 (2020): 1–10.
- Zahoor, Asma. "Linguistic Humor in Memes to Mitigate Post COVID-19 Severity." *Linguistics and Literature Review (LLR)*, 2020.
- Zukowski, A. "Communicating Faith in a Digital Culture." *Momentum* 43, no. 3 (2012).

ABOUT AUTHOR

Sphehile Blessing Khanyile is researcher and academic who lectures Media Studies at the Central University of Technology, South Africa. His research foci overwhelmingly engages African Pentecostalism, prosperity gospel and the discursive representations of African Christianity on media terrains.