

Rethinking Spirituality, Technology and Society

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As the technological advancement revolution is evolving rapidly, so have affluent spiritual organisations embraced it to increase and influence their space(s) of activity. Digitalisation processes and the use of information technologies (IT) have raised the stock and expanded the global reach of spirituality services by transcending physical spaces. Religion-focused TV channels and livestreaming of spiritual services for example have enabled an online virtual presence that has negated the need for physical presence while bestowing global reach. To borrow from Schwab (2016), this transition and transcendence into the immaterial leads into contestations of the “what” and the “how” of doing things, and further “who” we are. Such debates have predominantly outlined the impact of machines doing a greater amount of work than humans and have thus raised questions and concerns primarily at the effects on resultant unemployment as one of the more obvious trade-off. Yet other pertinent questions should focus on how technology is not only enabling exercise of hegemonic power by trend leaders (innovators) but also its impact on socio-economic development issues including the practice of spirituality. Technological innovation, particularly digitisation, combined with networking has enabled certain global collaborations which some call exploitation of the vulnerable. What have been the implications of the recent technological advancement on the spiritual experiences of people in the global south? Who is the captive audience within this space? What is the impact of this social innovation on spirituality’s sustainability? Such debates opine on the increasing importance of pervasive automation on spirituality, which this theme track will delve into.