Digital Pilgrims' Progress: How New Zealand Christian Charities Navigate Digitalisation

Karl Udy

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Abstract

In an increasingly digital world, every sphere of society is being impacted by digitalisation. While much attention is given to the impact of digitalisation in the commercial sector, less is given to its impact on other spheres of society. Christian charities are a large subset of New Zealand's not-for-profit sector which play a significant role in New Zealand society. This thesis asks the question, "How are Christian charities in New Zealand navigating digitalisation?" and includes quantitative data from an online survey open to all Christian charities in New Zealand supplemented by qualitative data from interviews of a selection of charities that participated in the survey. The research identifies three distinct positions toward digitalisation that Christian charities may hold: 1) *digitally proactive;* 2) *digitally reactive;* and 3) *digitally inactive*. Each of these positions had markedly different approaches toward digitalisation. *Digitally inactive* charities sought minimal use of digital technology in their operations despite the rapid increase of digital technology in society. *Digitally proactive* charities used digital technology widely and integrated their digital decision-making into their long-term plans, implementing several aspects of effective digital strategy. *Digitally reactive* charities, although they used digital technology quite widely, found their digital decision-making dominated by concerns regarding issues such as budget and staff skills that hindered their ability to implement an effective digital strategy. New Zealand Christian charities generally adopted a DIY approach to digitalisation, characterised by ad-hoc decision-making, a preference for in-house solutions, and a reliance on volunteers. The charities also indicated that the "people" aspect of digital technology was extremely important. They were prepared to forgo the convenience of digital technology if that convenience was at the expense of excluding those who may have barriers to using digital technology. They were also careful to ensure that any digital technology introduced was not detrimental to the quality of the personal relationships in their community. Although the theological implications regarding digital technology were rarely made explicit, they were generally considered important by the charities. However, the practical concerns of a charity's operations often took priority over theological concerns.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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Ethics Approval

This research was approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) on 6 July 2020. The application number was 20/150.

Written and informed consent was obtained from all of the interview participants. Interviews were conducted on 5 August, 9 August, 20 August, 26 August, 2 September and 4 September 2020.

1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

This thesis presents a study of the digitalisation journey of Christian charities in New Zealand. The study is based on data from both a survey of the broad population of Christian charities in New Zealand, as well as more in-depth interviews with a small selection of these survey participants.

In the wake of what has been described as an industrial revolution every bit as radical as the introduction of mechanised power in the 18th century and electricity in the 19th century, the introduction of digital technology has resulted in profound changes in life, society and economies (Schwab, 2016). This new orientation of organisations, industries, and societies around digital technology is called *digitalisation* (Brennen & Kreiss, 2016).

Digitalisation is often considered in the context of the commercial sector. This is revealed in the common framing of digitalisation as an *industrial* revolution. Correspondingly, most of the research (both academic and professional) regarding digitalisation has been focused on this commercial sector of society. The often rapid and unanticipated change brought on by digitalisation has been described as disrupting industries through the introduction of new digital technology (Downes & Mui, 1998). Industries affected by this digital disruption experience pressure to make unplanned changes to their organisational structures or operations, as their businesses come under threat (Downes & Mui, 1998).

Although digitalisation has mostly been discussed in the context of commercial activity, it affects all aspects of society, including charities. Charities are distinct from commercial organisations primarily by having a purpose aligned to motives other than profit (Allison & Kaye, 2018). Christian charities are a subset of these organisations that include in their motivation or operation an element of faith – specifically a Christian faith. The Christian faith has a long-standing and complex engagement with technology, ranging from the use of novel technologies such as Gutenberg's movable

printing press, radio and television in the dissemination of the Christian message, to the example of communities such as the Amish who eschew many technologies (Sims, 2005). The adoption and the increasing ubiquity of digital technology has resulted in the current period often being called *the digital age* (e.g., Negroponte et al., 1997; Beck & Picardo, 2021). This increasing adoption and normalisation of digital technology is likely to have affected the operation of Christian charitable organisations to some extent, resulting in these organisations undergoing some form of digitalisation.

1.2 Aims of the Study

This thesis investigates the research question, "How are Christian charities in New Zealand navigating digitalisation?" In answering this question, this thesis attempts to identify how Christian charities have perceived their digitalisation needs, such as skills and resources, and how they have been or are planning to respond to digitalisation.

1.3 Significance of the Study

There are three contexts that define the focus of this research. This research looks at digitalisation within the context of charities. Many initiatives in understanding digitalisation have been approached from the perspective of commercial entities. As charities are organisations created to serve society without making a profit, this distinction from a commercially-oriented perspective of digitalisation raises the question of how this may affect the experience and perception of digitalisation in these organisations.

This research also looks at digitalisation within the context of the Christian religion. Due to the relative novelty of digitalisation, there is little research investigating digitalisation in the context of religious organisations. By exploring the perceptions, motivations and challenges of Christian charities as they are responding to digitalisation, this research aims to produce insights into this segment of society.

Christianity is a part of many New Zealanders' lives, with 37% of New Zealanders having identified as Christian in the 2018 census (Statistics NZ, 2019). The impact of Christian charities likely extends considerably beyond this, given the large number of Christian charities devoted to providing a variety of services to the wider community.

Therefore, the digitalisation of Christian charities is of relevance to a significant segment of the population.

Third, this research looks at digitalisation in the context of New Zealand. New Zealand has a reputation for innovation encapsulated by its "number 8 wire mentality", and its location and culture make it suitable for testing new products and ideas before moving to a global scale (IDC, 2021, p. 29). Although New Zealand is small, its talent, ideas and trusted reputation enable it to cultivate innovative technology at a scale that belies its size (IDC, 2021).

Moreover, these three contexts also interact. New Zealand has the highest number of charities per capita in the OECD, underlining the importance of charities to New Zealand society (Etcheverry, 2022). New Zealand also has a strong Christian heritage stretching back to 1814, and Christianity is of particular importance to certain elements of New Zealand society, such as the Pasifika community (MPP, 2020).

This study helps understand what digitalisation looks like in the context of Christian charities in New Zealand. Understanding digitalisation in this context also helps develop a more nuanced understanding of digitalisation overall. Investigating digitalisation in Christian charities in New Zealand allows inference into how this different context affects the experience and response to digitalisation, and by corollary, which aspects of the experience and response to digitalisation are shared across the different contexts. Therefore, this study is of value to all who have an interest in digitalisation, and especially to those with an interest in Christian charities in New Zealand.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis consists of a total of six chapters. Chapter One gives the context for the thesis by introducing the aims and significance of the thesis, followed by Chapter Two, which gives a review of the existing relevant literature that backgrounds this research. Chapter Three explains the methodological design of the research, and Chapter Four presents a summary of the findings from the data analysis. The interpretation of the data from the research, and discussion of the significance and implications of the

findings, is found in Chapter Five. The sixth and final chapter summarises the interpretations of the data and concludes the thesis by answering the research question and providing recommendations for further research.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces relevant key terms and concepts from the field of digital strategies. This chapter also reviews the relevant characteristics of both charitable organisations in general, and Christian charitable organisations in particular.

2.2 Digitalisation

This research examines the process of digitalisation in Christian charities, which raises the question of what digitalisation is. *Digitalisation* and *digitisation* are two very similar words that despite their distinct meanings are often used interchangeably (Brennen & Kreiss, 2016). Brennen and Kreiss (2016) defined *digitalisation* as "the way many domains of social life are restructured around digital communication and media infrastructures" and *digitisation* as "the technical process of converting streams of analog information into digital bits" (p. 1). Hence, *digitalisation* and *digitisation* are separate concepts, but *digitalisation* will inevitably involve some processes of *digitisation*. Gobble (2018a) concurred with Brennen and Kreiss' (2016) definition of digitisation, adding to it "The process of moving a process from manual to digital" (p. 1). They defined *digitalisation* as "the use of digital technology and probably digitized information, to create and harvest value in new ways" (p. 56). i-Scoop (2016) offered three definitions based on three different contexts. They identified first, in the context of an individual business, *digitalisation* as "leveraging digitized data and processes" (i-Scoop, 2016, para. 29) for engagement and insight, and noted that this was the most common usage. Second, they identified the usage of *digitalisation* as it related to the effect of digital technology on an industry, or an aspect of business that is not isolated to an individual business (i-Scoop, 2016). Third, they noted that *digitalisation* is sometimes used with respect to the effect that digital technology has on society as a whole, which coheres with Brennen and Kreiss' (2016) definition stated earlier.

Brennen and Kreiss (2016) described how digitalisation results in various convergences of different aspects of life and society, such as convergences of infrastructure, devices, functions, and media. Previously, separate infrastructures and devices were needed

for various different types of functions and media. Digitalisation, utilising the power of digitised information, allowed a single device and a single infrastructure to be used for a multiplicity of functions and for transmitting information over a variety of different media. The primary example that Brennen and Kreiss (2016) used to illustrate this trend was the smartphone, which replaced the functions of many individual devices, such as the telephone, camera, internet browser, and map, and is able to handle various media types such as audio, text, and video. Brennen and Kreiss (2016) also pointed to digitalisation's effect of both destabilising existing social structures as well as remaking new ones in the process. The social structures affected included those built around the creation and distribution of media, the connection of people and the formation and establishment of groups. This destabilising impact of digitalisation was often called "digital disruption" (e.g., Furr & Shipolov, 2019, p. 99). Gobble (2018a) approached the topic from a business perspective and emphasised digitalisation's role in usurping established business models and strategies. Gobble (2018a) further described how digitalisation facilitates the remaking of businesses, and even industries, around the new possibilities afforded by digital technology.

In summary, digitalisation can be defined as the process by which organisations and societies are radically transformed, as they are restructured around new digital technologies and processes, resulting in the disruption of existing structures and the creation of new digital structures to replace them.

2.3 Digital Transformation

Both Gobble (2018b) and i-Scoop (2016) pointed out that the definitions of digitalisation and digital transformation are very similar and can often be considered synonymous when context does not demand the nuance in their difference. Gobble (2018a) pointed out that digitalisation is the process that leads to digital capabilities. i-Scoop (2016) noted that digital transformation is the wide-ranging effect of the adoption of digital technology across all aspects of a society or business, resulting in a complete reshaping of that business or society. Gobble (2018a) also emphasised the importance of digital transformation in reshaping an entire organisation, thus distinguishing digital transformation from instances where digitalisation affects only a single aspect of a business. Gobble (2018b) elsewhere stated "The goal of a digital

transformation is continuous optimization" (p. 66), illustrating an aspect of how organisations are profoundly changed through digital transformation.

2.4 Digital Strategy

Gobble (2018b) stated that digital transformation is not accidental, and not usually organic, but instead is a journey that needs a map. A digital strategy is defined as such a map towards digital capabilities. Aron (2013) defined a digital strategy in contrast to an IT strategy. Whereas an IT strategy was defined as "a technical answer to a business question" (para. 2), a digital strategy was defined as "a business answer to a digital question" (para. 3). Gobble (2018b) pointed out that isolated digital initiatives and digital innovation within an organisation do not qualify as a digital strategy. A digital strategy is instead a corporate strategy to transform a whole organisation around a digitalised reality (Gobble, 2018b). McDonald (2012) emphasised the importance of a digital strategy integrating various different technologies in concert across the whole business.

The term "digital strategy" gained currency in the 1990s, as introduced by Gilder (1990) for describing inventor Ray Kurzweil's use of artificial intelligence in his development of computer speech recognition, and also occasionally in reference to companies employing a digital strategy, such as MTV (Attwood, 1997), Sony (Electric Business Asia, 1997), and Kodak (Business Week, 1997). Following these initial references, Downes and Mui (1998) described digital strategy as "a new approach to strategic planning" (p. 58). They italicised the words "digital strategy", indicating a coining of a term that entailed more meaning than simply using "digital" as an adjective for "strategy".

Downes and Mui (1998) proposed that digital strategy is based on three factors: Moore's Law, regarding the growth of computing capacity (Moore, 1965); Metcalfe's Law, regarding the exponential increase in the value of networks (Gilder, 1993); and economist Ronald Coase's theory of transaction costs (Coase, 2012). Downes and Mui (1998) posited that together, these three factors necessitated a radical change not just in specific strategies, but in the whole way that business strategy was conceived.

The term “digital strategy” is sometimes used as an ellipsis of various terms. For example, Rouse (2015) equated the term with “digital media strategy”. Chaffey (2017) pointed out the varied understanding of the word “digital”, with the most common understandings being synonymous with IT or technology. Chaffey (2017) went on to explain how leaders in business, IT, and marketing would all have a different understanding of “digital strategy”, with marketers, for example, interpreting the term to mean “digital marketing strategy”. These varied applications of the term demonstrate how the term “digital strategy” can be confusing, as different people tend to import meaning for the term “digital strategy” from their own focus. Aron’s (2013) earlier distinction between IT strategy and digital strategy is useful here in qualifying a digital strategy as an organisation’s strategic response to a digital reality, as opposed to simply using digital technology to achieve organisational goals, as are Gobble (2018b) and McDonald’s (2012) observations that a digital strategy needs to be organisation-wide.

Therefore, a digital strategy is a strategic response by an organisation to digitalisation, designed to achieve digital transformation, which is a profound re-orientation of the whole organisation around the new digital reality.

2.5 Digital Strategy Approaches

Many of the organisations active in digital strategy consulting have developed their own approach to digital strategy, often with an eye on selling their consultancy services (e.g., Boston Consulting Group, n.d.; EY, n.d.; KPMG, 2017; Westerman et al., 2011). Despite the number and variety of approaches, there are significant areas of agreement between them.

Key among these areas of agreement is, as BDO (2019) said, that digital strategy is not all or even primarily about digital technology. BDO (2019) described digital strategy as requiring “a holistic cultural shift” (p. 2). The Economist (2019) referred to it as being as much about making changes in culture as technology. Gobble (2018b) said that it is mainly about people. Geissbauer et al. (2016) similarly pointed out that the greatest challenge in digital strategy, counter-intuitively, is not technology, but people. The key foci of the various approaches emphasised human elements as critical components of

a successful digital strategy. This emphasis reflects a recurrent theme that, despite digital strategy referring to digital technology, people and culture matter as much as, if not more than technology. BDO (2019), The Economist (2019), KPMG (2017) and Newman (2019) all mentioned organisational culture as an important aspect of digital strategy. Perkin (2019) viewed culture as a component of transformation that cannot be ignored, and Deloitte Digital (n.d.) described "the right organisational mindset" as an important component in enabling companies to adapt to the new demands of work in a digital environment (p. 4). Groysberg et al. (2018) identified four key attributes of culture as being: shared among a group, pervasive across an organisation, enduring for long periods of time, and implicit, i.e., unspoken but widely understood; and they proposed that it can be a powerful accelerator or inhibitor of an organisation's performance. Perkin (2019) described organisational culture as including the values, beliefs, and behavioural norms of those within the organisation, and indicated that key attributes of a culture that facilitates successful digital strategy included "adaptability, good levels of autonomy and collaboration … entrepreneurialism, curiosity and learning" (p. 18). Boston Consulting Group (n.d.) considered "agility" as an important attribute as it allows companies to respond quickly to change (para. 12). This consistent focus on organisational culture, and on how organisational culture should be shaped to facilitate successful digital strategy reveals the importance of this aspect in digital strategy.

This focus on organisational culture is related to other emphases as well. Westerman et al. (2011) linked organisational culture to leadership by highlighting leadership's critical role in culture change through vision casting and regular communication. The importance of the role of leadership in developing or furthering digital strategy was further emphasised by Grant Thornton (2019), KPMG (2017), Newman (2019) and RSM (2016). Aspen (2018) placed the onus on leaders' openness to creativity and new ideas, while Perkin (2019) noted the responsibility of the leader to create an environment conducive to team success. The value of effective leadership was reinforced by BDO (2019), who reported that a lack of leadership vision was seen as the most significant barrier to successful digital initiatives.

Facilitating the desired organisational change was seen as important not only for leaders, but also for the staff, as noted by Boston Consulting Group (2019) and

Newman (2019), who both mentioned the importance of having the right people in the organisation to progress digitalisation. Newman (2019) described them as having the ability to think on a macro level, being willing to take risks, and being intelligently inquisitive, which indicates that they need people who do not simply have the right formal qualifications or technical ability, but those who also have a mindset conducive to the changes the organisation needs. The Economist (2019) also made the point that people with both "the skills and mindset" (p. 12) are essential for companies to develop the necessary culture that facilitates digitalisation. Perkin (2019) noted that finding such people proved challenging for many organisations.

The importance of people to digital strategy extends beyond those within the company, as revealed by the emphasis of these approaches on understanding and meeting the needs of their customers. Westerman et al. (2011) noted customers' rising expectations, including their desire for seamless personalised experiences across different channels and platforms (BDO, 2019). KPMG (2017) highlighted the importance of companies incorporating their customers' perspectives through developing an "outside-in" mindset (p. 7), where customers' voices are empowered to drive strategy decisions. Conyard (n.d.) proposed the use of personas as a method for companies to develop such a perspective. Many approaches included the use of customer experience journeys as a tool to properly orient digital strategy around the customer (e.g., Aspen, 2018; Bain & Company, 2018; Fenwick & Schadler, 2018; Gurumurthy & Schatsky, 2019; Newman, 2019; The Economist, 2019; Westerman et al., 2011).

Another key and an often-repeated component of these digital strategy approaches was innovation (e.g., EY, n.d.; Fenwick & Schadler, 2018; Grant Thornton, 2019; Newman, 2019; Rogers, 2016). Whistler and DeMaine (2014), and Newman (2019) pointed out that an important ingredient in successful innovation is a willingness to experience failure. Whistler and DeMaine (2014) highlighted the importance of viewing failure as a learning opportunity, and Newman saw failure as an integral part of the process of experimentation that leads to successful innovation. This perspective on failure was found in the agile approach of software development (e.g., Catlin et al., 2017; Franek et al., 2017), which was often explicitly mentioned regarding innovation, as an agile approach enables rapid innovation (Boston Consulting Group, n.d). KPMG

(2017) stated that the unpredictability of the specifics of the future of digital technology meant that it is important to maximise innovation success by investing in multiple prospective solutions, and quickly pivoting investment from those that fail to those with the best prospects of success (KPMG, 2017) – a process that aligns with agile practices. As mentioned earlier, Boston Consulting Group (n.d.) also identified such an agile approach as an important element in facilitating organisational change, which is an indication that innovation is connected with organisational culture in digital strategy.

Digital technology affords the use of data beyond the scale of what was previously possible. It can do this through the collection of data from internet browsers and other internet-connected devices (KPMG, 2017). Geissbauer et al. (2016) considered the use of data to inform strategic decisions essential to a successful digital strategy. Boston Consulting Group (n.d.), Gurumurthy and Schatsky (2019), and Rogers (2016) also mentioned the importance of data as an element of digital strategy. The possible uses of the data, as reported by KPMG (2017) could range from aiding new product design to guiding decision-making, through to real-time adjustment to business offerings. Gurumurthy and Schatsky (2019) highlighted the opportunity that data and analytics provide to uncover possibilities that businesses may not have been previously aware of. It is not simply the collection of digital data that is of value though, as Geissbauer et al. (2016) pointed out, but the development of insights and guidance of action that comes from understanding the wealth of data available. Harvard Business Review (2018) noted that analytics was increasingly able to be used, not only to understand the past, but also to predict the future. Geissbauer et al. (2016) warned that the value of this data can be limited if silos exist in the organisation which prevents the free transfer of this data between different organisational departments. The role that silos play in restricting the value of data highlights the connection of this element of digital strategy to the organisational culture.

The literature showed that it was essential for digital strategy to encompass both the human and technological aspects. Even the aspects that seem more technologically oriented, such as innovation and the use of data, were linked in their application and effectiveness to the human elements. This linking of the different aspects of digital

strategy as opposed to treating them in isolation was highlighted by Perkins (2019), who noted that digital is often now seen as an aspect of "business as usual" (p. 4), and by Aspen (2018) and KPMG (2017) who cautioned that the digital strategy should not be treated as an add-on but that instead, the entire organisation should re-orient itself around the new digital reality.

2.6 Charities in New Zealand

The not-for-profit sector represents those organisations in society aside from those in the private (or corporate) and the public (or government) sectors. Not-for-profit organisations generally provide a public good or contribute toward the general wellbeing of society apart from the public and private sectors.

Allison and Kaye (2018) identified eight characteristics that distinguish not-for-profit organisations from those in the public and private sectors. Some of these characteristics are intrinsically true of not-for-profits, such as the dual financial and mission bottom lines that dictate their success, the role of the governing board to not only give oversight, but also support the work of the not-for-profit, and the role of volunteers in the running of the organisation (Allison & Kaye, 2018). Other characteristics flow out of what could be described as the culture of not-for-profits, such as a bias towards informality and consensus in operation, a passion among those involved for the organisational mission, a tendency for workers to do both work they are skilled in and work that they lack skills in, an atmosphere of scarcity, and a difficulty in assessing the outcomes of the organisation's programmes in the absence of standardised criteria to evaluate these programmes (Allison & Kaye, 2018).

A survey by New Zealand's Inland Revenue identified insights into not-for-profits that echoed Allison and Kaye (2018). Their insights included the significance of the challenge of funding for not-for-profit organisations, the sincere dedication of not-for-profit organisations towards their cause, the essential role of volunteers in the work of not-for-profits, that workers at not-for-profits are often required to do work that they lack expertise in, and that relationships and connections are key to how not-for-profits operate (Inland Revenue, 2020).

In New Zealand, there are various legal forms of incorporation for not-for-profit organisations, including incorporated societies (of which there were 21,500 in 2005, comprising as much as 60% of registered not-for-profit organisations), charitable societies and trusts (of which there were 15,000 in 2005, comprising 30% of registered not-for-profit organisations), charitable companies, friendly societies, industrial and provident societies, Māori legal structures, and other organisations set up by their own specific empowering legislation (e.g., Royal New Zealand Foundation of the Blind). Not-for-profit organisations can be registered as a charity, a political party, or a trade union, provided they meet the respective specifications (Tennant et al., 2006).

2.7 Not-for-Profit Organisations and Digital Strategy

Many of the characteristics of not-for-profits (Allison & Kaye, 2018) have implications for their application of digital strategy. Some of the characteristics provide obstacles to digitalisation. For example, an atmosphere of scarcity often resulted in not-for-profits being under-resourced and limited their ability to make good strategic decisions (Allison & Kaye, 2018). Given the importance of accurate data in digital strategy, the difficulty of assessing not-for-profit programme outcomes creates added complexity. Other characteristics, such as the tendency towards informality and consensus, or the frequent lack of matching of skills to staff roles can frustrate the strategic leadership needed to implement a digital strategy (Allison & Kaye, 2018). However, the fact that the governing board has both a supporting oversight role, and the participation of volunteers opens up avenues where a not-for-profit can leverage expertise and skills that may not be available to other organisations (Allison & Kaye, 2018).

Perhaps because of the prominence of management consultancy agencies in the field of digital strategies, the focus of most of the writing about digital strategy has been directed to the corporate sector. The literature sources for digital strategy for not-for-profit organisations are comparatively slim. Electric Putty (2015) identified the need for digital strategies for not-for-profits in a survey where they reported that three-quarters of organisations surveyed did not know how to implement a digital strategy. There are some initiatives to help not-for-profit organisations develop digital strategies. Breast Cancer Care in the United Kingdom has developed a Digital Maturity Benchmark model for not-for-profit organisations (Kluge, 2017). Skillsplatform (Amar

& Clough, 2019) and Infoxchange (2019) are examples of organisations that specifically serve not-for-profits and charities in developing their digital strategies and digital capabilities. In addition to this, companies such as Salesforce (2020) and Google (n.d.) offer services dedicated to not-for-profit organisations. However, when seen in the light of the added complexity of delivering digital strategy to not-for-profit organisations (e.g., the more acute scarcity of resources, diverse non-financial success criteria, and the more informal, consensual approach to business), the range of digital strategy services catering for not-for-profits and charities compared poorly to what was available to the corporate sector (Allison & Kaye, 2018).

As a part of providing services for not-for-profits, some of these organisations have conducted surveys of the digital capabilities of not-for-profits. These include annual surveys by Skillsplatform in the United Kingdom (Amar & Clough, 2019), by Infoxchange in Australia and New Zealand (Infoxchange, 2019), and a multi-national annual survey by Salesforce (2020).

Each of these surveys revealed that charities faced significant challenges to their digital capabilities posed by limited financial resources, which were often perceived as the greatest obstacle to digital progress. (Amar & Clough, 2019; Infoxchange, 2019; Salesforce, 2020). Amar and Clough (2019) reported funding as the greatest barrier, and staff skills as the second greatest issue. Nahrkhalaji et al. (2018) agreed on the challenge to not-for-profit organisations in the development of new capabilities and skills, ranking this criterion as their greatest challenge. These all matched the findings of Allison and Kaye (2018) and Inland Revenue (2020) regarding the challenges faced by charities in general.

Amar and Clough (2019) reported that charities considered themselves to be generally low in their general digital capabilities and also low in confidence in their digital skills. Infoxchange (2019) reported that a majority of the charities considered their use of digital technology unsatisfactory. Despite the low assessment of their skill levels, Infoxchange (2019) reported that most digital spending by charities was on hardware, or ongoing digital services as opposed to either hiring or developing skilled staff (Infoxchange, 2019).

According to Infoxchange's (2019) survey, the focus of charities was mainly on existing digital technology, as opposed to emerging digital technology. Both Amar and Clough (2019) and Salesforce (2020) recorded a lack of talent in charities' workforces with Amar and Clough noting that charities lacked a known plan to increase digital skills. Salesforce (2020) recorded a lack of IT talent and budget. Catlin et al. (2017) explained how the challenge of fundraising and a charity's limited budget can be a barrier to recruiting the people with the skills that are needed, especially in light of the fact that large, well-resourced companies already struggle with the high-demand skills needed to shepherd the change required in the digitalisation journey.

Many charities identified organisational rigidity as a barrier to the effective use of technology to achieve their mission (Salesforce, 2020) and that culture was an ongoing impediment to deriving value from digital technology (Amar & Clough, 2019, p. 12). Nahrkhalaji et al. (2018) identified the needed organisational culture change as a significant challenge for not-for-profit organisations. Amar and Clough (2019) concurred with Nahrkhalaji et al.'s (2018) assessment regarding culture. One of the ways that this challenge was apparent was in the prevention of the implementation of digital strategy by a lack of organisation flexibility that was reported by Salesforce (2020). Allison and Kaye's (2018) assessment of not-for-profit organisations' tendency to informality, participation and consensus is consistent with the challenges of implementing organisational culture change.

Although Salesforce (2020) reported that charities recognised the value of digital data, they also reported that charities experienced struggles in capturing, managing, measuring and reporting data. Amar and Clough (2019) similarly reported charities' lack of skills in handling data.

Regarding emerging technologies, Amar and Clough (2019) and Salesforce (2020) both reported that although many charities are aware of issues, they are slow to begin planning for these issues, even though these changes in digital technology have already begun. Infoxchange (2019) reported that almost a third of charities surveyed were building mobile apps, yet investment in emergent technologies lagged way

behind. Similarly, Amar and Clough (2019) reported that most charities were aware of ethical issues posed by digital innovation but had not made plans for them.

This paints a picture where "many non-profits lag behind the corporate world in their use of digital" (Salesforce, 2020, p. 22). The not-for-profits are encountering the core issues regarding digital strategy in general (i.e., recruiting and developing staff with necessary digital skills, leadership, organisational culture, innovation, and use of data), although they have acute needs regarding funding and recruiting or developing staff with the needed digital skills, and they may be less aware of the need for change than organisations in the corporate sector.

2.8 Christian Charitable Organisations

There are a wide variety of different types of charities that exist in New Zealand. The Charities Register (Charities Services, 2020) is a voluntary register of charities in New Zealand, and includes over 27,000 charities. Only charities on the Charities Register are entitled to charitable tax status and to deem themselves charitable entities (Charities Services, 2020). Each charity on the Charities Register is categorised according to its sector, its activities, its beneficiaries, and its location (Charities Services, 2020). Within these categorisations, the sector denotes the specific field that the charity is involved in. Its activities describe the type, or types, of work the charity engages in. The beneficiaries indicate which group or groups the charity serves, and the location indicates the geographical region that the charity operates in (Charities Services, 2020). Therefore, it is possible to define religious charities as those charities that are either (a) part of the "religious activities" sector, (b) engaging in the activities of "provid[ing] religious service activities", or (c) serving "religious groups" as beneficiaries (Charities Services, 2020, non-pag.). In 2020, the Charities Register listed close to 8000 charities that fit one or more of these categories (Charities Services, 2020). Of these religious charities, approximately five out of six were Christian in their religious affiliation, which means that approximately one quarter of all charities on New Zealand's Charities Register in 2020 could have been described as Christian charities.

Many of the Christian charities listed on the Charities Register were small in size, with only about a third of them (approximately 1700) having fulltime staff, and fewer than 200 having 10 or more fulltime staff (Charities Services, 2020). Many Christian charities were local church congregations. The largest Christian charities were denominational bodies (e.g., The Salvation Army) and religious orders (e.g., Sisters of Mercy). Altogether, the Charities Register listed 107 Christian charitable organisations with 10 or more fulltime staff, and only 11 with more than 100 fulltime staff. Among these 107 Christian charities, there were also organisations devoted to Christian education, the publication of Christian media, Christian mission work, managing property, and providing Christian services such as chaplaincy (Charities Services, 2020).

As a subset of not-for-profit organisations, Christian charities share the challenges and opportunities facing not-for-profit organisations in general regarding digital strategy. As to the experience of Christian charities in particular with digitalisation, there is very little literature available. MissionFound (n.d.) offered services in forming a digital marketing strategy, The Church of England (n.d.) had a similar resource for churches, and there was a smattering of case studies on Christian organisations developing digital strategies. For instance, the Vatican made use of the services of the management consultancy Accenture in developing a digital strategy for reorganising and revamping its various communication channels under a single brand (Accenture, 2018). Although, given the financial resources available to the Vatican compared with most charities, pursuing such an option may not be available to most Christian charities. Christian Aid, an international aid organisation, although much less well-resourced than the Vatican, similarly made use of the services of a consultancy firm, The Digital Transformation People, to assist in developing a digital strategy (Morecroft, 2018). Organisations like FaithTech (n.d.), which exists to foster Christian community and to provide an outlet for service for Christians in the tech sector, offered resources and opportunities for those interested in the intersection of Christian faith and digital technology. However, in terms of the particular issue of how Christian charities navigate digitalisation, or develop a comprehensive digital strategy, as opposed to a digital marketing strategy, the extant literature consists of only a handful of brief case study reports.

There are accounts of individual Christian charities that have pioneered emerging digital technology. What is described as “online church” has been in operation in New Zealand for more than a decade (Otago Daily Times, 2010; Stuff, 2009). Perhaps the earliest online church, and certainly one of the most influential is Life.Church, which in 2001 began broadcasting its services over the internet (Life.Church, 2015). The practice of mediated presence for churches is well established, with televangelists, and radio broadcasts being common throughout the 20th century. Cooper et al. (2021) described the difference between an attempt at creating a digitised reproduction that resembles a physical church service, which they described as “online church”, and a more thorough rethinking of how the functions of a church service could be represented in a digitised environment, which they called “church online”.

There is also a body of research into how digitalisation has affected the Christian community in general. The influential 20th century Christian theologian, John Stott, anticipated the impact of what he called the “cybernetics revolution” (2017, p. 41). With the power of digital technology, he predicted that the rising ubiquity of the internet would likely result in direct human interaction becoming less common and less valued. (2017). Stott considered such a situation dehumanising, and envisioned the local church as an oasis of in-person human contact (2017). Many other voices in the Christian community viewed the digital world as inherently inferior to the physical world in spiritual value (Kim, 2020). Phillips et al. (2019) offered another approach, and defined four waves of digital theology. The first two waves of digital theology described ways that theology can use digital technology. The third wave, however, “intentional, sustained and reflexive theologically-resourced engagement with digitality/digital culture” (p. 39), described a mutual engagement where theology both influences and is in turn influenced by digitality. Such an approach, where theology and digitality are in a mutual relationship, implies that digitality is viewed as something of spiritual value. The fourth wave, “a prophetic reappraisal of digitality in the light of theological ethics” (p. 39), referred to the Christian tradition throughout history of prophetically speaking to contemporary issues of justice, and clearly viewed the relationship between theology and digitality as having moral and ethical importance.

2.9 Summary

In summary, the discipline of digital strategy, itself not yet fully mature, has adapted quickly and continues to adapt to new developments and the challenges of digitalisation within the corporate sector. Despite a wide variety of conceptualisation and modelling of digital strategy, there are key principles that are held in common among most practitioners, which include: the importance of recruiting or developing staff with the needed skills, developing an organisational culture amenable to digitalisation, a focus on customer experience, a high value placed on innovation, and the importance of using digital data to guide strategic decision-making. The demand for management consultancy from the corporate sector is unlikely to abate in the foreseeable future, which would result in less financially able organisations, including most not-for-profit organisations, being less well served in comparison.

In all likelihood, some Christian charities in New Zealand do have a digital strategy, although, just as in the corporate sector, these likely range from the digitally naïve to the digitally savvy. What is unknown is, in a field that is known to lag behind the corporate sector, how far digitalisation has penetrated the awareness of the industry, what form digitalisation takes in this segment of society, and what the current understanding and adoption of digital strategies are.

3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodological framework that provides the basis for this research. It explains how the data is collected and analysed, and introduces the research tools used in this process.

3.2 Methodological Framework

This research uses both quantitative and qualitative data for answering a single research question, thus, the study applies a mixed modal approach. The quantitative data consists of a survey that invites all Christian charities on the New Zealand Charities Register with valid contact information to participate. This study is latitudinal, as there is a single time period of data collection for the survey.

The qualitative data consists of interviews of self-selected members of the survey population. As such, this data cannot be generalised across the whole population but is indicative of the respective individuals or organisations within the population.

3.2.1 Research Methods

Because of the mixed modal approach of the study, there are two methods of both data collection and data analysis. For the quantitative survey, the data is collected via an online survey using Qualtrix sent to representatives of all Christian charities on the Charities Register that could be contacted via email. The survey consists of multiple-choice questions. This data is then analysed using both Qualtrix's statistical components and Microsoft Excel.

The qualitative data is collected through interviews that are audio-recorded. This data comprises of verbal responses to open-ended questions. The transcripts of these interviews are analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012) to derive key themes from the interviews.

3.2.2 Analysis of Quantitative Data

The survey data is analysed by using the statistical software component of Qualtrix and Excel. Only simple statistical analysis is performed. This simple statistical analysis consists of comparisons of tallied responses both within and between different categories and presenting these visually in charts and tables.

3.2.3 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is an approach that can help interpret qualitative data and thus derive meaning from the data by discovering patterns, or themes, in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). It is a method that is well-suited to analysing interview data. There are six phases in Braun and Clarke's (2012) thematic analysis process, beginning with *familiarisation*, where the researcher aims to gain an appreciation of the complete dataset, and begins to make observations about highlights and connections between different data points, as well as the dataset as a whole. This step is followed by *generating codes,* at which point the researcher is systematically organising and labelling the data, identifying patterns that reveal meaning. This process could either involve only patterns that arise from within the data itself, or it could involve the researcher interrogating the data with respect to concepts that they bring in from outside the dataset. The codes used at this stage could be semantic, having a close connection to the actual language used by participants, or latent, where the connection between the data points is less explicit and less connected to the actual language used. Once the data has been coded, the next step is to *construct themes*. This begins a process that is both iterative and heuristic, that is, the researcher repeats the process several times of clustering the different codes into potential themes, and after each iteration of this process evaluates the value of these potential themes in giving insight to the overall narrative of the data. This process is continued through the next two stages of *revising* and *defining* the themes. The iterative process of revising the themes allows earlier prototypes of themes to be superseded by themes that provide more insight into the data. The defining of the themes helps identify the boundaries of each theme and ensures that each theme makes a unique contribution to telling the story of the data. The final stage is *producing the report*, at which point the presentation of each theme in relationship to the others can be evaluated as to the

ability of the set of themes to communicate a coherent and insightful narrative arising from the dataset.

3.3 Research Design

The research is designed to investigate how Christian charities in New Zealand are navigating digitalisation. This includes obtaining both an overview of the state of digitalisation in New Zealand's Christian charities and for gaining a more in-depth understanding of the attitudes, motivations and goals of the charities with respect to their technological decision-making. To this end, the research design includes a survey of a substantive number of Christian charities, followed by a small number of one-on-one in-depth interviews.

3.3.1 Survey

To get as wide an overview as possible of digitalisation in Christian charities, all electronically contactable Christian charities on the New Zealand Charities Register are invited to partake in the online survey.

The list of Christian charities is compiled by selecting all of the charities that either indicate that they operate in the "religious activities" sector, or "provide religious services activities" as their core business. The selected charities are cross-checked to ensure they have a Christian orientation by inspecting the details in their submitted documents in the Charities Register.

The survey is comprised of fifteen questions that are all multiple choice. Multiple choice questions aid the ease of answering the respective prompts. Some of the questions ask the participants to respond via a five-point Likert scale, and others ask the participants to rank different options in their perceived order of importance or preference.

3.3.2 Interviews

Although the survey alone is expected to provide a wealth of data, purely quantitative data can be difficult to draw implications from without qualifying context. For this purpose, follow-up interviews of a small selection of survey participants are

undertaken to provide context and nuance to the broader survey data. There are ten scheduled questions planned for a semi-structured interview format, so as to leave space for follow-up questions and for pursuing topics of interest arising during the interview. The scheduled questions seek to explore the experiences, expectations and attitudes of the charity towards aspects of digitalisation that may have notably affected the organisation, its ways of interacting with its stakeholders, and/or its streamlining of operations. Interviews may occur in person or via a video-call; all interviews are auto-recorded for later transcription and analysis.

3.4 Summary

This chapter introduced the methodological framework that underpins the collection and analysis of the data in this research. This research is explanatory, as it seeks to explore and explain how Christian charities in New Zealand currently navigate the opportunities and challenges of digitalisation. This research consists of quantitative data (surveys) analysed by statistical methods, and qualitative data (interviews) analysed and interpreted by thematic analysis. Together, the quantitative and qualitative components of this research aim to give both a broad understanding of digitalisation in the respective sector and more nuanced insights into how and why particular decisions and initiatives were or were not taken up.

4 Findings

4.1 Introduction

To discover how Christian charities are navigating digitalisation, it is necessary to understand Christian charities' current digital activities, as well as their perceived challenges, opportunities, and attitudes towards operating their charity in an increasingly digital world.

To that end, a survey was sent out via email to all of the Christian charities in New Zealand. These charities were selected from the New Zealand Charities Register and included all of the charities that included "religious activities" in their purposes or activities, where those religious activities were Christian in nature.

4.2 The Survey

There was a total of 4219 invitations to the survey, of which 386 responses were received. Of these responses, 58% were from churches, and 42% were from non-churches. Of the churches, 39% were congregations of 50 or fewer people, 40% were congregations of between 50 and 150 people, 18% were congregations of between 150 and 500, and only 4% were congregations of over 500 people. These figures correspond roughly with existing statistics about church sizes in New Zealand, such as the 2014 report from the Baptist Churches of New Zealand (Taylor, 2014), which showed that 68% of Baptist churches in New Zealand had congregations of 150 or less and Derbyshire's (2013) study showing 78% of Anglican churches in New Zealand had an average attendance of less than 150 between 2001 and 2010.

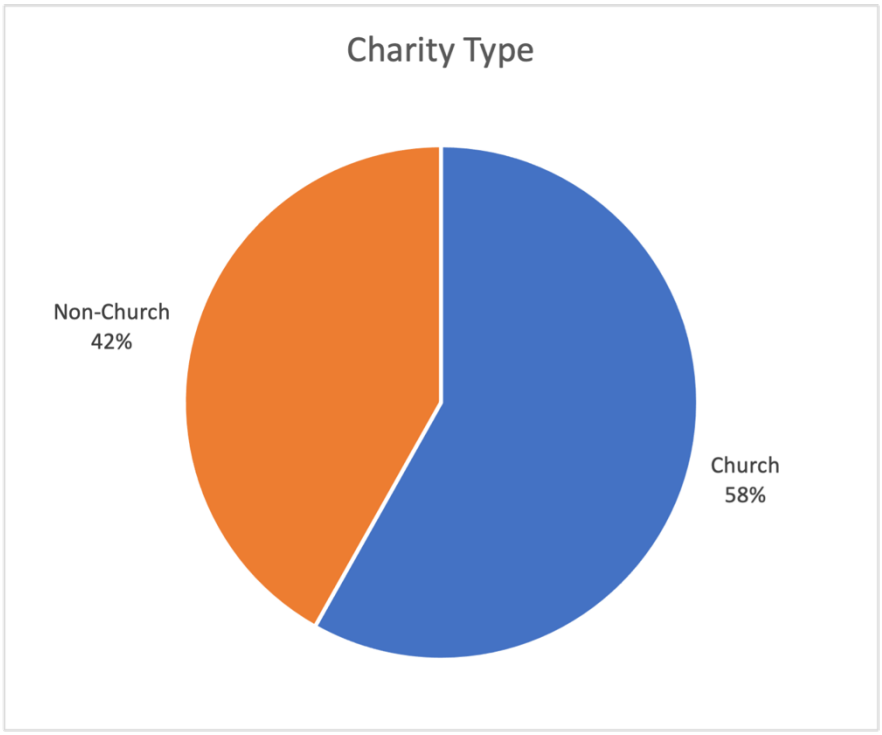

Figure 4.1: Distribution of Churches and Non-Church Charities in Survey. Source: Author.

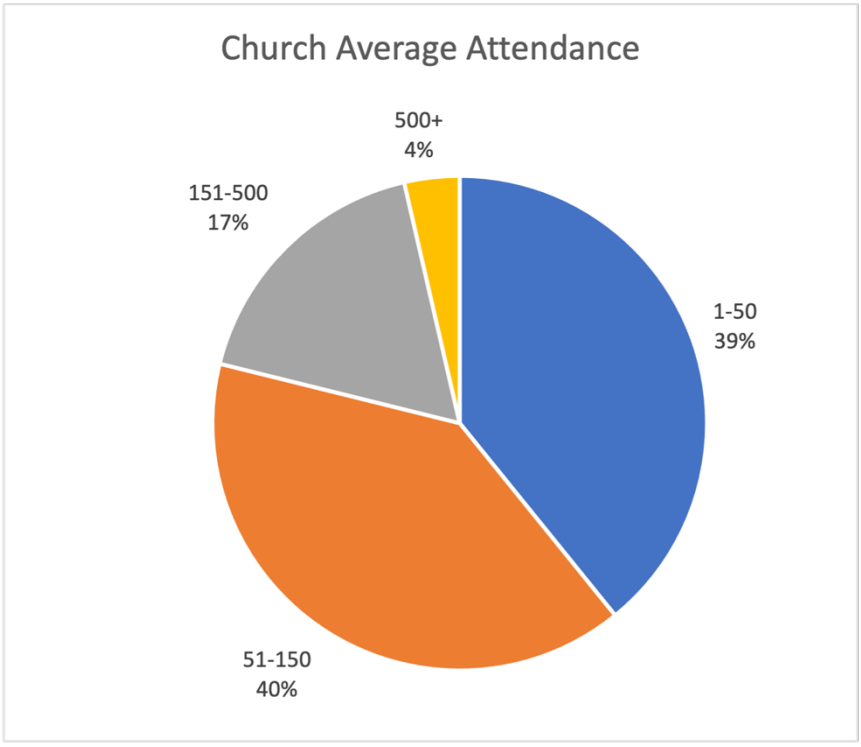

Figure 4.2: Size of Churches in Survey. Source: Author.

Of the charities that were not churches, the most common primary activities or functions of the charities were “carrying out missionary activities” (17%), a “network of churches or national or regional denominational body” (15%) and “providing services to the local community” (11%).

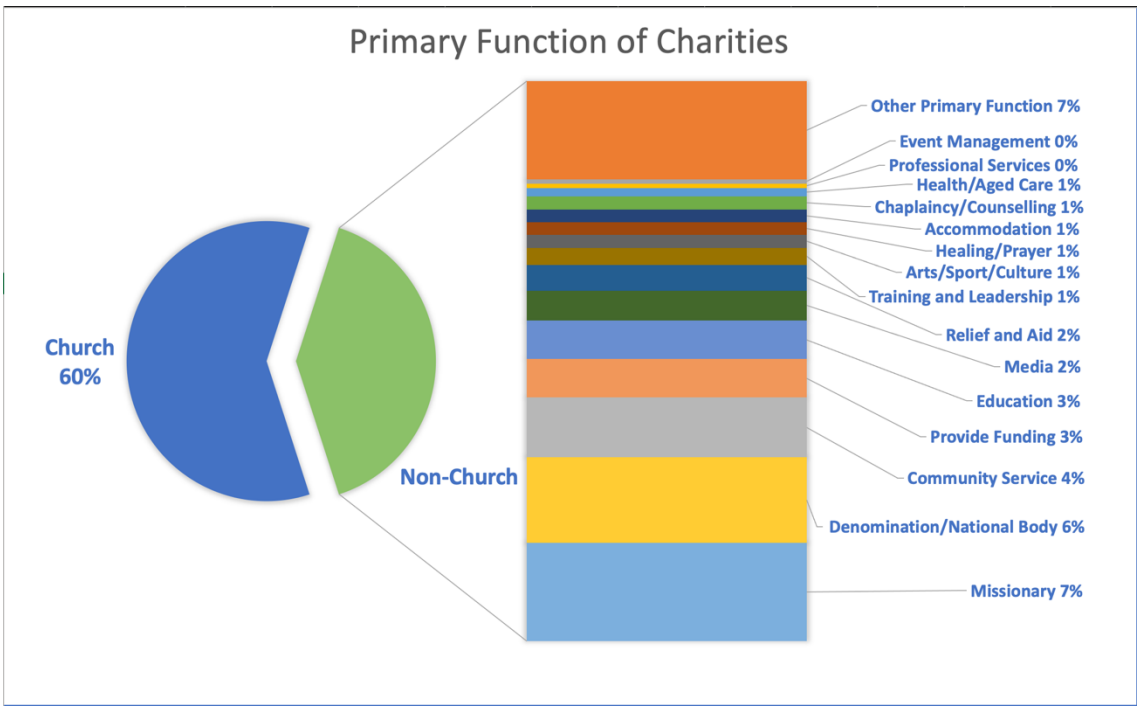

Figure 4.3: Distribution of Primary Function of Charities in Survey. Source: Author.

4.2.1 Use of Digital Technology and Processes

The charities were asked about their current use of digital technology and processes. They indicated on a five-point scale regarding each technology or process, as to whether it had been "used for over 5 years", "used for about 1 year", "used for less than 1 year", "have not used but are considering", and "have not considered using". In most of these technologies and processes, the responses followed a U-shaped pattern, where the responses were highest for the "used for over 5 years" or "have not considered using" responses at each end of the scale, and lowest for the "used for less than 1 year" responses in the middle of the scale. Some of the listed technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR)/augmented reality (AR), and blockchain were not considered for use by approximately 90% of all responses. The technologies that were most widely adopted were e-newsletters (71%), digital financial services (68%), e-commerce (59%) and cloud computing services (57%). For each of these technologies, over 60% of those which had adopted the respective technology had been using it for more than five years. Church management software was used by about 70% of the churches in the survey, compared with 16% of the non-church charities, which is to be expected as it is a tool specifically designed for churches. There were two technologies that did not fit this "U-shaped" pattern of responses, being livestreaming and online meetings. Livestreaming had been adopted

by 27% of the responding charities in the last year, with another 14% considering adopting it. Online meetings had been adopted by 38% of the responding charities in the last year, with another 7% considering it. This surge in charities adopting livestreaming and online meetings was largely driven by churches with over half of responding churches having adopted each technology for less than a year. The recent adoption of these technologies by charities was likely to have been precipitated by the Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns, with churches in particular having to find new ways to operate as they were unable to meet during the pandemic lockdown periods.

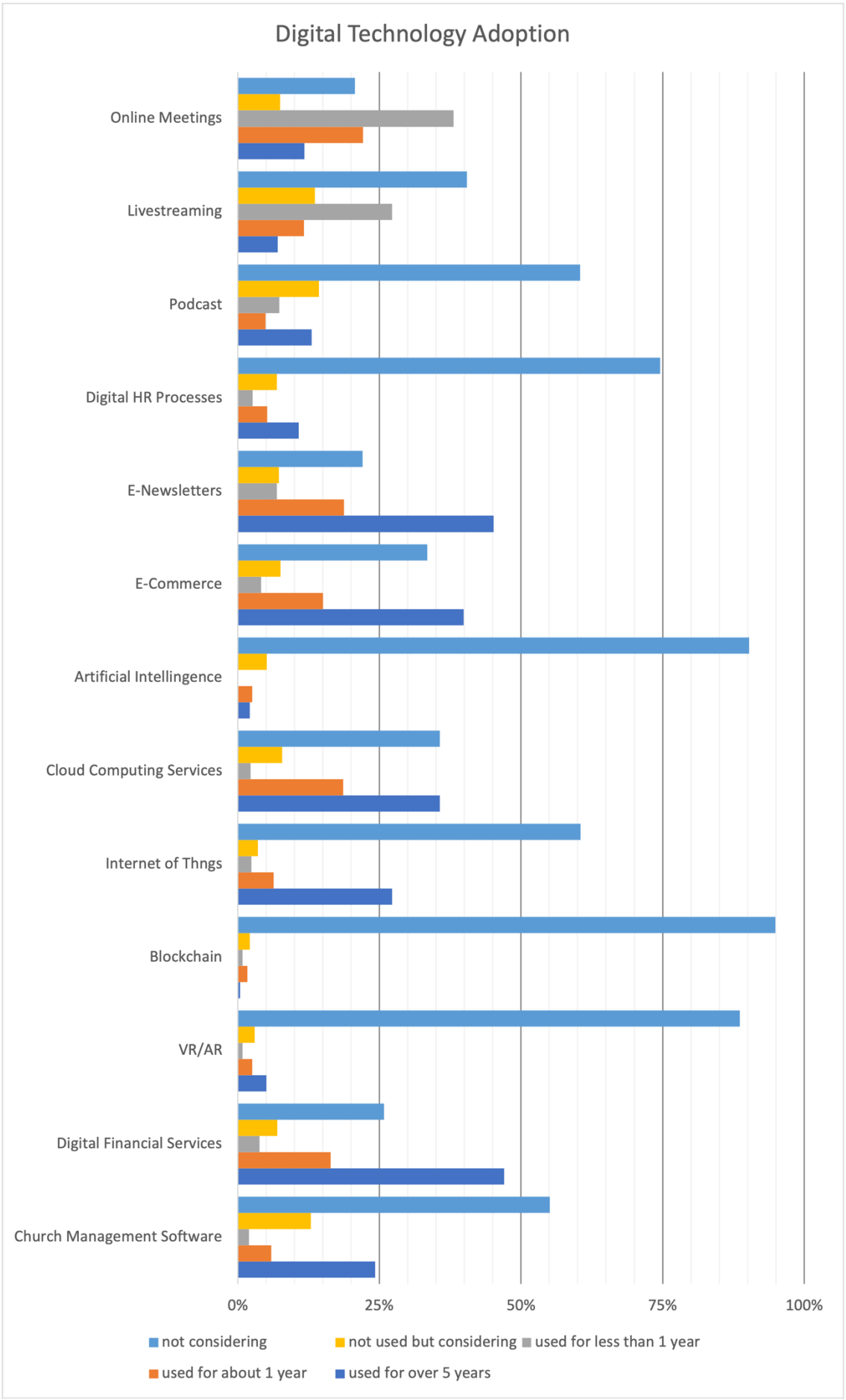

Figure 4.4: Digital Technologies Used and Considered by Christian Charities. Source: Author.

Larger churches were more likely than smaller churches to adopt several digital technologies or processes. For example, the larger a church was, the more likely it was to use church management software, digital financial services, or cloud computing services. Digital HR processes did not tend to be used by any but the largest churches, indicating that the value of such processes was not apparent until a certain economy of scale is reached.

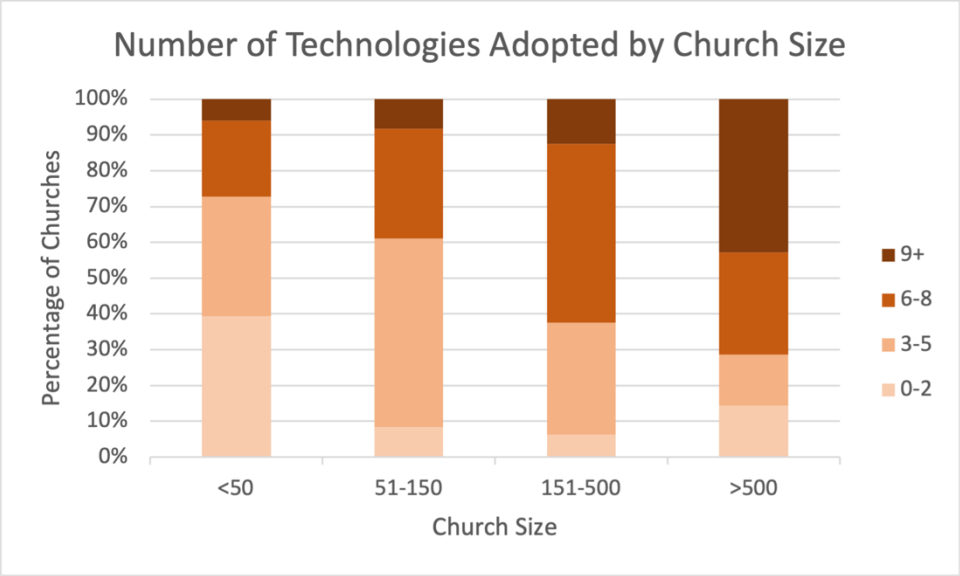

Figure 4.5: Number of Technologies Adopted by Church Size. Source: Author.

Among non-churches, charities whose main purpose was providing community services or mission work were more likely to use digital financial services, with 89% and 82% of these charities respectively already using these services.

The charities were asked to rank nine factors in terms of their importance in considering whether to adopt a new technology or process. The nine factors were: "budget", "staff skills", "organisational leadership preference", "stakeholder preference", "other organisations' experience", "expert/consultant/salesperson recommendation", "long-term strategic plans", "changes in operational need", and "alignment with organisational mission". In considering these factors, "budget" was the top-ranked factor overall. It was selected as the top ranked factor by 27% of the responding charities, and in the top three ranked factors by 57% of the responding charities, and had the lowest mean rank of 3.38. The next two top ranked factors were "staff skills" and "organisational leadership preference". "Staff skills" was ranked in the

top three by 48%, and “organisational leadership preference” in the top three by 46% of responding charities, and they had mean rankings of 3.78 and 3.91 respectively. The lowest ranked factor was “expert/consultant/salesperson recommendation” (mean = 7.42) which was in the top three ranked factors for only 4% of charities, and “other organisations’ experience” (mean = 6.71), which was in the top three ranked factors for only 6% of charities.

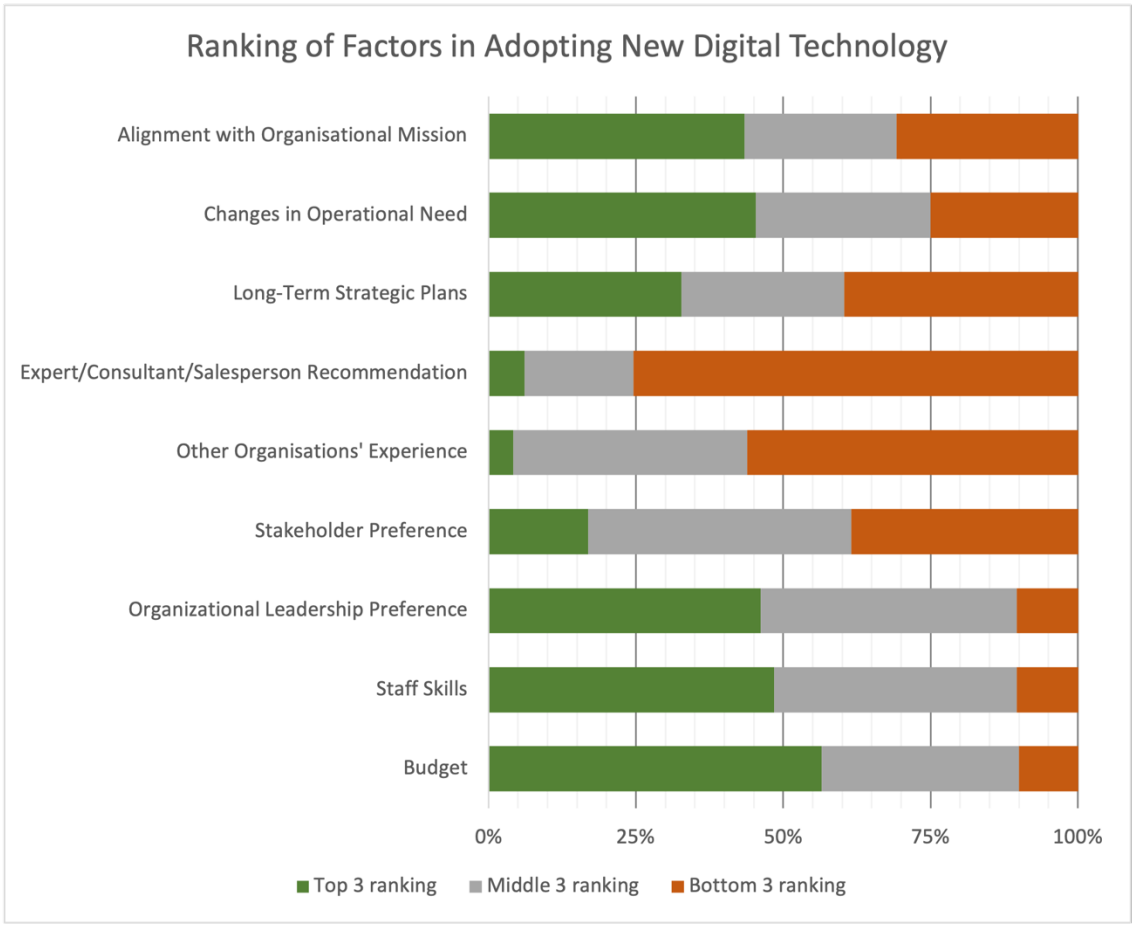

Figure 4.6: Ranking of Factors in Adopting Digital Technologies. Source: Author.

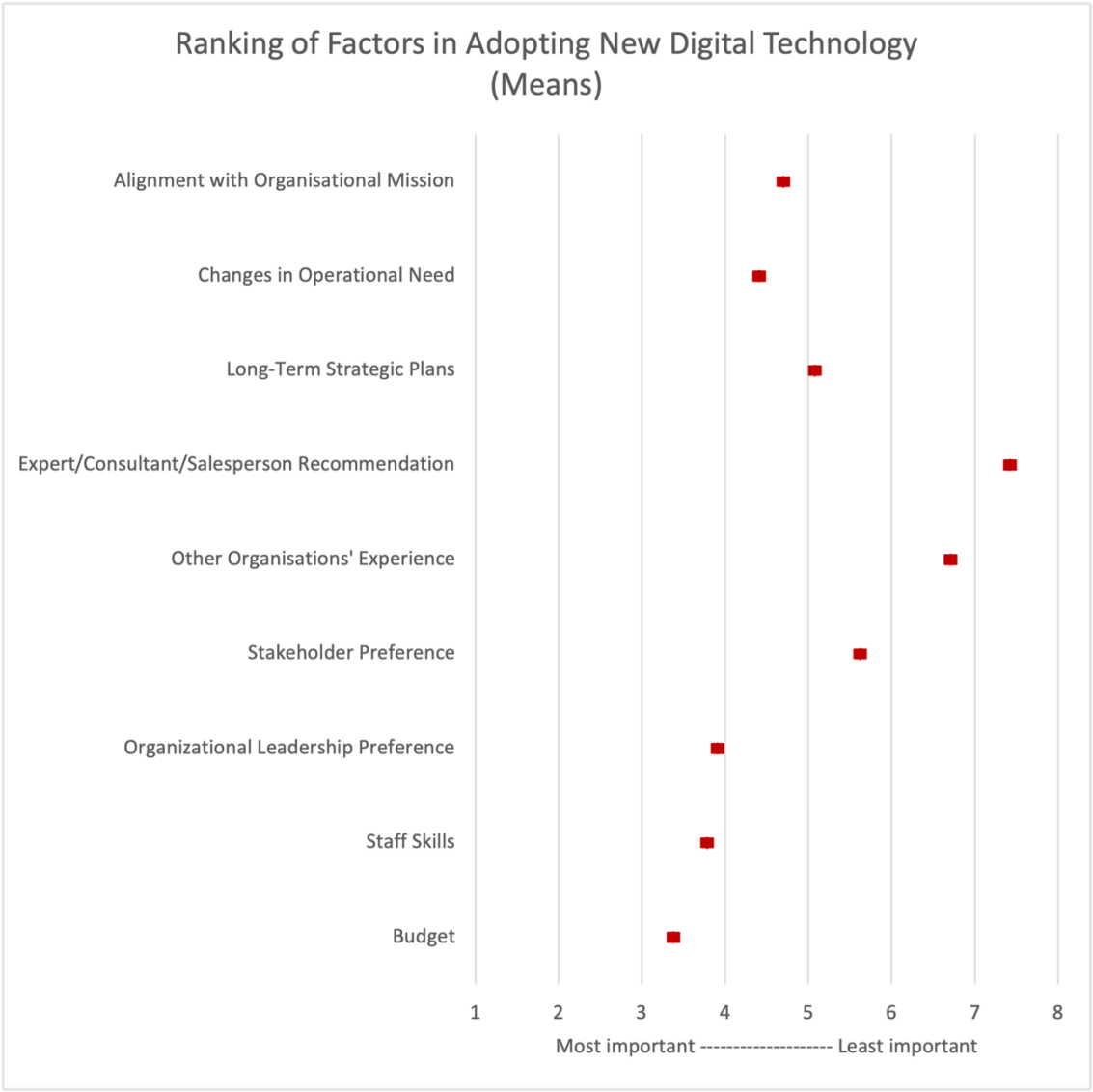

Figure 4.7: Mean Ranking of Importance of Factors in Adopting Digital Technology. Source: Author.

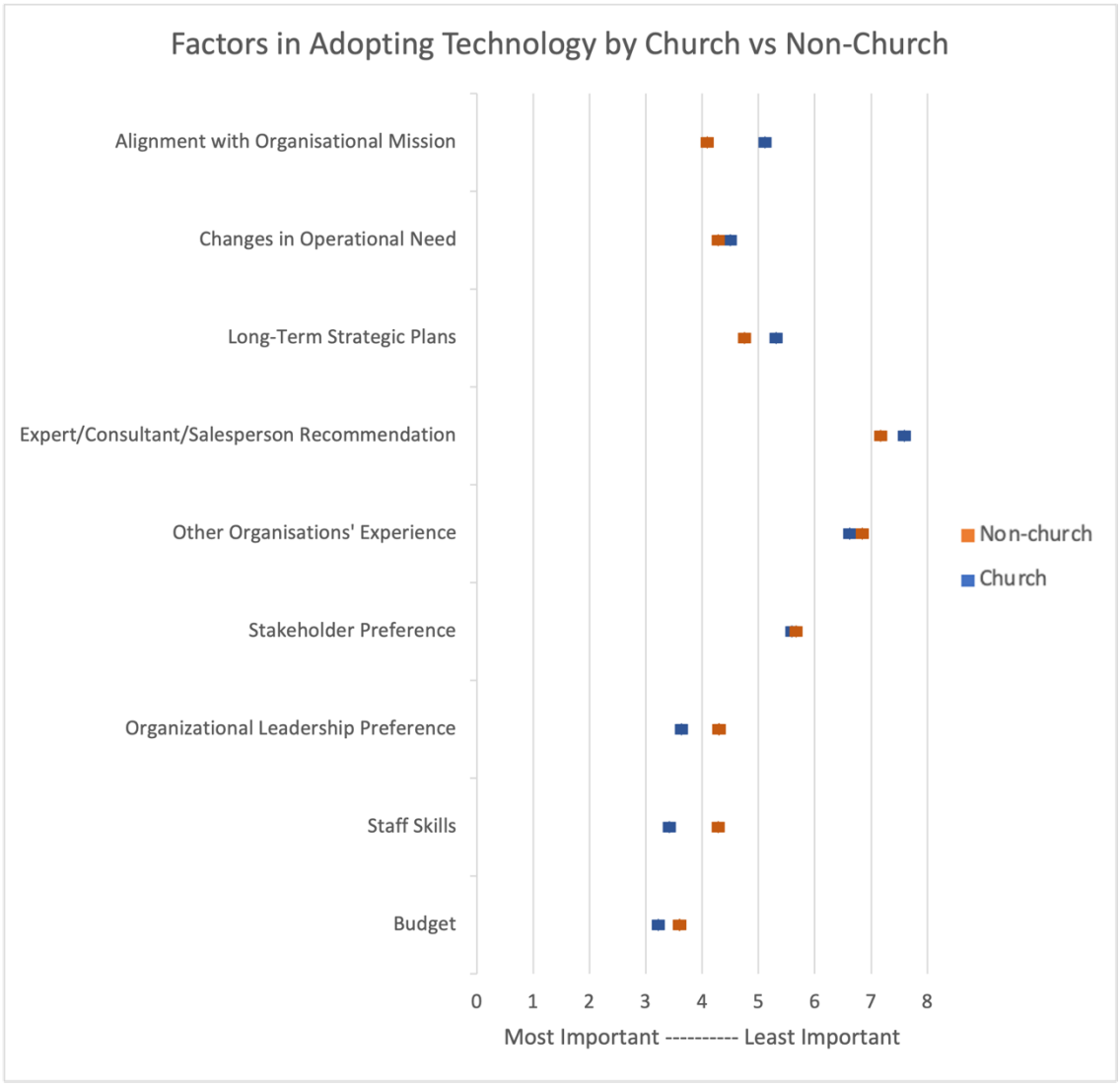

Figure 4.8: Mean Ranking of Factors in Adopting Digital Technology by Church vs Non-Church. Source: Author.

Churches followed the same ranking order as that for the charities overall. However, non-church charities differed in the rankings of "staff skills", "organisational leadership preference", "changes in operational need", and "alignment with organisational mission". Non-church charities ranked "alignment with organisational mission" second, and "changes in operational need" third. The difference in the ranking of "alignment with organisational mission" was the greatest, with churches ranking the factor at a mean of 5.12, and non-churches at a mean ranking of 4.09, more than a full ranking position in difference. This suggests that the non-church charities may be more attuned to their organisational mission than churches. There was also an observed difference in how different non-church charities ranked the factors. Charities with the main purpose of providing aid/relief, mission work, media, or leadership development ranked "alignment with organisational mission" as the highest factor, whereas those

with the main purpose of funding, community work or education ranked “budget” as the highest factor. The outlier was denominational bodies and church networks that ranked “organisational leadership preference” the highest. Within churches, there were differences in the rankings compared to the overall for both the smallest churches (those with congregations less than 50) and the largest (those with congregations larger than 500). With the smallest churches, “budget” fell to the third-ranked factor in deciding whether to adopt digital technology or processes, and for the largest churches, it fell to the fourth-ranked factor. For the smallest churches, the top factor was “staff skills”, followed by “organisational leader preference”. Given that many of these churches had only one staff member who was likely to also be the organisational leader, it makes sense that their preference and skillset dictated choices in digital technology. For the largest churches, the greatest factor was “alignment with organisational mission”, followed by “long-term strategic plans” and “changes in operational needs”. This focus on organisational mission and strategy may indicate that a more corporate culture is likely to exist in these larger churches, but also may indicate that their budget is sufficient to give them the freedom to consider other factors more. These largest churches also ranked “staff skills” as the third-lowest ranked factor, perhaps indicating, along similar lines to their lower ranking of “budget”, that they have the financial freedom to hire or train staff for any new digital technology or processes they may adopt.

4.2.2 Employment in Digital Roles

The charities were asked about their employment of people in digital roles. Of these eight digital roles, only two – digital designer and social media manager – had more than 10% of responding charities employing someone in that role (11% employed a digital designer and 20% employed a social media manager.) A very high proportion of charities did not employ anyone in digital roles – 85% of churches and 64% of non-church charities indicated that they did not employ someone in one of the digital roles mentioned.

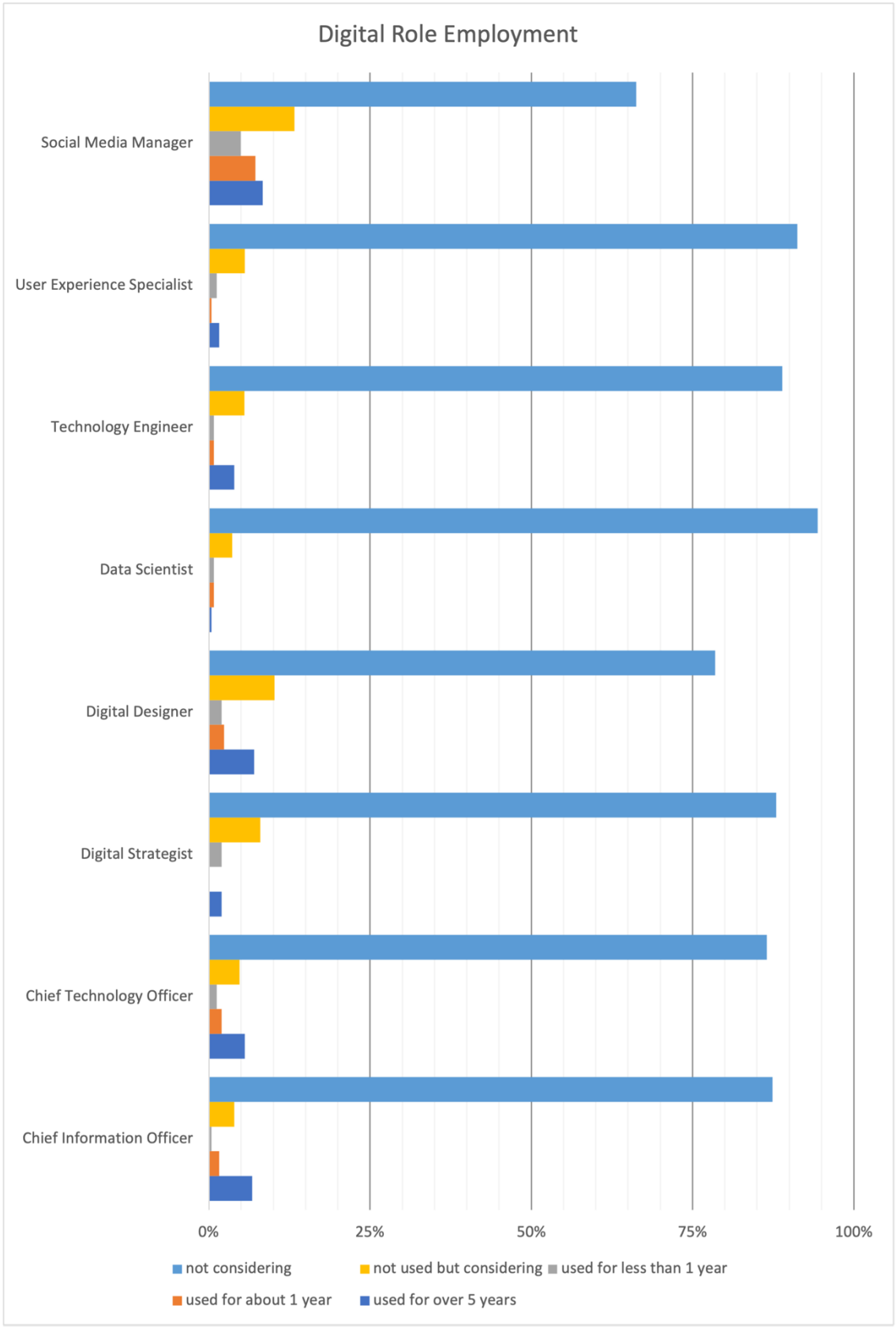

Figure 4.9: Digital Roles Employed and Considered by Christian Charities. Source: Author.

The charities ranked ten factors in terms of their importance in considering whether to employ for a new digital role: “budget”, “staff skills”, “capacity of volunteers to fill

role", "organisational leadership preference", "stakeholder preference", "other organisations' experience", "expert/consultant/salesperson recommendation", "long-term strategic plans", "changes in organisational needs", and "alignment with organisational mission".

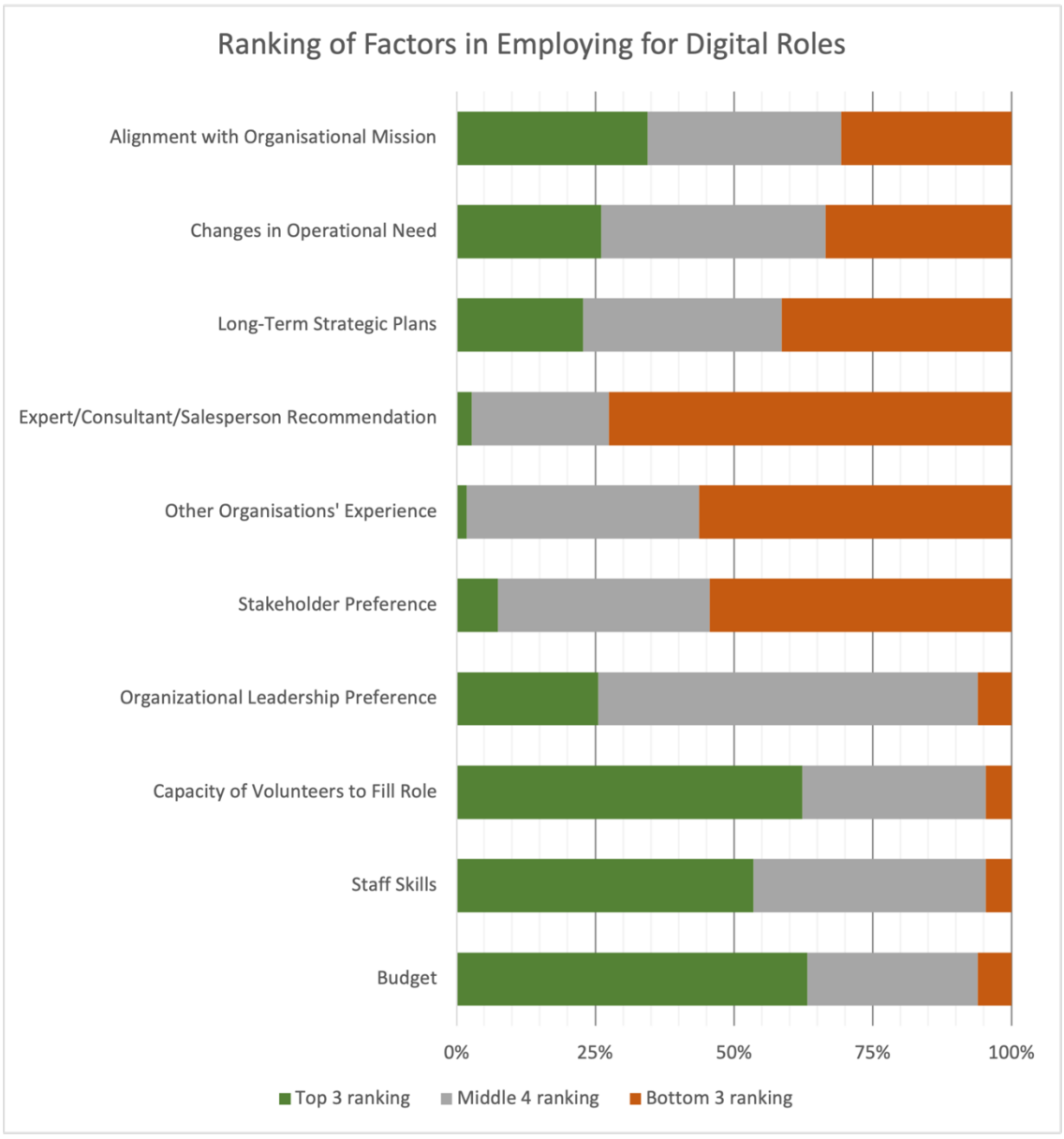

Figure 4.10: Ranking of Importance of Factors in Employing for Digital Roles. Source: Author.

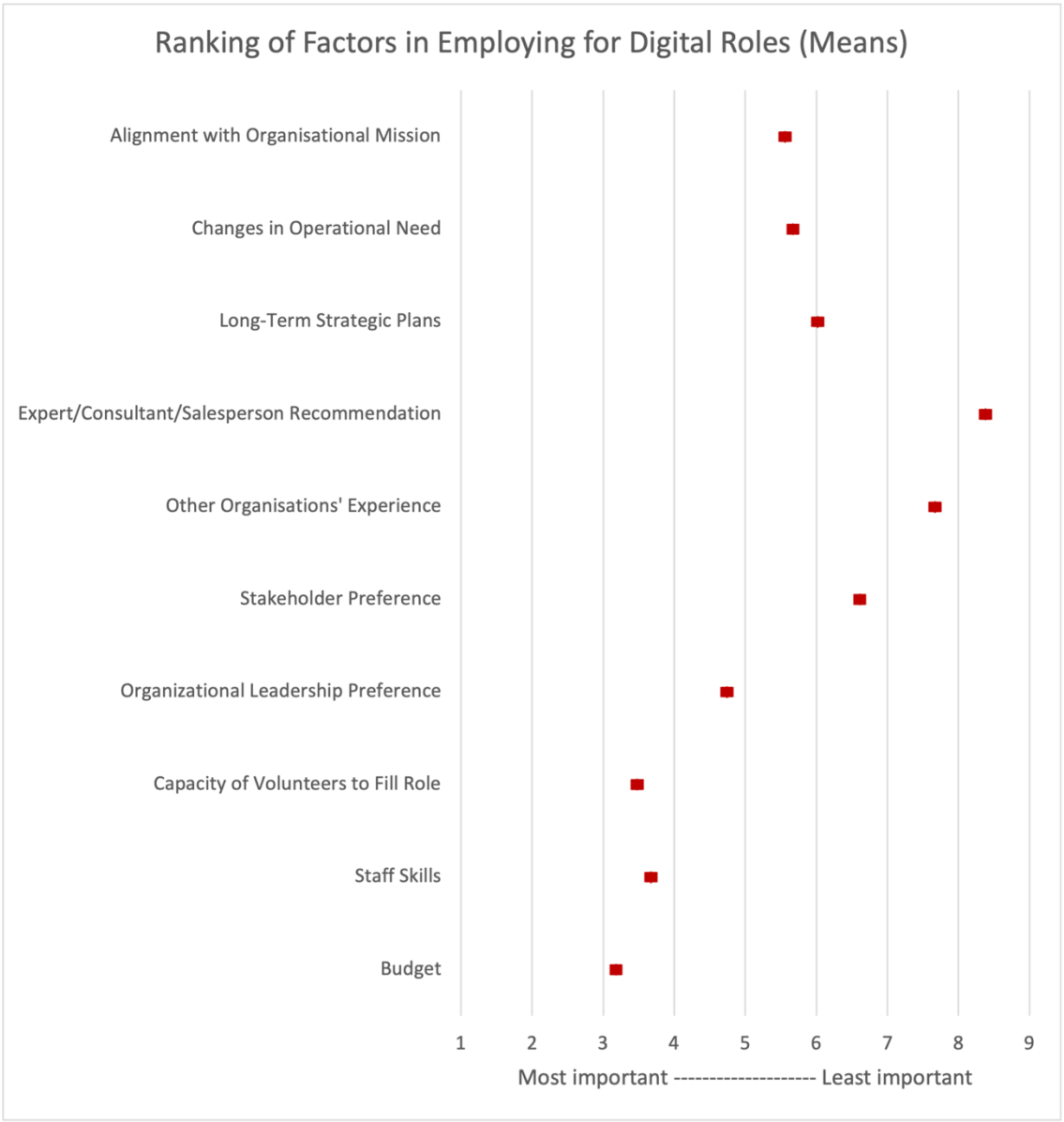

Figure 4.11: Mean Ranking of Importance of Factors in Employing for a Digital Role. Source: Author.

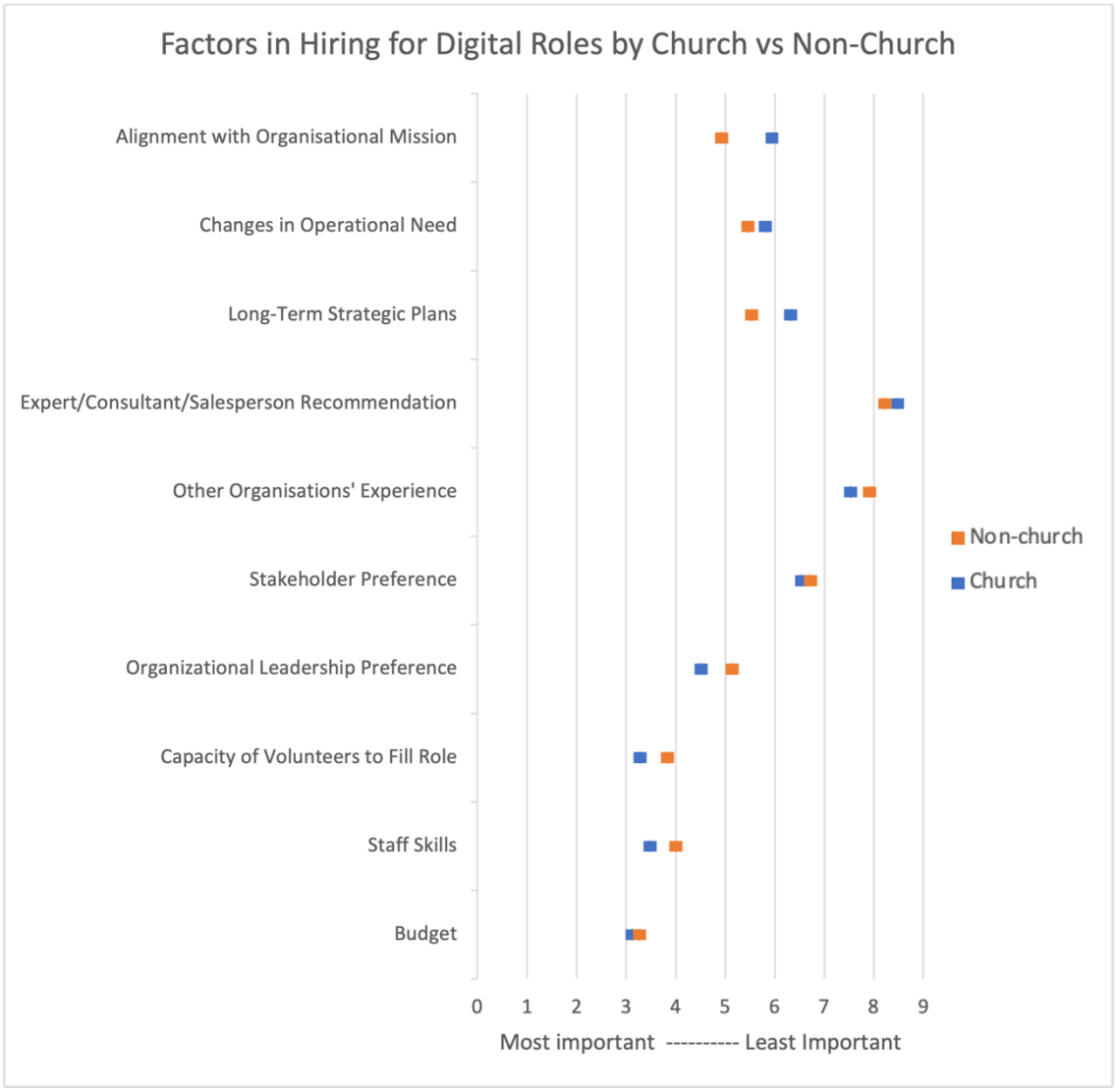

Figure 4.12: Mean Ranking of Importance of Factors in Employing for Digital Roles by Church vs Non-Church. Source: Author.

Again, the top-ranked factor overall was “budget” which was ranked first by 34% of all organisations, with a mean ranking of 3.18, followed by “capacity of volunteers to fill role” (mean = 3.48) and “staff skills” (mean = 3.67). It was also the top-ranked factor within both the church and non-church groups. However, there was variation in the responses for different-sized churches. The largest churches (congregation over 500) ranked “alignment with organisation mission” highest (only two churches of this size completed this question, and both ranked “alignment with organisation mission” first), with “budget” ranking towards the middle and bottom, and the smallest churches (congregation under 50) ranking “capacity of volunteers to fill role” marginally higher than “budget” (mean = 3.29 for “capacity of volunteers to fill role”, versus mean = 3.31 for “budget”). Within non-church charities, aid/relief charities ranked “alignment with organisational mission” the highest factor, education charities ranked “staff skills” the

highest, media charities had “staff skills” and “capacity of volunteers to fill roles” tied for the highest rank, and mission work charities had “capacity of volunteers to fill roles” and “change in organisational needs” tied for the highest rank.

4.2.3 Digital Investment

Digital Budget Allocation	Digital Budget Expected Change					
	Decrease significantly	Decrease a little	Stay about the same	Increase a little	Increase significantly	Total
More than 10%	0%	0%	3%	1%	1%	5%
5-10%	0%	1%	7%	5%	1%	14%
1-5%	0%	2%	30%	15%	1%	48%
Less than 1%	1%	1%	25%	6%	0%	33%
Total	1%	4%	65%	27%	3%	

Figure 4.13: Current Versus Expected Digital Expenditure. Source: Author.

The survey included questions regarding the charities’ budget allocation to digital expenses. This budget allocation included equipment, software, digital services, and staff in digital roles. Almost half (48%) of all the charities indicated that they spent between one and five percent of their budget on digital expenses, this was followed by approximately a third (33%) who spent less than one percent of their budget on digital expenses. Fourteen percent of charities spent between five and ten percent of their budget on digital expenses, and only five percent of charities spent more than ten percent of their budget on digital expenses. Within non-church charities, the charities with a primary function of leadership development recorded the highest budget allocation with five out of the seven responding indicating a budget allocation of at least five percent, followed by those whose primary function was media, where half of the responding organisations indicated a budget allocation of at least five percent. Almost two-thirds (65%) of the charities expected their spending on digital expenses to be about the same for the next budget cycle, with about a quarter (27%) expecting it to increase a little. Churches with a greater budget allocation to digital expenses were slightly more inclined to expect an increase in budget allocation towards digital than those with a lower budget allocation. Within non-church charities, those whose purpose was mission work and media were most likely to anticipate an increase in

budget allocation towards digital expenses, with more than half of the nineteen charities doing mission work anticipating an increase, and only one a decrease, and two of the six media charities anticipating an increase, and none a decrease in the next cycle of budget allocation.

4.2.4 Organisational Perspectives

The survey asked the charities to agree or disagree with statements relating to a range of categories. The categories were: the use of digital data and analytics, the organisation's interaction with donors, the organisation's interaction with their volunteers, the organisation's fundraising, the organisation's engagement with the community, the organisation's attitudes and beliefs, and the organisation's mission. Each category had several questions which were answered on a five-point scale (*strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree or disagree, somewhat disagree, and strongly disagree*). For the purpose of comparing the responses, mean scores for these questions were calculated giving *strongly agree* a value of 2, *somewhat agree* a value of 1, *neither agree nor disagree* a value of 0, *somewhat disagree* a value of -1 and *strongly disagree* a value of -2.

4.2.4.1 Data and Analytics

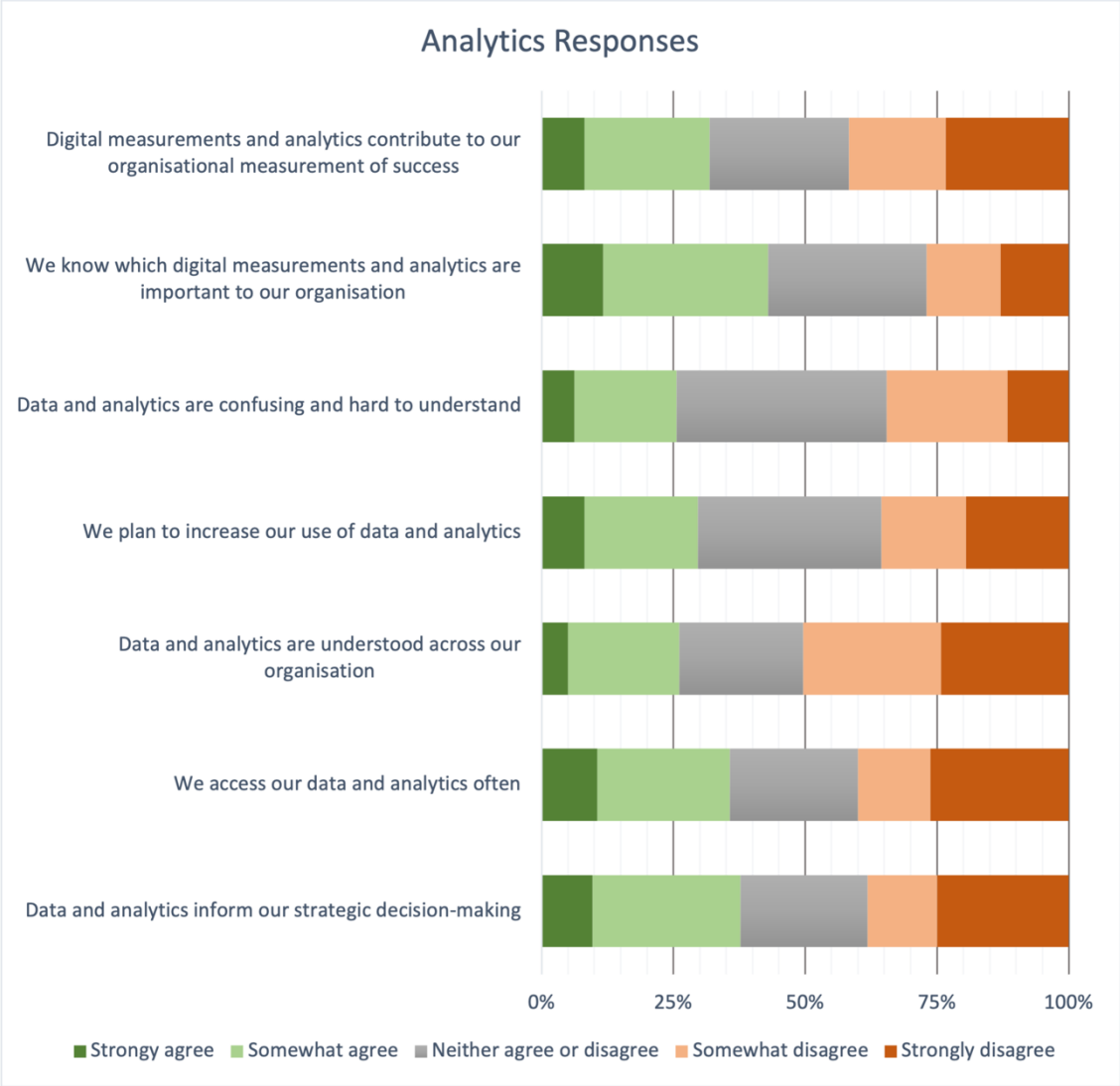

Figure 4.14: Responses to Questions About Analytics. Source: Author.

Figure 4.15: Mean Scores of Questions About Analytics. Source. Author.

Concerning the responses about the use of digital data and analytics, the organisations gave a range of responses that generally centred around the mid-point of the scale (the highest mean was 0.15 and the lowest mean was -0.43). The question that most charities agreed with was whether they know what measurements and analytics are important to their organisation, with over 40% agreeing, and about a quarter disagreeing. Churches and non-churches differed in their responses on the question of whether data and analytics were understood across the organisation, with 40% of non-churches disagreeing, but over half of churches disagreeing. The smallest churches (congregations less than 50 people) were more likely than other churches to disagree that data and analytics informed their strategic decision making, that they accessed their data and analytics often, that data and analytics were understood across their organisation, that they planned to increase their use of data and analytics, that they know which digital measurements and analytics are important to their organisation, and that the digital measurements and analytics contribute to their organisation's

measure of success. They were more likely than the other churches, however, to agree that data and analytics are confusing and hard to understand. The largest churches (congregations over 500 people) were more likely than other churches to agree that data and analytics inform their strategic decision making, that data and analytics are understood across their organisation, that digital measurements and analytics contribute to their organisational measure of success, and much more likely to agree that they access their data and analytics often.

4.2.4.2 Donors

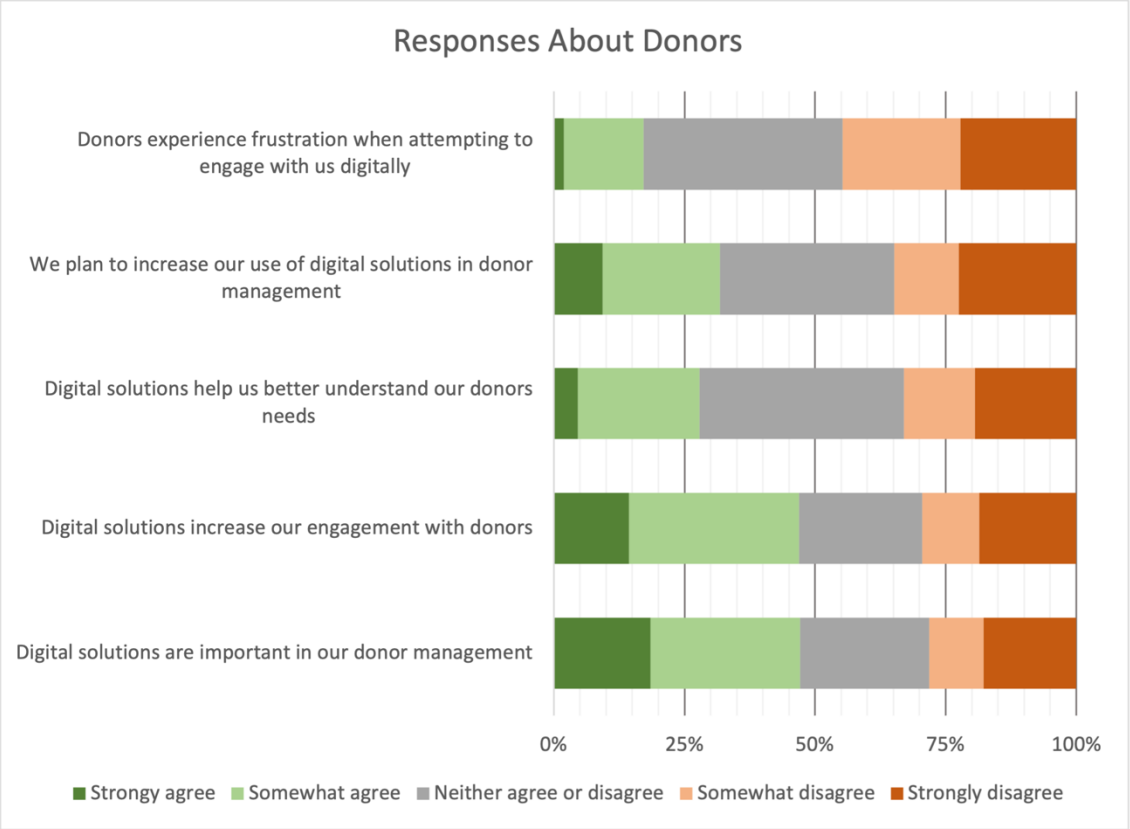

Figure 4.16: Responses to Questions About Donors. Source: Author.

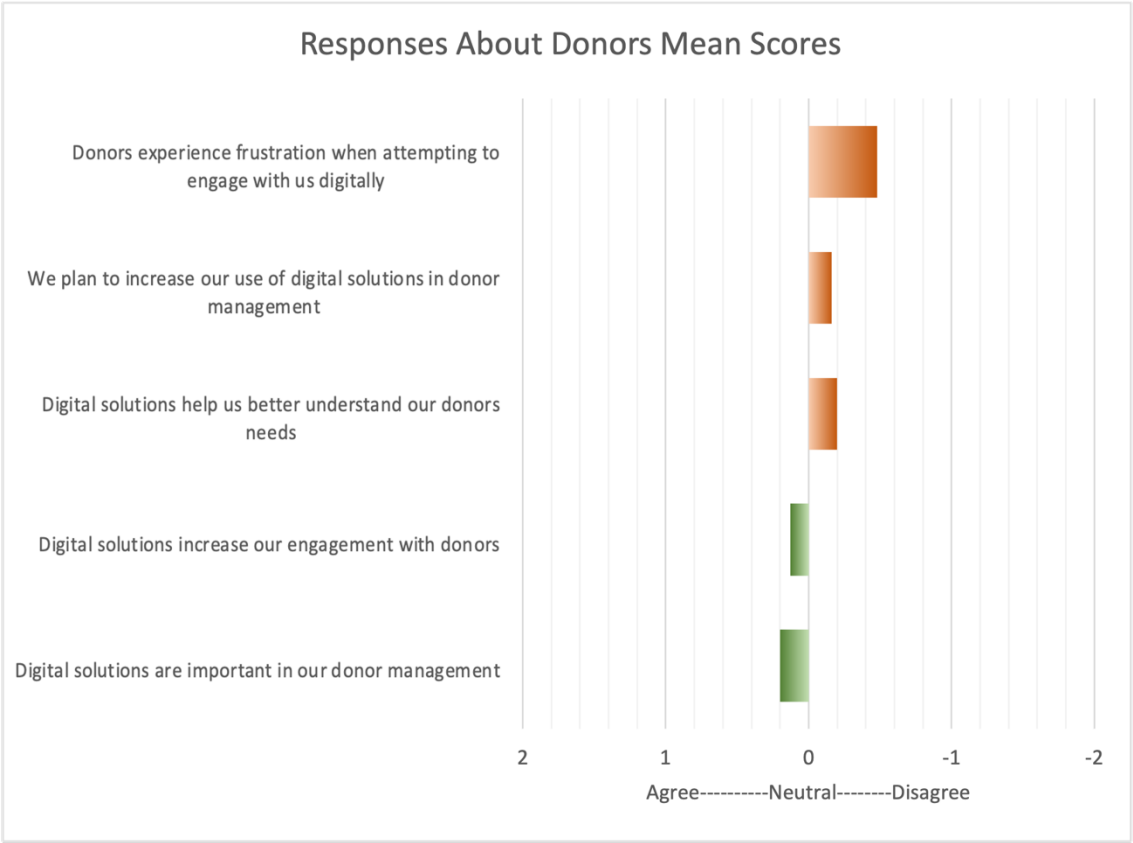

Figure 4.17: Mean Scores of Responses to Questions About Donors. Source: Author.

Regarding donors, the responses again generally centred around the mid-point of the scale with mean scores ranging between 0.2 and -0.48. Almost half of the charities agreed that digital solutions are important in their donor management and that digital solutions increase their engagement with donors. Conversely, almost half of the charities disagreed that donors experience frustration when attempting to engage with them digitally. Churches were more likely to disagree strongly that digital solutions help them better understand their donors' needs and that they plan to increase their use of digital solutions in donor management, with about the same percentage of churches disagreeing strongly as the total percentage of non-churches who somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed in both of these cases. Church size seemed to be a factor in how the questions were answered with the smallest churches more likely than the other churches to disagree that digital solutions are important to their donor management, that digital solutions increase engagement with their donors, that digital solutions help them better understand their donors' needs, and that they plan to increase their use of digital solutions in donor management. On the other end, the largest churches were more likely than the other churches to agree with each of these statements.

4.2.4.3 Volunteers

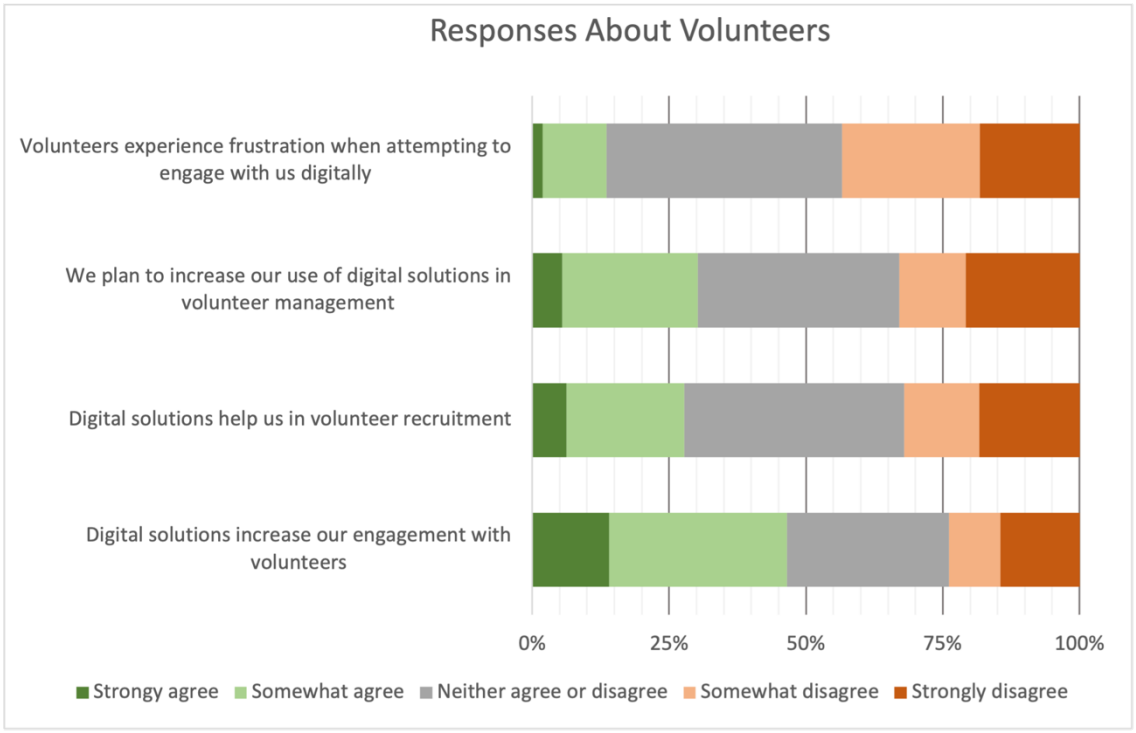

Figure 4.18: Responses to Questions About Volunteers. Source: Author.

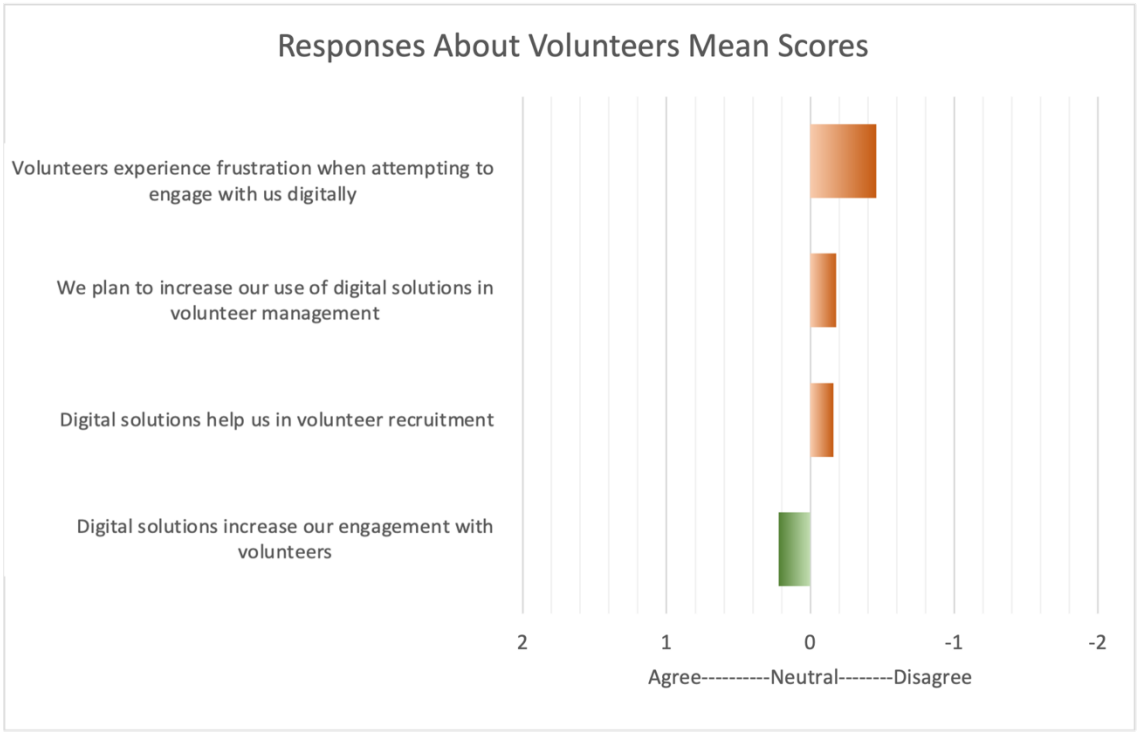

Figure 4.19: Mean Scores of Responses to Questions About Volunteers. Source: Author.

Most of the responses on the topic of volunteers again centred around the mid-point of the scale with mean scores ranging between 0.22 and -0.46. Almost half of the

charities agreed that digital solutions increase their engagement with volunteers. Non-church charities were more likely than churches to agree with this, with over half of them agreeing. Among churches, there was a difference depending on the size of the churches, with the smallest churches (congregations less than 50) being less likely to agree with all of the statements about volunteers. Interestingly, as well as being less likely to agree that "digital solutions help increase their engagement with volunteers", "digital solutions help in volunteer recruitment", and "plan to increase use of digital solutions in volunteer management", they were also less likely to agree that "volunteers experience frustration when attempting to engage with us digitally". This may indicate that these churches are not active digitally, and so consider there are no digital interactions that could cause frustration for volunteers. Among non-church charities, those whose main purpose is leadership development were most likely to agree that digital solutions increase their engagement with volunteers.

4.2.4.4 Fundraising

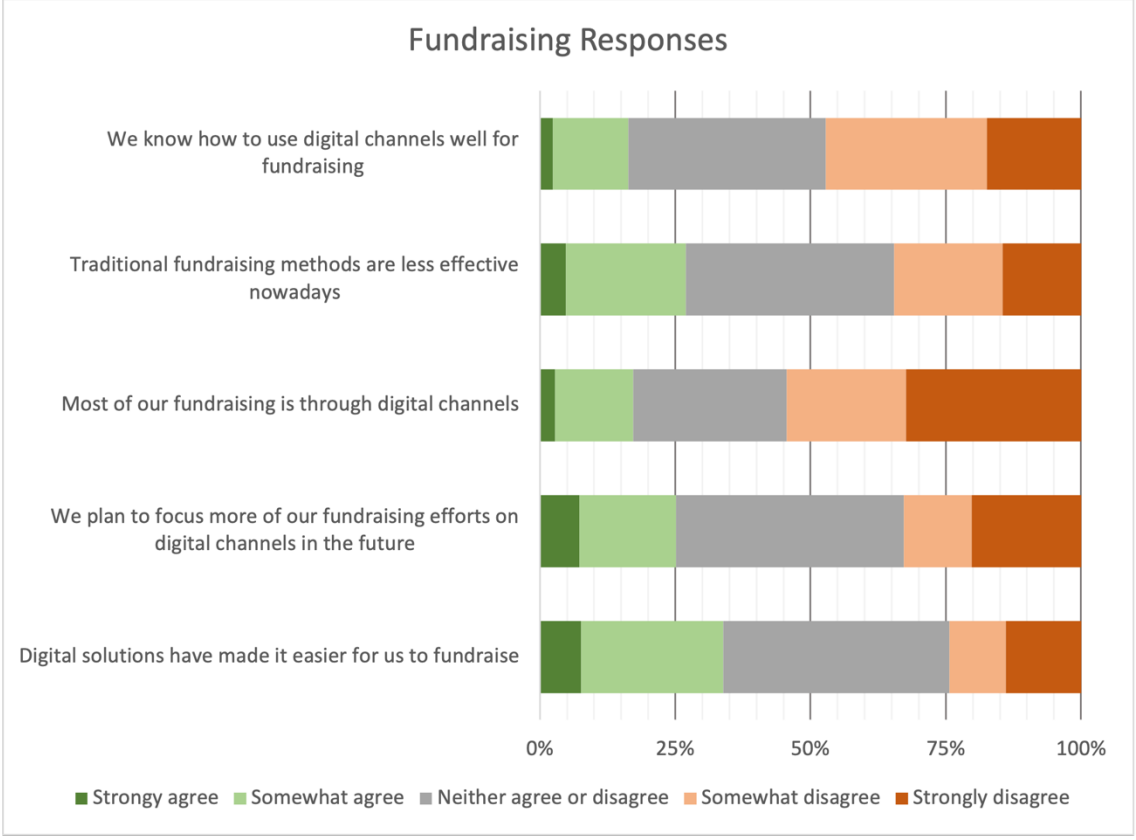

Figure 4.20: Responses to Questions About Fundraising. Source: Author.

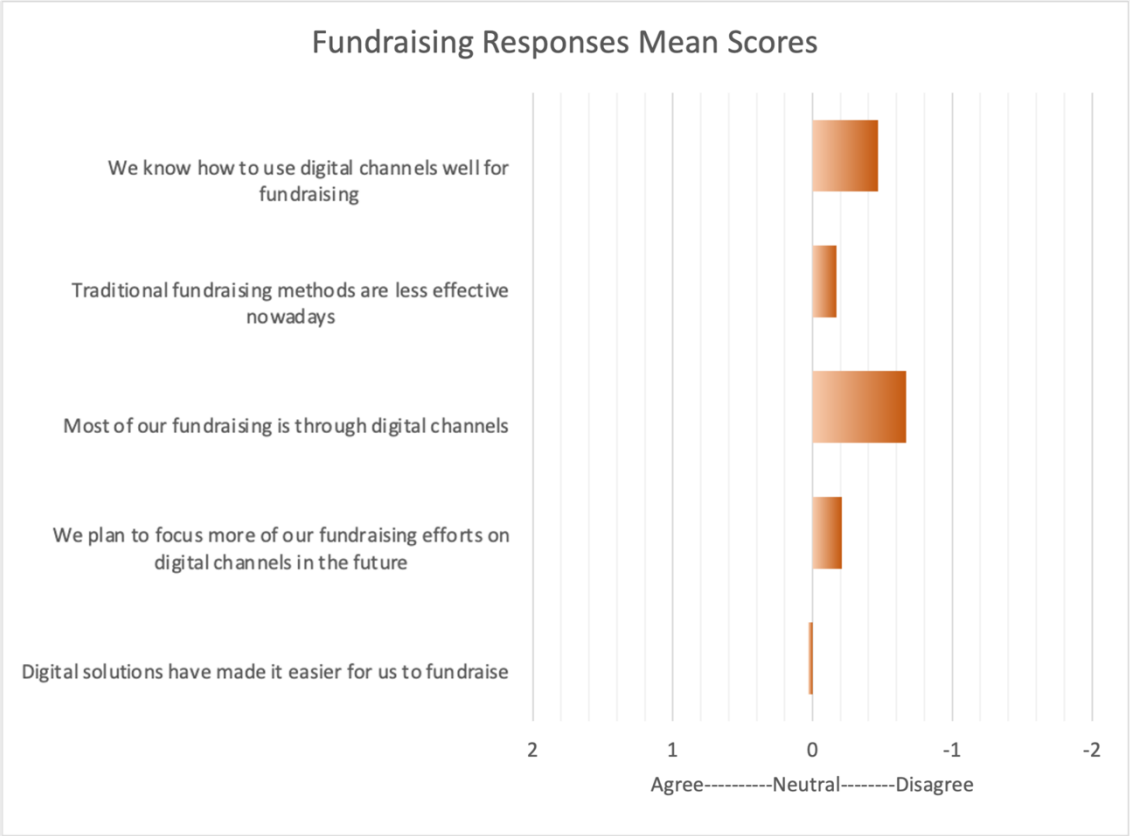

Figure 4.21: Mean Scores of Responses to Questions About Fundraising. Source: Author.

With fundraising, again most of the responses centred around the mid-point of the scale. However, over half of the charities disagreed that "most of their fundraising is through digital channels". There were also differences between the responses from churches and non-churches. Whereas less than 20% of churches indicated that they plan to focus more of their fundraising efforts on digital channels in the future, over a third of non-church charities indicated that they planned to do so. Whereas 60% of churches disagreed that most of their fundraising was through digital channels, only 40% of non-church charities disagreed. Whereas 8% of churches strongly agreed that "traditional fundraising methods are less effective nowadays", there were no non-church charities who strongly disagreed, indicating that perhaps the fundraising pathways for churches and non-churches are being affected differently by the changes in digital technology and culture. The smallest churches were more likely than other churches to disagree with each of the questions in this section, again suggesting that these churches were less likely to either have digital means of fundraising or feel the need for them. Among non-church charities, those whose purpose was aid/relief were considerably more likely than other non-church charities to agree that digital solutions have made it easier to fundraise (mean = 1.50 versus mean = 0.23 for all non-church

charities) and also that they plan to focus more of their fundraising on digital channels in the future (mean = 1.50 versus mean = 0.06 for all non-church charities). It could be that these charities fundraise at a larger scale than others and so have felt a greater need for digital solutions in fundraising.

4.2.4.5 *Community Engagement*

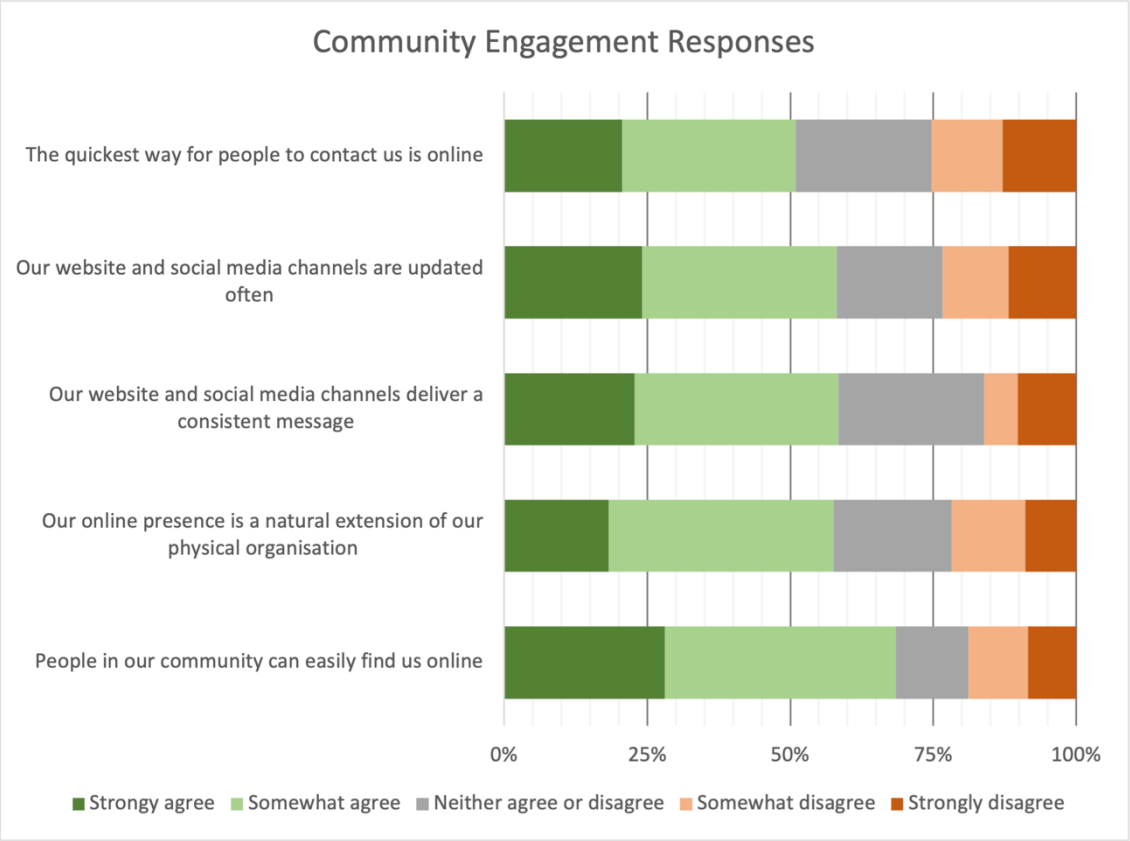

Figure 4.22: Responses to Questions About Community Engagement. Source: Author.

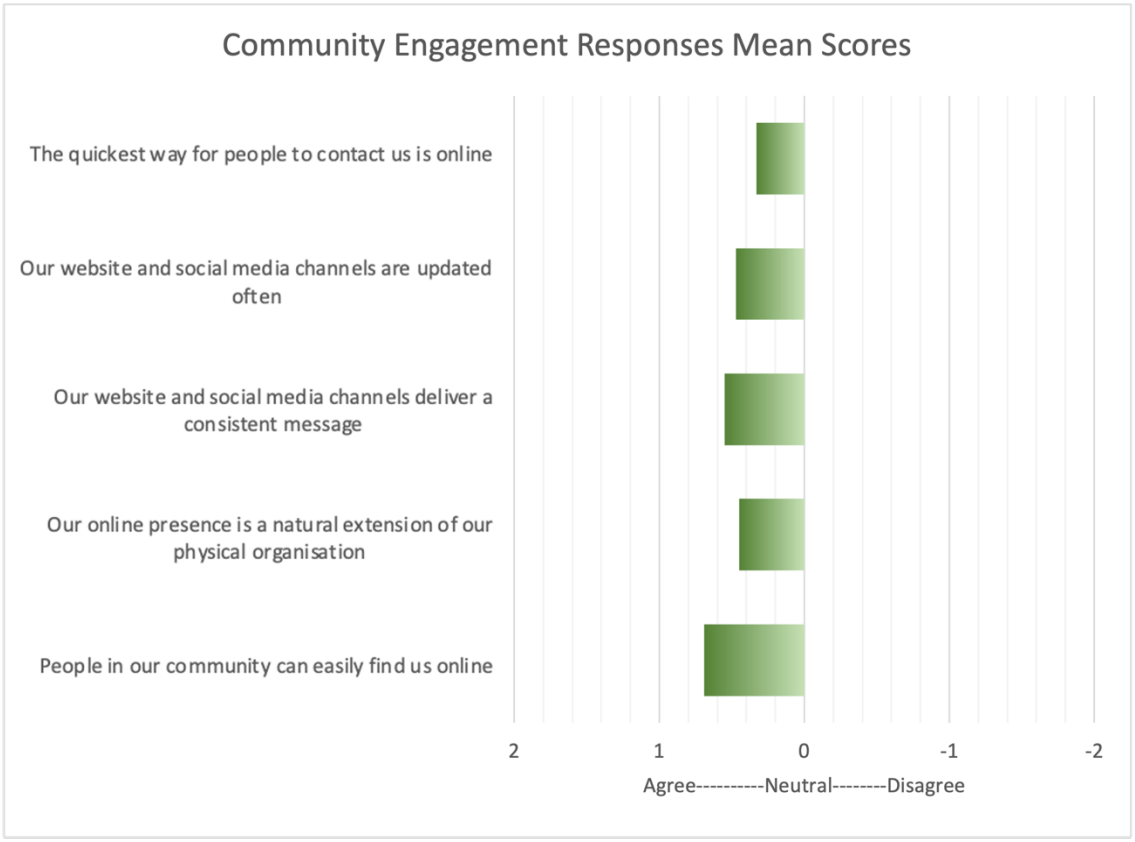

Figure 4.23: Mean Scores of Responses to Questions About Community Engagement. Source: Author.

In the responses concerning community engagement, over half of the charities agreed with each of the statements. Particularly strong agreement was found in response to whether "people in the community can easily find us online" which over two-thirds of charities agreed with (68%). There were also only 16% of charities who disagreed that their "website and social media channels deliver a consistent message". On both of these questions, the responses from churches were stronger than those from non-churches. Again, the smallest churches were less likely than other churches to agree with these statements. The largest churches (congregations over 500) were considerably more likely than other churches to agree that their "website and social media channels deliver a consistent message" (mean = 1.67 versus mean = 0.54 for other churches), and that their "website and social media channels are updated often" (mean = 1.67 versus mean = 0.46 for other churches).

4.2.4.6 Organisational Attitudes and Beliefs

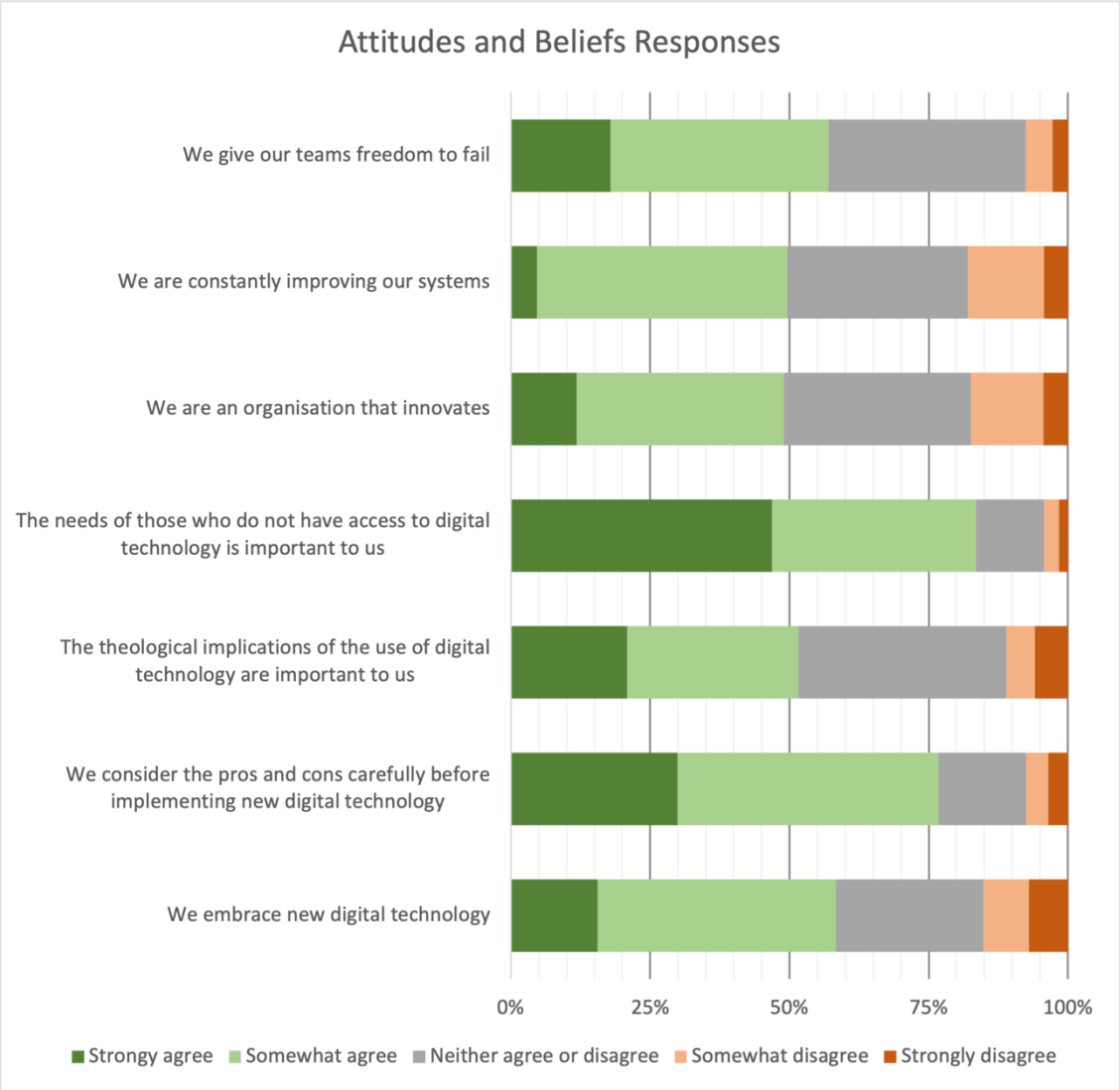

Figure 4.24: Responses to Questions About Organisational Attitudes and Beliefs. Source: Author.

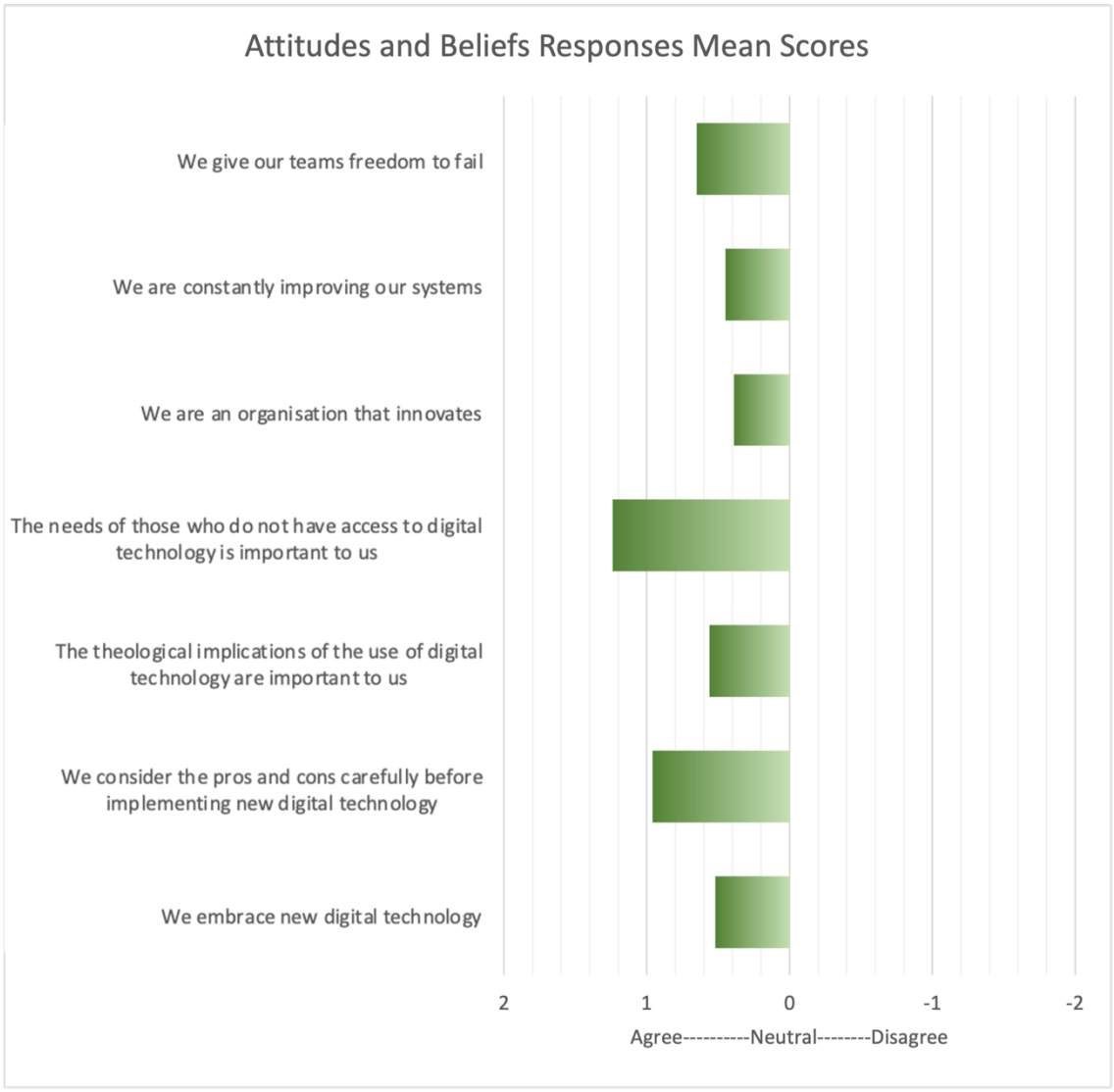

Figure 4.25: Mean Scores of Responses to Questions About Organisational Attitudes and Beliefs. Source: Author.

All of the statements about organisational attitudes and beliefs were agreed to by half or more of the charities. Two statements received very strong agreement. Almost three-quarters (73%) of all charities agreed, and only 7% disagreed, that they "consider the pros and cons carefully before implementing new digital technology". Almost half (47%) of all charities strongly agreed, with a further 36% somewhat agreeing, and less than 5% disagreeing, that "the needs of those who don't have access to digital technology is important" to them. The responses to these questions were agreed upon more strongly by churches than non-churches, although the overall pattern for non-churches still holds. The commitment to "considering the pros and cons carefully before implementing new digital technology" implies that this group is generally conservative in their adoption strategies. However, this needs to be balanced with more than half of the charities agreeing that they embrace new digital technology",

which indicates that their caution and conservatism do not constitute an outright rejection of the technology. The concern for "the needs of those who do not have access to digital technology" suggests that the digital divide is felt acutely in many of these organisations. The largest churches were more likely than other churches to agree with all of these statements but one, that the "theological implications of their use of technology is important to them", which they were less likely than other churches to agree with (mean = 0.00 versus mean = 0.46 for all churches).

4.2.4.7 Mission

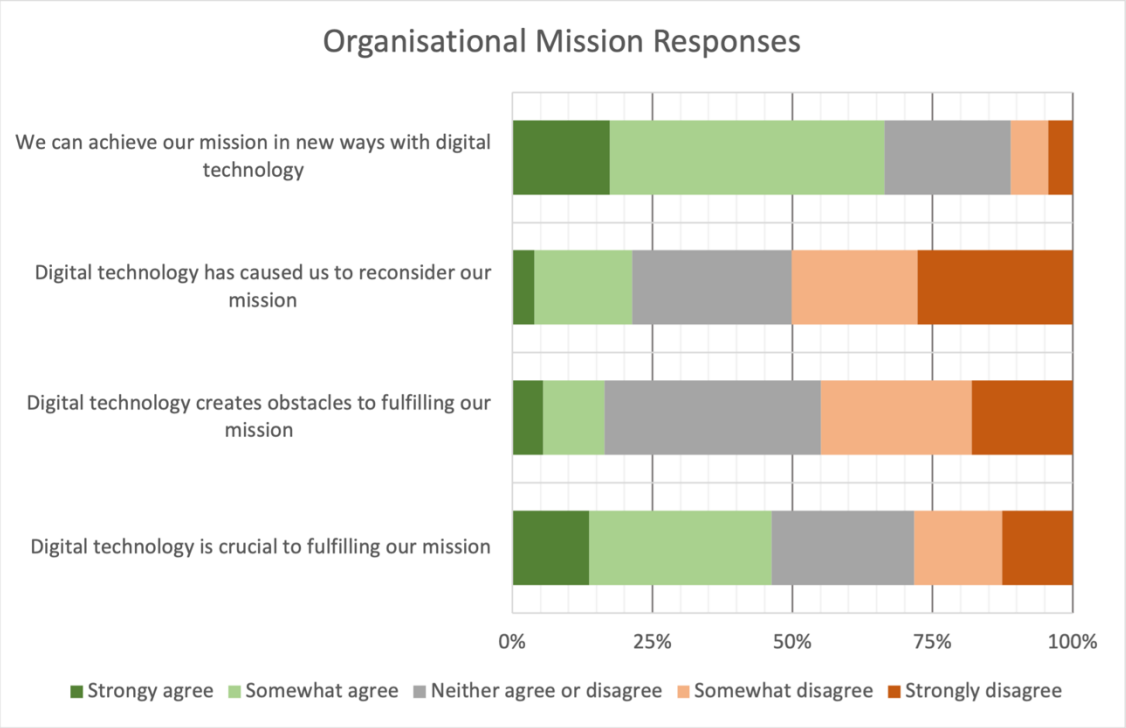

Figure 4.26: Responses to Questions About Organisational Mission. Source: Author.

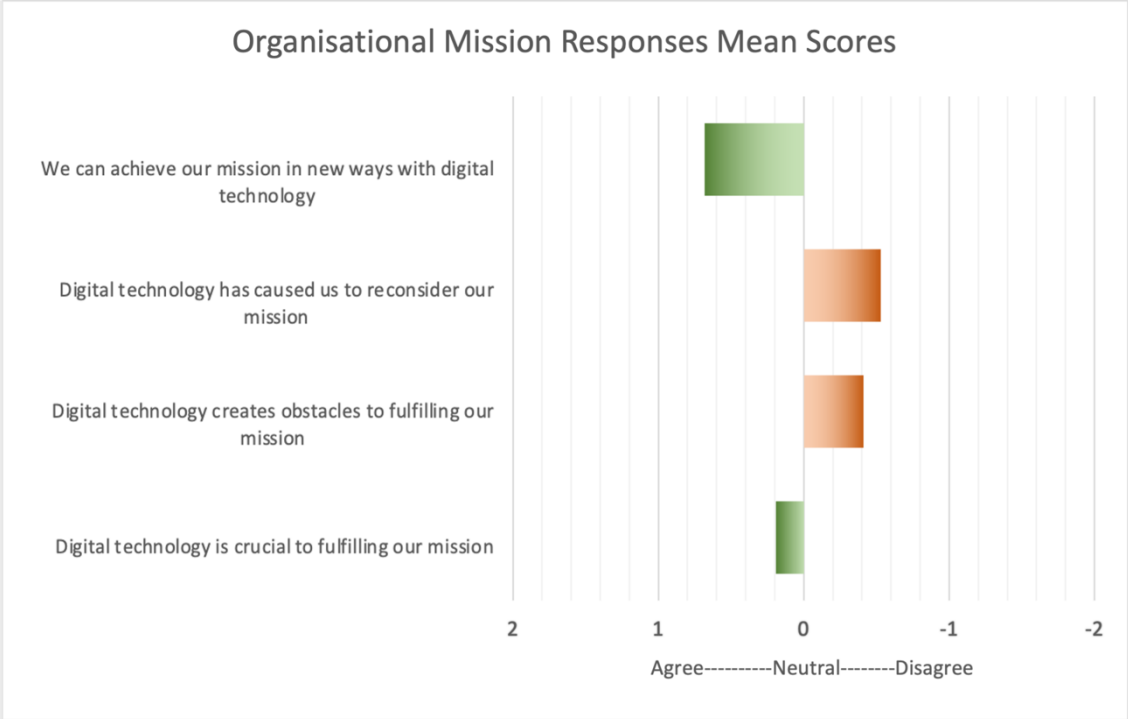

Figure 4.27: Mean Scores of Responses to Questions About Organisational Mission. Source: Author.

On the topic of organisational mission, two-thirds (66%) agreed that they can achieve their mission in new ways with digital technology, with only 11% disagreeing. Half (50%) disagreed that digital technology has caused them to reconsider their mission, indicating that their commitment to their organisational mission is strong in the midst of a changing environment. Furthermore, almost half (46%) agreed that digital technology is critical to fulfilling their mission, while almost half (45%) disagreed that digital technology creates obstacles to fulfilling their mission. Non-church charities were more likely than churches to agree on the critical nature of digital technology to fulfilling their mission, and to disagree that digital technology creates obstacles to their mission. The largest churches were more likely than other churches to agree that digital technology is critical to accomplishing their mission, and that they can achieve their mission in new ways with digital technology, and more likely to disagree that digital technology creates obstacles to fulfilling their mission. Conversely, the smallest churches were less likely to agree to the critical nature and the new possibilities of digital technology, and less likely to disagree regarding the potential of obstacles created by digital technology. Among non-church charities, those whose purpose was aid/relief or leadership development were more likely to see digital technology as critical to fulfilling their mission (mean = 1.25 and mean = 1.20, versus mean = 0.39 for all non-church charities). Those whose main purpose was media were more likely to

agree that digital technology had caused them to reconsider their mission (mean=0.14 versus mean = -0.61 for all non-church charities).

4.3 The Interview Responses

Individuals involved with six charities participated in the interviews. Four of the charities represented were churches. Three of these churches were smaller in size (P1, P2 and P3), with regular congregations of around 50 people. One church was comparatively large with a regular congregation of around 600 people (P4). Of the two other charities, one was a charity that provides local services to the community (P5), and the other was a mission organisation that operates on a national scale (P6).

The interviews were recorded and analysed to discover themes in the responses from the whole group of interviewees. Out of this process, nine leading themes emerged. These nine themes were: digital is not simple, change is difficult, we can't afford digital, relationships are key, accessibility matters, look inside for talent, ad hoc approaches, whatever works, and theology and technology are disconnected.

4.3.1 Digital is Not Simple

The charities referred often to the complexity, rapid changes and consequent difficulties in using digital technology. Some of the participants referred to the speed of change ("changes happen very fast", P2), some referred to the scope, such as "there is such a vastness available to us with what we do now" (P2) or "currently we're only one level up from scratching the surface" (P4). Some referred to the complexity of digital technology ("digital solutions are too complex", P4). There were references to specific challenges as a result of the complexity and rapid changes such as "trouble remembering passwords" (P6) and "dealing with different OS and file formats" (P1). Together, these experiences of rapid change, complexity and being out of one's depth formed a sense of disorientation, as expressed by one participant as "I don't know when we will get to the end of making changes" (P6). These challenges are not unique to charities and are a reminder that the disruptive nature of digital technology permeates into every sector of society.

4.3.2 Change is Difficult

This theme refers to the commonly mentioned difficulties experienced by the charities in facilitating change. Several of the charities had experienced trying new digital technology and then reverting back to previous methods or tools because of the difficulties in use, or the lack of adoption of the new tool. There was a recognition that "people don't see the value of digital advances until they've been tried" (P4), but also a "need to educate before implementing, not just announce [the planned changes]" (P6). Despite the difficulties, there was an acknowledgement of the need for change in comments such as, "We need to do things differently if we want different results" (P6). The Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns were a catalyst for changes for many charities. One participant mentioned that if the pandemic had not occurred, "digital advances would have been talked about, considered, but not seen as important – so forgotten" (P6). This theme highlights that the leadership of these organisations were aware of the need for change, but experienced difficulty in bringing the rest of the organisation with them to buy into these changes.

4.3.3 We Can't Afford Digital

This theme highlights the need for investment that digital technology requires and how this impacts decisions regarding digital technology. Digital investment is often financial, such as, "Finance is a top priority" (P1) and "To utilise digital tools to the full needs more money than our congregation has". However, this theme could also refer to other limitations the charities face, such as, "Our decisions are reactive because of size and money" (P1) and "[Because of] our size [we do not have] access to digitally savvy members" (P1). Participants expressed the "need to spend money just to keep doing what we've been doing" (P2), indicating that the financial models of digital technology create strains for certain organisations. The biggest impact of this issue is in hiring. Many of these organisations have very small employee numbers ("only have one employee so a lot comes off his back", P1, and "have no employed staff", P3) and so, when it comes to the possibility of hiring digital experts, the participants responded that they "certainly wouldn't have a lot of money to pay for experts to come in" (P2), and "if money was no issue we would get someone with the expertise who could dedicate their time to digital" (P6). This theme illustrates how the constraints that

Christian charities face – mainly of size and finance – limit their perceived available options regarding digital technology.

4.3.4 Relationships are Key

The importance of personal relationships was referred to often by most of the participants. The theme refers to the vital nature of the personal or relational aspect of the organisation. Some of the participants saw digital technology as a threat to relationships, such as, “In many ways technology becomes impersonal” (P2) and “Relying on digital instantly excludes some people at the bottom of the ladder” (P1). Others mentioned the need to keep the focus on personal relationships even when using digital technology, such as, “The person is the tool God uses, not the resource” (P6) and “do it with them [disciples] – even if you use digital resources” (P6). Beyond these specifics, however, there is a recurring theme of the primacy of personal relationships in the core activities of the charities, such as, “We pass the message life-to-life is the main thing” (P6), “want to focus on friendship first in outreach (P1) and perhaps most succinctly of all, “Ministering is personal” (P2). This theme illuminates the importance of personal connection and relationships in the functioning of Christian charities.

4.3.5 Accessibility Matters

Digital access was a concern at the forefront of many charities’ thinking as they made decisions about digital technology. There are a variety of factors that are implicated in digital access. Some of the participants mentioned that the “age of the congregation will limit uptake” (P1) and “some old people can’t use computers or smartphones” (P3), indicating that older members face barriers to participation when digital technology is introduced. Others mention the financial aspect of digital access, such as, “Some people lack money to keep their phone loaded with data” (P5) and “concerned when cost becomes a barrier to participation in church events” (P1). Although some participants acknowledged that “those without digital access are a minority in today’s world” (P4), they become apparent when making decisions to implement digital technology, as one participant responded, “When moving away from paper notices to online, only some people express they don’t have internet” (P4). Even where these people were a minority, there was a commitment to include them in the life of the

charities, as expressed by comments such as, “We don’t want to inadvertently exclude anyone” (P1) and “We do our best for people without digital access” (P4). This theme highlights the importance of including people, even those on the margins to Christian charities.

4.3.6 Look Inside for Talent

A common pattern among Christian charities is a reliance on those inside the organisation to do work, including digital work, even if they lack the specific expertise to do the work. There is a pattern of “[hiring] from within, instead of skillset” (P1) in Christian charities, which often results in people without specific expertise taking in digital work. This was evident in participant responses such as, “The minister needs to get their head around it too” (P1), and “It wasn’t part of their job description when they first joined” (P1). There is a common theme of relying on volunteers to provide the expert skills needed, such as, “That was done with the help of someone in the fellowship with the knowhow” (P2), and “These were skills that people brought from their day job” (P1). A factor in this pattern is the limited resources of these charities, one of the charities interviewed had “no employed staff” (P3), and another had “only one employee, so a lot comes off his back” (P1). As one participant mentioned, they “certainly wouldn’t have a lot of money to pay for experts to come in” (P2). The implications of this situation include that “adoption might be held back because of limited skillsets” (P2) and a “need to consider if technology or expertise is within our reach” (P2). This theme identifies both a challenge for charities in their limited capacity, but also an ability to make use of volunteers and re-training of existing staff and members in new skills.

4.3.7 Ad Hoc Approaches

A theme of an “ad hoc”, or unplanned approach to digital was evident in the respective charities. Several of the charities mentioned that they “dealt with issues ad hoc, as and when needed” (P1), or addressed “issues as needs became apparent” (P2). This ad hoc approach was applied to the management of digital technology, and the training or learning of digital skills. Participants mentioned that there were “no formal regular reviews” (P4) of how they were using digital technology. This ad hoc approach to implementing digital technology indicates that the organisations may not see the

importance of developing a strategy for their digital development, and may even indicate a risk of not being prepared for potential digital disruption.

4.3.8 Whatever Works

"Whatever works" refers to the participants' primary concern in their use of digital technology being practicality or convenience. Several of the participants referred to their approach to decisions regarding digital technology as being "pragmatic" ("a lot is pragmatic" P4, "sometimes it's more pragmatic" P6) or "convenient" ("digital is more convenient" P3, "technology is convenient" P2). The participants usually saw digital technology as a tool. This was also expressed regarding individual decisions, such as, "use WeChat because it is convenient as most of the congregation already use WeChat" (P3) and "PowerPoint is easier for the preacher – more convenient" (P3). The participants commonly expressed their view that digital technology was a tool and aimed to use it to that end, such as, "If it's practical we'll probably approve" (P1). This theme seems to indicate that these charities generally approached digital decisions from a practical perspective, with the aim of finding practical solutions to issues they are facing.

4.3.9 Theology and Technology are Disconnected

Although the charities all had a theological foundation, their responses described a perceived lack of relationship between theology and digital technology. Several of the participants expressed that theology usually had not come into consideration in decisions about digital technology and practice, such as, "I don't know if we've thought much about how theology impacts what we do with technology" (P6) and "I don't even think it needs to be a theological question" (P1). Where participants described further the relationship between theology and digital technology, the participants did not usually see digital technology as anything more than a tool, such as, "Theologically, digital is just one of the tools we use" (P3), "Theologically digital is a tool – a means to an end" (P1), and "[There is] no moral or theological dilemma in choosing a particular tool" (P4). Some participants did raise concerns about digital technology, but each time this was a qualifying concern within an expression that the general relationship was one of utility, such as, "[Our] theology is pragmatic but [we] want to avoid anything that would lead to digital addiction" (P5) and "Theologically we use it as a

tool, not against it, but it's not going to manipulate or control us" (P2). When the relationship between theology and technology was recognised, it was framed in terms of usefulness, for example, "The theological question is 'does this help the mission of the church?'" (P4). This theme raises the issue of potential theological and ethical questions regarding digital technology, and whether these charities are aware of them. It invites consideration of how much they have thought through questions regarding how the use of digital technology can be informed by theology, and the ethical implications of the use and development of digital technology that are raised by theology.

4.4 Summary

The survey revealed patterns among charities regarding their use of, and attitudes towards digital technology. For many of the digital technologies listed, there was a U-shaped pattern reflecting that the vast majority of charities had either been using that technology for a significant period of time or were not planning to use it. Of particular interest were two digital technologies that did not fit the U-shaped patterns. These were livestreaming and online meetings, two digital technologies which a large proportion of charities had recently begun to use, probably in response to the Covid lockdowns.

As charities approached decisions about adopting digital technologies and hiring for digital roles, the budget was the most prominent factor, with "staff skills" and "organisation leader experience" also weighing strongly in these decisions. Although "budget" was a dominant factor in deciding to adopt new digital technologies for most charities, there is considerable variety in the most important factors, reflecting the different perceived priorities and constraints of the charities.

The charities indicated that they found digital technology generally helpful in the areas of fundraising, donor management, and volunteer management, but were less enthusiastic about increasing their use of digital technology in these areas. They considered that they were easy to find online and were generally satisfied that they were doing a good job of bringing a cohesive message to their online presence. The strongest agreement across all the responses from the charities was that the needs of

those without access to digital technology were important to them, and that they considered the pros and cons carefully before implementing new digital technology. There was also generally strong agreement that the charities embrace new digital technology and that they can achieve their mission in new ways with digital technology.

The interviews revealed nine key themes. Three of these themes related to challenges or to struggles those charities faced regarding digital technology. They were “digital is not simple”, “change is difficult”, and “we can’t afford digital”. Two of the themes are regarding values that are evident across the charities as they consider decisions regarding digital technology – “relationships are key” and “accessibility matters”. Three of the themes are related to patterns of thought and behaviour that they exhibited, perhaps subconsciously as they approached digital decision-making. These were “look inside for talent”, “ad hoc digital” and “whatever works”. The final theme is negative in nature, in that it captures an expressed absence of conscious connection between theology, which is foundational to Christian charities, and digital technology.

Together the themes from the interviews help to give insight into the mindset of those leading these charities. Paired with the survey data, outlining the decisions, attitudes and priorities of the charities, they help to paint a picture of how Christian charities in New Zealand navigate digitalisation.

5 Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by identifying, examining and comparing three distinct positions toward digitalisation that emerge from the survey responses. Following this is an examination of the ad hoc, self-guided approach to digitalisation that appears to characterise the approach of many Christian charities. The discussion then turns to look at the priority that Christian charities place on people and relationships in their perspective on digitalisation and then concludes by investigating the apparent disconnect that seems to exist between theology and technology as Christian charities navigate digitalisation.

5.2 Three Positions Toward Digitalisation

Survey data revealed that with respect to the adoption of technologies, recent adoption (within the past year) of new technologies was the least common response. In contrast, past technology uptake and resistance to technology were much more common. This pattern is the opposite of the bell-shaped curve that Rogers et al. (2014) proposed for the adoption of new technologies. The curve developed by Rogers et al. (2014) describes a retrospective view after a technology has been established. It is common to not foresee a new technology becoming mainstream ahead of time (Rogers et al. 2014). Therefore, many that indicate that they do not plan to adopt a technology may do so because at that particular point in time they do not perceive a future value in doing so, although this later becomes apparent (Rogers et al., 2014). A low reported recent adoption rate compared to other options would normally indicate that the technology was either at the beginning or the end of its adoption cycle. This explains the responses for emerging technologies such as VR/AR, blockchain and artificial intelligence, which would be at the beginning of the adoption cycle and had the vast majority of charities not considering their use. This would also suggest that technologies such as e-newsletters and e-commerce were reaching the end of the adoption cycle as they had already been adopted by over half of the charities and had a low current adoption rate.

However, there were two technologies that did not fit this pattern, and it is likely that these two technologies reached a tipping point of adoption shortly before the survey data was collected. These were online meetings and livestreaming. The timing of the survey in this study (July 2020) suggests that many of the charities might have answered the survey questions with their recent experience in the first Covid lockdown in mind. This lockdown forced many businesses and other organisations, including charities, to find new ways to operate. This gives a plausible explanation for why both livestreaming and online meetings showed substantial recent consideration. The responses for these technologies also raised questions as to the mindset that charities had regarding the adoption of digital technologies in general. With these two technologies, it appears that they were adopted by many charities because they experienced unusual pressure to change their regular practices. The data shows that the responses of the charities to their adoption of online meetings revealed three distinct positions towards digitalisation, which are evident in their responses to other questions in the survey. Understanding these three positions helps recognise that Christian charities in New Zealand are not all approaching digitalisation in the same way, but that there are patterns in how different charities navigate digitalisation.

This study labels these three positions toward digitalisation *digitally inactive*, *digitally proactive*, and *digitally reactive*. The *digitally inactive* group of charities were those that responded that they were "not considering using online meetings" of which there were 61 charities. The *digitally proactive* group of charities were those that responded that they had used online meetings for over 5 years", of which there were 35 charities. The *digitally reactive* group of charities were those that responded that they had "used online meetings for less than a year" of which there were 121 charities. The differences in the responses are presented in detail in the Appendix.

5.2.1 Digitally Inactive Charities

The *digitally inactive* charities indicated little use of digital technology. Very few of them indicated any use of digital technology in analytics, donor relations, volunteer relations or fundraising. They also indicated that they saw little value in using digital technology in any of these areas and did not have plans to start using digital technology in these areas. Although some of them indicated that they did have an

online presence, this online presence appeared to be minimal. They generally could not be easily found online, and any online channels were likely to not be updated very often.

5.2.2 Digitally Proactive Charities

In contrast to *digitally inactive* charities, *digitally proactive* charities tended to have incorporated digital solutions across a wide range of areas of operation. They saw themselves as innovative, embracing new technology, and were looking to constantly improve their systems. *Digitally proactive* charities were using digital technology for both donor and volunteer engagement and recruitment, fundraising, and are also making use of digital analytics. They also saw these digital solutions as important and valuable, and unlike other charities, they expressed clear agreement that they planned to increase their use of digital technology in donor management, volunteer management and analytics. They had a well-established and active online presence. They appreciated the value that digital technology contributed and planned to invest in more use of digital technology. They had adopted attitudes and practices that facilitated a strong digital culture. Although budget was an important factor in their digital decision-making, it was not the most important factor. They instead paid more heed to alignment with their organisational mission, toward which they anticipated digital technology playing an important role.

5.2.3 Digitally Reactive Charities

Digitally reactive charities actively used digital technology widely across their organisation, although they did not see the importance of this digital technology as clearly as *digitally proactive* charities, and generally did not plan to increase their use of digital technology. Their digital decision-making was dominated by budget considerations, with alignment with organisational mission and long-term strategic planning ranking comparatively low. Although they generally affirmed similar principles regarding use of digital technology and its role in their mission as *digitally proactive* charities, they were less confident in these affirmations, and appeared to be more easily dissuaded from further investment in digital technology by perceived obstacles and frustrations.

5.2.4 Implications of these Positions on the Digitalisation of Christian Charities

Unsurprisingly, the number of digital technologies adopted by *digitally inactive* charities was much lower than the other charities. What was perhaps less intuitive was that the difference between the *digitally proactive* and *digitally reactive* charities was very small. This indicates that the difference between these two positions is not simply a case of one using more digital technology than the other. This calls to mind the observation that digital strategy is not mainly about technology (BDO, 2019; Geissbauer et al., 2016; The Economist, 2019). There was however a significant difference between *digitally proactive* and *digitally reactive* charities in their hiring of staff in digital roles. That *digitally proactive* charities differ from *digitally reactive* charities significantly in their hiring but not in their adoption of digital technology reinforces the point that digital strategy is more about people than technology (Geissbauer et al., 2016; Gobble, 2018b). It seems that one of the differences between *digitally proactive* and *digitally reactive* charities is that *digitally proactive* charities are making decisions about where they are investing their time and money with an understanding that decisions surrounding the "people" aspects of digitalisation have a significant influence on the experience of digitalisation across the organisation.

Although the number of digital technologies adopted did not reveal substantial differences between *digitally proactive* and *digitally reactive* charities, which indicates that the difference between *digitally proactive* and *digitally reactive* charities was not one of willingness to try new technology, the factors behind their decisions to adopt digital technologies and hire for digital roles was markedly different. Of particular significance was the priority that *digitally proactive* charities, compared to the other charities, gave to whether a digital technology or role aligned with their organisational mission and long-term strategic plans. This indicates that it is likely that digitalisation is a factor in the long-term plans and organisational mission of these charities. Furthermore, *digitally proactive* charities were much less influenced by budget, staff skills, and the preferences of their leader or stakeholders than other charities. This indicates that their decision-making was less directed by situational factors. These factors in decision-making are an illustration of Aron's (2013) distinction between an IT strategy and a digital strategy, which focused on whether the starting point of digital decisions came from a business question or a digital question. *Digitally proactive*

charities, which have incorporated a digital perspective into their mission and long-term plans, made business decisions in light of that digital starting point. This is what Aron (2013) called a digital strategy. *Digitally reactive* charities, on the other hand, found their digital decisions were dominated by business factors such as budget, and their staff's capacity to use the technology, aligning with what Aron (2013) described as an IT strategy. Standing apart from these, as evidenced by their lower consideration of changes in operation needed for their digital decision-making were *digitally inactive* charities, which could be considered to have had neither a digital strategy nor an IT strategy.

The position of *digitally inactive* charities was revealed explicitly when they on average disagreed that they are organisations that innovate, embrace technology, or are constantly improving their systems. They agreed less strongly than the other charities that the needs of those without digital technology are important to them, which indicates that concerns about the digital divide were not a motivating factor behind their decisions to abstain from digital technology. Although all three positions indicated, on average, that they disagreed that digital created obstacles in fulfilling their mission or caused them to reconsider their mission, *digitally inactive* charities alone out of the three positions did not see potential for digital technology to help them achieve their mission.

It appears that the *digitally inactive* charities have intended to avoid the use of digital technology in their operations as much as possible. These charities did not respond to the sudden disruptive environment of the Covid lockdowns by adopting digital technology to overcome these new challenges when other charities either already had or were in the process of adopting digital technology. They were generally using very little digital technology and were not planning to increase their use of digital technology. They did not see digital technology as relevant to their operation or mission. Whether this leads to these charities becoming, as Stott (2019) suggested, oases of humanity, or whether they drift towards irrelevance as they keep digital technology at arm's length while the society around them digitalises at speed is unknown. Stott suggested that in-person human contact would become both less common and less valued. If both of these trends materialise then this creates a risk for

these charities that they could become less visible to the community they are situated in, and therefore appear less relevant to society in general. However, if in-person contact becomes less common, its scarcity will cause it to also become more valued, at least by some. One of the key aspects of successful digital strategy is a focus on customer experience, including personalisation (BDO, 2019; Westerman et al., 2011). If some people have a strong need or desire for in-person contact, then those people may have a more fulfilling experience interacting with a charity that focuses on in-person as opposed to digital connection. The growing popularity of artisanal movements (McCracken, 2022) and within churches a resurgence in liturgical services (Dunlap, 2008), and the growing call for people to "unplug" (Morris & Cravens Pickens, 2017) are evidence that there is demand for such an approach, even if it turns out that this demand is not universally shared, but remains an alternative to the general trends of society.

The *digitally proactive* charities exhibited many of the characteristics emblematic of organisations employing a successful digital strategy, such as allowing digital reality to lead their business decision, actively using data to derive insights, developing a culture conducive to digitalisation and embracing innovation. Regarding analytics, they knew which digital measurements and analytics were important, analytics informed their decision-making and contributed to their organisational measurement of success. This contrasts with the responses of other charities. Geissbauer et al. (2016) pointed out the importance of not simply collecting digital data, but deriving insight from it, and it appears from these responses that *digitally proactive* charities have been able to achieve this. The significance of this is further emphasised by the fact that *digitally proactive* charities were planning to increase their use of analytics, whereas *digitally reactive* and *digitally inactive* charities generally were not. It appears that *digitally proactive* charities were confident of the value of analytics to their organisation, whereas other charities remained unconvinced.

Digitally proactive charities stood apart from other charities in the areas of donor management, volunteer management and fundraising. They alone out the three positions planned to increase their use of digital solutions. This reveals a confidence that *digitally proactive* charities had both in their own use of digital technology and

also in the potential for digital technology to contribute to their organisational mission. This confidence in the potential of digital technology is explicitly confirmed by their strong agreement they can achieve their mission in new ways with digital technology, and by a lower strong agreement that digital technology is crucial to fulfilling their mission.

Digitally proactive charities considered that they gave their teams freedom to fail, that they were organisations that innovate, that they embraced new technology and especially that they were constantly improving their systems. Their agreement that they gave their teams freedom to fail, and that they were constantly improving their systems, is an indication that their culture had taken on board aspects of agile practices, which have been identified as contributing to success in digital strategy (KPMG, 2017).

Digitally proactive charities showed the most agreement out of the three positions that the needs of those without digital technology, and the theological implications of digital technology were important to them, and also that they consider the pros and cons carefully before implementing new digital technology. This indicates that the position of these charities was not one of blind trust in digital technology, or avoiding facing difficult questions that digitalisation may bring. Instead, these charities appeared to be the most engaged in these questions, which raises the question of whether the engagement with these issues, or the charities' digitalisation was the driving factor in this correlation, or whether there was another factor that was driving them both.

Like *digitally inactive* charities, *digitally proactive* charities appeared to have adopted their position deliberately. They viewed digital technology as a benefit toward achieving their organisational mission, and in some cases saw digital technology as critical to achieving this mission. Moreover, as they made digital decisions regarding adopting new digital technologies and hiring for digital roles, they put most value on how closely these decisions aligned with their organisational mission. They exhibited most of the aspects that characterise successful digital strategy. For example, they used digital data strategically, valued innovation, embraced values that help form an

organisational culture amenable to digitalisation, and considered the needs of digitalisation in their recruitment. The fact that they adopted technology such as online meetings several years before the Covid lockdowns prompted most of their fellow charities to do so, reinforces that they were considering their digital decision-making strategically. Their digitalisation has not been without struggles or frustrations though. *Digitally proactive* charities reported that both their donors and volunteers experienced frustration in engaging with them digitally, and they were not confident that they knew how to use digital channels well for fundraising. Yet despite these challenges and frustrations, they remained committed to using and even increasing their use of digital technology in these areas. The combined picture of these results describes a set of charities that were committed to the use of digital technology because they saw the potential value of it to their mission, and were therefore not dissuaded by challenges along the path to digitalisation. In a world where digital technology is rapidly changing, organisations need to continually assess how emerging digital technology fits into their organisation. This forward-thinking approach to digitalisation gave *digitally proactive* charities the time to consider pros and cons carefully and weigh the theological implications of their digital decisions so that they could assess the suitability of any emerging digital technology for them. They were also able to do this with less urgency as they were able to assess these emerging technologies before they disrupted existing technologies. This set *digitally proactive* charities up well for negotiating future digital disruption. By nurturing a culture that facilitates digitalisation, and establishing a strong connection between digital decision-making and their organisational mission, they have developed capabilities to successfully navigate digitalisation. They have developed successful digital strategies, that is, they have successfully re-oriented their charities' operations around a new digital reality.

However, as opposed to both *digitally inactive* and *digitally* proactive charities, *digitally reactive* charities did not appear to have actively chosen to adopt their position. Although their surface decisions, such as the number of technologies adopted, whether they used digital technologies for donors, volunteers, or fundraising, or whether they used analytics appeared similar to that of *digitally proactive* charities, *digitally reactive* charities did not appear to have the same confidence or clarity in

these decisions, and their motivations behind these decisions were strikingly different. Whereas *digitally proactive* charities had elevated digital decisions to the level of their mission and long-term strategic plans, *digitally reactive* charities had considered these decisions in the light of immediate concerns such as the current budget, and their staff's skill capacity for digital technology. Tellingly, although their use of digital technology was on a par with *digitally proactive* charities, their hiring for digital roles was substantially lower. It is likely that the high value given to budget and staff skills resulted in *digitally reactive* charities choosing less expensive alternatives, such as asking existing staff or volunteers to take on the anticipated digital responsibilities, or choosing a solution that did not require the same level of digital skills. The low consideration given to how these digital decisions aligned with their organisational mission and long-term strategic plans, as well as the high value given to budget and staff skills more closely resembled the decision-making priorities of *digitally inactive* than *digitally proactive* charities. *Digitally reactive* charities were therefore in a curious position of exhibiting behaviour in technology adoption that resembled *digitally proactive* charities, yet citing motivations for those very decisions that resembled the motivations of *digitally inactive* charities – charities that often came to opposite conclusions regarding adoption of these digital technologies.

The ranking of budget as the main factor in *digitally reactive* charities' decisions regarding adopting new digital technology implies that the charities considered they would have had better options if they had more money. However, these charities were for the most part not increasing their digital budget. This suggests that it was not a priority for *digitally reactive* charities to implement better digital solutions.

Digitally reactive charities considered that they gave their teams freedom to fail, that they were organisations that innovate, that they embraced new technology and especially that they were constantly improving their systems, however, their agreement on all of these questions was weaker than that of *digitally proactive* charities. The agreement to these questions indicates that elements of a culture that facilitates digitalisation were present in these charities. However, their responses to other questions give a contrary impression. For instance, *digitally reactive* charities were not planning to increase their use of digital technology for significant aspects of

their operation, likely at least in part, because such decisions were not seen in light of their mission or long-term plans. Consequently, they were experiencing less value than *digitally proactive* charities from their use of digital technology. They were less confident in their use of data and analytics and were not sure how these measurements related to their success. Their apparent frustration with the difficulties and challenges of implementing digital solutions associated with a reluctance to increase their use of digital technology suggests that these charities found it difficult to push through the more difficult stages of technology adoption or change processes. This indicates that these charities may resist changes that require the charity to make significant adjustments. If this is the case, then these charities may be at risk of not making necessary changes to adapt to new digital realities. Moreover, the experience of *digitally reactive* charities illustrates the danger of implementing an IT strategy when a digital strategy is required. By taking elements such as budget, staff skills and change in organisational needs as a starting point in digital decisions, an organisation only considers a narrow range of the digital options available, and does not take into account the major shifts in digital technology and culture that digitalisation encompasses. Approaching digital decisions from such a perspective will likely result in digital decisions that soon appear unsuited or inadequate. Organisations that have negative experiences in adopting digital technology can create an impression that these negative experiences are typical of digital technology, which then creates further barriers to successful digitalisation.

In summary, the labels used to describe the different approaches of these three groups of charities are simply descriptive*. Digitally inactive* charities have chosen to remain set apart from digital technology as much as possible. Although these charities may be vibrant organisations, the digital side of their operation is quite deliberately inactive.

The *digitally proactive* charities have taken a very different approach and have consciously chosen to include digitalisation at the core of their charities' operations and decision-making. They have taken steps to address the underlying issues of organisational culture, and to consider where digital technology fits into their charities'

missions and long-term plans, which has prepared them to make confident decisions regarding digitalisation.

The *digitally reactive* charities on the other hand have not chosen to either embrace digitalisation at a foundational level, or to avoid digital technology, but instead have found themselves needing to make digital decisions without an understanding of where these decisions fit in the big picture of their organisational missions, how their organisational culture will affect and be affected by these changes, and how such decisions fit into their long-term plans. Instead of being prepared for digitalisation, they have been reacting to digitalisation.

5.3 DIY Approach to Digitalisation

One theme emerging from the interview data was the significant role that convenience and pragmatism played in the digital decision-making of the charities. In contrast to the charities' reported behaviour regarding digital technology from the survey, where they indicated that they carefully considered the pros and cons before implementing digital technology, they replied that they "dealt with issues ad hoc" (P1) and "as needs became apparent" (P2). This also ties in with the expressed theme of "whatever works" that came from the interviews.

The charities may well have thought that the cautious approach of considering the pros and cons carefully had worked for them in general. Certainly, the expressions of frustration that some charities expressed regarding having to revert digital technology implementations, indicated that the perceived experience of not having sufficiently explored the pros and cons before implementation was something that they wished to avoid. However, when it became obvious that their existing systems were not suitable for their situation, they were willing to choose whatever digital technology worked to enable them to continue their operations with minimal disruption. It is likely that budget also played a role in this mindset. Inland Revenue (2020) made the point that fundraising is a challenge for not-for-profits, while Amar and Clough (2019) reported that charities considered it their greatest challenge. Allison and Kaye (2018) described how this was not simply a matter of limited funds, but that there was also a mentality of scarcity in many not-for-profits that affected their decision-making. Having both a

reality of limited funds, and also a scarcity mentality, can contribute to what might be at times an over-cautious approach to purchases, including purchases that would be considered an investment in the organisation's digital future. A theme emerging from the interviews was that "we can't afford digital", and this resonates with this apparently hesitant and cautious approach to digital investment.

This value of convenience appeared to be evident in many areas of Christian charities' digital operations. For example, the common practice among the charities of assigning digital roles to people already within the organisation, whether staff or volunteers, could have been perceived to be more convenient and to cause less disruption than hiring a new staff in a specialist digital role. Hiring new staff is often a time-consuming and costly process, and integrating a newly-hired member into a workforce is equally as challenging. This is a factor that leads to situations such as one charity (P1), which stated they had "only one employee, so a lot comes off his back", and regarding staff doing digital work that "wasn't part of their job description when they first joined". Again, because of the cost of hiring staff, this was likely also influenced by budget concerns and the aforementioned scarcity mindset. This is accentuated with the issue of hiring though, because, as this research shows, very few of the charities in the study employ digital staff, and Infoxchange (2019) reported that most digital spending by charities was not on hiring or developing skilled staff. The "we can't afford digital" theme that emerged from the interviews perhaps has more cachet here, as many charities simply cannot afford to hire someone with the skills they need due to their small size and budget. In the interviews, a charity said, "If money was no issue, we would get someone with the expertise who could dedicate their time to digital" (P6). Despite the motivation behind such an approach of saving money, this tendency to "look inside" for digital roles may have false economies. The literature on digital strategies emphasised the importance of having the right people on board for successful digital strategies (Boston Consulting Group, 2019; Newman, 2019). This included people having both the requisite skills and the right mindset to facilitate a successful digital strategy. The approach of "looking inside" when recruiting for digital roles may result in a less thorough assessment of a candidate for a role. In many cases, a staff member or volunteer's only qualifications may be that they are willing to take the role on. This problem is further deepened by the lack of attention given by

charities to the development of digital skills, as evidenced by Infoxchange (2019) and in the interviews, which noted that the approach to digital training and skill development was often ad-hoc. One charity mentioned that the lack of digital skills in their staff limited their options as they considered digital technology, because they "need to consider if technology or expertise is within our reach" (P2). In almost all cases it results in appointing someone to a role for which their skills are a less than perfect fit for, and often little consideration is given to whether those staff or volunteers have an appropriate mindset for effective digital strategy. The potential to leverage volunteers is not to be discounted, however, as charities can, as they testified, make use of those who have the necessary know-how, and the skills that people bring in from outside. The qualifying factor to this use of volunteers though, is that the charity has much less control over the quality of skills that volunteers bring, let alone having a mindset that is conducive to a digitalising organisation. As mentioned by one of the interviewees, "[Because of] our size [we do not have] access to digitally savvy members" (P1).

Furthermore, especially given the frequently under-resourced nature of charitable organisations, staff or volunteers who take on a digital role in addition to their current responsibilities may not have adequate capacity to give the desired attention to the new digital role. This would be most pronounced where the new digital role does not come with a reduction in their previous responsibilities. With many charities having only one, or sometimes no, full-time employees, the burden of this extra work can become unsustainable. Furthermore, assigning roles to volunteers carries a particular risk that outside circumstances may cause the volunteer to no longer be able to fulfil a role that they have previously committed to. Remembering that digital work was not part of the original job description for many staff at charities, the adding of digital roles to an already full workload will often mean that the digital work is most neglected, especially where adequate training is not given. Together these all create the possibility that the work of digital roles ends up not being done by anybody.

One of the interviewees commented that a reason given for not making use of experts was that they "certainly wouldn't have a lot of money to pay for experts to come in" (P2), which aligns with the high priority that the budget played in the charities' digital

decision-making. However, money is no such barrier to learning from peer experience and the reasons for this not being given value by Christian charities are less obvious. Some Christian charities may consider their operation to not have peers whose experience would be comparable and allow them to learn. However, as almost one quarter (23.2%) of the charities in the survey were churches of between 51 and 150 members, the idea that such organisations are so different that they could not learn lessons on digital strategy from each other is difficult to maintain. However, in mitigation to the low value that charities attached to peer experience, it is not easy to find peer experiences of successful digital strategy within the Christian charity community in New Zealand. In the literature, globally there were just a handful of examples that were apparent (e.g., Accenture, 2018; Morecroft, 2018).

The charities often found the complexity involved in digital decision-making intimidating. This is an experience that is common in other sectors as expressed by the literature on digital strategy (e.g., Aspen, 2018; Perkin, 2019). Not only is digital not simple, but the process of organisational culture change is extremely difficult. This is the case for all organisations, even those that are very well resourced. The change an organisation needs to make in response to digitalisation is called "digital transformation" for a reason – it is not a mild, gentle accommodation, but rather a disruptive, challenging, and often risky process. The reality is that with digitalisation, change is a constant companion, as expressed by one interview participant, "I don't know when we will get to the end of making changes". Of particular difficulty with charities is the diverse range of stakeholders who may not be on board with proposed changes. For example, in churches, every member of a congregation is a stakeholder who could potentially oppose implementation of a particular digital technology. These stakeholders may feel that they have a right to have their voice heard, yet they also are not employees of the charity, and so do not have an employment duty to follow the directions of the leader of the church. This can create complexities for charities as they negotiate resistance to adopting digital technology, which can often lead to inertia and inaction on the part of these charities regarding digital decision-making, especially bearing in mind the value of consensus in decision-making that many charities hold. For many of them, it often becomes easier to do nothing than to try to persuade a resistant set of stakeholders, donors or volunteers to support proposed

digital changes. As Groysberg et al. (2018) observed, culture can be a powerful accelerator or inhibitor of organisation performance, and also, as culture is implicit, it can often be difficult to discern exactly what the cultural driver is behind certain behaviour. Furthermore, the important role that leadership plays in successful digital strategy (Westerman et al. 2011; Perkin, 2019) places an onus on leaders to have the qualities required to guide their charity through digitalisation, including the task of instigating organisational culture change, which they may not be trained or prepared for.

Together, the attitude of choosing convenient and inexpensive options in decisions regarding digital technology and hiring, the looking to those within the charity or volunteers to do digital work, the lack of attention to training in digital skills, and the low value given to experts and peer experience, creates a picture of what could be described as a Do-It-Yourself (DIY) approach to digital strategy. The reality that, as the charities observed "digital is not simple", and the difficulty of leading an organisation through the radical culture change that digitalisation entails, lead to what is often an uncomfortable realisation – that a DIY approach to digital strategy will not work. As Gobble (2018b, p. 66) observed, digital "transformation doesn't happen by accident and is rarely organic."

The risk of taking such a DIY approach with digital strategy is clearly identified with the realisation by charities that "digital is not simple". Several charities have begun a process of digitalisation and only once the process has begun have realised that it is much more complex than they had previously anticipated, as expressed by comments such as, "There is such a vastness available" or "Currently we're only one level up from scratching the surface". There was also frustration upon realising that decisions made without a full understanding of their implications may need to be reverted.

5.4 People Matter Most

New Zealand's Inland Revenue (2020), in their overview of the charities sector, observed that relationships are critical to the operation of charities. This is a point that deserves emphasis, given that it is also strongly evident in the data from this research.

This also mirrors the critical role people and relationships play in a successful digital strategy (Geissbauer et al., 2016; Gobble, 2018b).

The people and relationship aspect of charities' operations includes their volunteers, staff, and those that the charity serves. This research indicates that the considerations of the effect of digital decisions on any of these sets of people weighed strongly in the decision-making process of the charities. Two themes in particular that emerged from the interviews had a very strong people focus – "relationships are key" and "accessibility matters".

The charities in the survey overall agreed very strongly that the needs of those who do not have access to digital technology were very important. This was reinforced by the interviews, where the respondents indicated that a reason against adopting certain digital technologies was the potential that such technologies could exclude people. Two groups, in particular, the elderly and the poor, were highlighted as being of concern to the respondents in their decision-making. Even charities that did decide to move from analogue to digital processes, were careful to consider who, and how many people might be negatively affected by such a change, and often made sure that they were able to offer non-digital alternatives to those who held that preference.

Digital access is an issue that can easily be overlooked in digitalisation. As more of society is digitalised, those without easy access to digital technology can find that they are excluded from more and more opportunities and aspects of social participation. The charities in this study brought up two issues regarding digital access– the financial cost of either buying the devices or enabling the use of a digital service (such as, for example, paying for a data plan on a mobile phone), and the skill or confidence in using a digital device or service. The financial barrier to participation in digital life has been raised often (e.g., Cullen, 2001), and was acutely felt over the Covid lockdowns, as many people found they had to conduct work and school online (MPP, 2021). For charities, some aspects of their operation where digitalisation may impact those affected by the "digital divide" could be moving to online donations, using a website or mobile app to allow people to sign up for services, or using digital services such as email or social media to deliver information from the charity. For many churches,

whether to provide an online channel for their church services was a key decision where the digital divide needed to be considered during the Covid lockdowns, accentuated because the nature of the lockdowns meant that there were no non-digital alternatives, they were able to offer during this time. Some of the participants feared that people who could not afford an internet-enabled device, or who could not afford to pay for either an internet connection or for data for a mobile device, were therefore automatically excluded from participation in church services. Many Christian charities operate primarily to provide services to the less privileged in society (Charities Services, 2020), and churches have traditionally made explicit efforts to include the less privileged, as taught by Jesus, who said that he was sent to "bring Good News to the poor" (Luke 4:18, NLT). Therefore, several charities expressed concern that these people may be excluded from the activity of their charities or their churches. A greater issue remains though, which is that as more of society becomes digitalised, these people are at risk of gradually becoming more marginalised and excluded from society. This raises the question of what Christian charities could do to help reduce or eliminate the barrier of digital participation for the poor.

Another aspect of digital access is those who do not have the skills or confidence to use digital devices. The responses from the interviews indicated that they were mostly thinking about the elderly in this aspect. This is likely to be an increasing problem as churches in New Zealand are an aging demographic (Ward, n.d.), and volunteers for charities also tend to be older adults (Inland Revenue, 2020). Older adults often struggle with digital technology for several reasons. For example, they may bring pre-conceived expectations that digital technology will be complicated and difficult to use (Hill et al., 2015). They often have not developed digital literacy skills, having not needed them for their working careers (Barnard et al., 2013). Many older adults also have physical issues such as poor eyesight or reduced manual dexterity that can make operating digital devices more difficult (Barnard et al., 2013). The cost of devices and subscriptions is also a significant barrier (Reneland-Forsman, 2018). As charities' volunteers and church congregations age, this makes facilitating older adults' full participation in their digitalised operations an acute issue for Christian charities in New Zealand.

It appeared that the charities were aware that people they served were facing these issues brought on by poverty or old age. However, that these issues were often raised in connection with explaining the charities' reasoning behind not adopting new digital technologies indicates that the charities were often not helping these people cross the digital divide. Even for the charities that did not let these issues prevent them from adopting digital technology, the solution seemed to be to continue providing analogue solutions as opposed to either seeking more appropriate digital solutions or helping them develop skills and confidence in using digital technology. This is probably an expression of the high value on consensus in decision-making which Allison and Kaye (2018) identified as a key characteristic of not-for-profits. This value of consensus stands in conflict with the importance of adaptability (Perkins, 2019) and agility (Boston Consulting Group, n.d.) in a successful digital strategy. This conflict illustrates how digitalisation is introducing clashes in values for many charities. Charities are in a position where they cannot uphold a commitment to both their long-standing culture of consensus and inclusion, as well as a commitment to a culture of adaptability and agility that digitalisation demands. Many charities seem to be responding by continuing their established culture of consensus decision-making, which in practice means continuing analogue systems as the environment and society around them digitalise.

The heart behind the charities' decisions in foregoing the use of digital technology to include those who cannot easily use the technology, is one of sensitivity to those in their community who are often the least heard and most vulnerable. They are willing to ask those in their communities who are more able to use digital technology to sacrifice convenience for the sake of the few who cannot. In particular, one of the participants representing a church (P2), mentioned that the church had chosen to not adopt certain digital technologies because of a handful of "old faithful" who struggled to use digital technology. The implication is that if it were not for the preference of those few older adults, that church would have adopted those digital technologies. It is a true characterisation that for many of the charities, the importance of relationships is a key motivation for their concern about accessibility.

There was a common perception among charities that digital technology detracts from the quality of personal relationships. There is a particular concern that digital technology tends to make interactions less personal simply by virtue of being digital instead of physical, a point that was expressed by Stott (2017).

While keeping in mind the struggle that charities have to maintain their focus on people and relationships in the process of digitalisation, it is also helpful to remember how important people and relationships are to a successful digital strategy. One of the great misconceptions about digital strategy is that it is about technology (BDO, 2019; Geissbauer et al., 2016; Gobble, 2018b; The Economist, 2019). Christian charities in New Zealand appeared to be, on the whole, not making the mistake of focusing on technology over people as they considered digitalisation. This attentiveness to the effect that digitalisation has on people and relationships has the possibility to be harnessed to aid charities as they digitalise. As mentioned earlier, Inland Revenue (2020) pointed out that relationships and connections are key to how not-for-profits operate, and Allison and Kaye (2018) noted that those involved in not-for-profits tend to have a genuine passion for the mission of the organisation, which are two aspects of their culture that have potential to contribute to a successful digital strategy.

To this end, the focus that many Christian charities have on relationships is an asset allowing them to implement digital solutions in a way that is less likely to become impersonal, precisely because of their awareness of this danger. Furthermore, as charities adopt digital strategies, their focus on relationships and the priority of people can help them to implement digital strategies with a more human-oriented approach, as those charities who have a strong culture of prioritising relationships and people are less likely to overlook the role that this has in successful digital strategy.

The digital strategy approaches developed for commercial entities often measure the effectiveness of digital strategy based on the assumption that the goal of digital strategy is to increase the business' profit (e.g., Aspen, 2018; Conyard, n.d.; Gurumurthy & Schatsky, 2019; The Economist, 2019). Although "people" aspects such as organisational culture, leadership, staff recruitment and training, and customer experience are seen as essential elements of a successful digital strategy, their

importance to digital strategy is largely because of the effect they have on a business's profit. For example, customer experience is considered important because customer purchases provide the revenue that enables a business to make a profit. Likewise, the organisational culture, leadership and staff are of value as elements of a digital strategy based on their contribution to the business' profit. In short, because profit is the primary measure of success in the commercial world, the digital strategies that are tailored for those organisations view those "people" aspects of the digital strategy as means, not as ends in themselves. It is common for the Christian charities in this study to view digitalisation in terms of its effect on people based on their worth as people, not on their potential contribution to the charities' goals. Because these charities are not-for-profit entities, the value of staff, leadership, organisational culture, and customers is not viewed in terms of their contribution to the organisation's profit. This is tied to the fact that charities find it much more difficult to measure the results of their programmes because there is often no dollar value that can be put on the work that they do (Allison & Kaye, 2018). In terms of the importance that these charities place on the value of people, the quality of relationships and the inclusion of marginalised people are measures both of the success of the charity, and also of relational and societal health in general. This raises the question of what truly successful digital strategy entails. Can a digital strategy be truly successful if it does not consider the effect that it has on the relational and societal health of those people and communities it impacts? Schrage et al. (2021) proposed that organisations needed to have another higher purpose in addition to profit in order to experience successful digital transformation. The situation of Christian charities as not-for-profits means that a measurement of successful digital transformation does not include profit at all. From the perspective of these Christian charities, successful digital strategy should take into account the effect that digitalisation has on both the quality of interpersonal relationships and the impact on the charity's ability to include all of their community.

5.5 Technology and Theology Appear Disconnected

The survey responses from the charities indicated that they considered the theological implications of their use of technology to be important, therefore it was surprising to find that the interview responses showed a very different picture. In the interviews, the charities indicated that they either had not considered the relationship between

the two previously, or that they regarded theology as irrelevant to their decisions regarding digital technology, viewing the use of technology in a purely pragmatic sense.

To understand this apparent contradiction, there first needs to be an understanding of what implications theology can have on the use of technology, and also how theology can inform decision-making regarding digital technology. Stott (2017) considered the reduced interpersonal contact as a result of increased digital technology to be potentially dehumanising. Crouch (2022) cautioned that the promises of technology always come with fishhooks that have the potential to enslave. This is partly because, according to Crouch (2022), technology is created to serve its economic masters first and foremost. However, both Stott (2017) and Crouch (2022) affirm that digital technology offers real value along with their warnings. One of the interview participants (P2) related how she perceived that the replacement of hymnbooks with projectors resulted in people reflecting less on the words of the hymns because they disappeared from the screen so quickly. Another participant (P5) spoke of the desire to avoid digital addiction. One major theological implication of the use of technology, therefore, is to understand the potential of technology to influence people's behaviour and desires, perhaps in ways they are not even aware of. The charities in this research appeared to be aware of these hazards associated with the use of digital technology, as they emphasised the importance of maintaining personal connection and quality relationships.

Since the Covid lockdowns, there has been considerable debate among church leaders regarding both the effectiveness and the theological basis of online church services (Giese, 2020). Theological positions have ranged from considering only physical gatherings as genuine church services, to seeing online church as an imperfect temporary accommodation to the current circumstances, through to seeing online church services on an equal footing theologically with physical church services (Giese, 2020). One of the interview participants (P3) reflected on the limitations of online church services by commenting that, "You can't share the elements [communion bread and wine] online". Based on the uptake of livestreaming and online services by

the churches that participated in the survey, it seems as though the full range of positions was represented.

Considering this, it appears that theology does indeed have implications for the use of digital technology, and moreover, the charities in the survey appear to have thought about these implications to some extent. However, several of the comments by the interviewees described their theological approach to digital technology as pragmatic ("theologically, digital is just one of the tools we use", P3; "theologically digital is a tool – a means to an end", P1; "theologically we use it as a tool", P2; " sometimes in the technology area it [our theology] is more pragmatic", P6; and "the theological question is 'does this help the mission of the church?'" P4). These comments indicate that the theological issues are often subject to the practicalities of the operations of the charities. Furthermore, although theology often influences the charities' macro decisions as to whether to use digital technology in a certain way, theology may again give way to pragmatism in the subsequent decisions concerning questions such as those regarding the choice of digital product or provider. This point of view was expressed in an interview as "[There is] no moral or theological dilemma in choosing a particular tool." (P4).

Therefore, it can be seen that theology does play a role in Christian charities' use of digital technology, but this role can often be tempered by practical concerns. A caveat to such an approach is that if, as Crouch (2022) argued, the political economy of a digital technology is a theological concern, then there could be theological or moral concerns regarding some of these digital decisions that Christian charities are not considering. For example, there could be theological implications regarding decisions of which particular tool is used, that relate to how a particular digital product or service may be designed to exploit its users. The concerns that some of the interview participants had about the negative effects of replacing hymnbooks with projectors (P2), and the possibility of digital addiction (P5), indicate that some charities are indeed aware of the wider issue of unintended consequences that may arise from adopting digital technology, even if it makes sense from a practical point of view.

5.6 Summary

There are three distinct positions toward digitalisation that can be identified among Christian charities. These can be described as d*igitally inactive charities:* those charities that avoid using digital technology where possible and are resistant toward digitalisation; *digitally proactive charities*: those charities that see their use of digital technology as an integral part of their operation and have a clear strategy for how digital technology fits into their identity; and *digitally reactive charities*: those charities that use digital technology, sometimes extensively, but do not have a strategy for incorporating digital technology into their operation or future. The differences between charities with these three positions are evident in their decision-making priorities, their use of digital technology, and their attitudes toward digital technology.

The most common of these positions is digitally reactive charities, and this position is associated with frustrations regarding successful adoption of digital technology. Charities adopting such a position toward digitalisation particularly embody the challenges described by a DIY approach to digitalisation. This combination of a decision-making process dominated by budget constraints and absent of expert input, and a reliance on the ability of those already within the organisation to pick up digital roles and responsibilities often leads to a sense of feeling overwhelmed with complexity and rapid change.

Christian charities were particularly sensitive to how digitalisation affects the people both within their organisations, and those whom they serve. Two issues with which they identified strongly were the effects of digitalisation on those left behind by the digital divide, and the importance of considering the effect of digital technology on relational interactions between people. This focus on how digitalisation affects people reveals potential limitations of measuring the effectiveness of digital strategies by the common commercial profit-oriented measurements of success, and how such measurements of the success of digital strategies may be unsuited to not-for-profit organisations.

Finally, the Christian charities considered the theological implications of their use of technology as it related to relationships, but less so in other areas. They saw theology

with respect to digital technology in mainly practical terms, although they did express reservations about possible negative effects of technology on spiritual practices.

6 Conclusions

6.1 Introduction

This research set out to answer the research question, "How are Christian charities in New Zealand navigating digitalisation?". In this chapter, that research question is answered. This is followed by the implications of this answer, then an acknowledgment of the limitations of this research, and finally recommendations for further research that this thesis raises.

6.2 Answering the Research Question

This research has found that Christian charities in New Zealand are not all navigating digitalisation along the same path. Some are attempting to navigate a path that minimises their adoption of digital technology. These charities are described as taking a *digitally inactive* position towards digitalisation. Others are embracing digitalisation, incorporating digital strategies in their strategic plans and carefully taking steps with digitalisation that align with their organisational mission. These charities are described as taking a *digitally* proactive position towards digitalisation. However, a larger number are making digital decisions in response to changes in digital technology dictated by constraints such as budget and the capacity of their staff and volunteers to use the new technology. These charities are described as taking a *digitally reactive* position towards digitalisation. Although the *digitally inactive* and *digitally proactive* positions seem to be adopted deliberately, it appears that charities adopting a *digitally reactive* position do so unintentionally. This *digitally reactive* position exacerbates the frustration and challenge of digitalisation experienced by these charities.

Christian charities in New Zealand appear to take a DIY approach to digitalisation, making decisions in an ad hoc manner, and relying on the existing resources of the charity. This DIY approach, motivated by convenience and budget limitations, often results in charities experiencing frustration as they encounter the complexity of digitalisation and organisational change, which can sometimes result in paralysing inaction regarding digital decisions.

As Christian charities in New Zealand make decisions regarding digitalisation they keep in view how any of these decisions will affect their people, whether they be staff, volunteers or the people they serve. They are particularly concerned not to exclude anyone who is threatened by the digital divide, whether this divide results from poverty or a lack of digital skills or confidence. As opposed to commercial entities, these charities do not measure their digital progress by profit, but by other measures. It appears that the effects on personal relationships and their community are paramount.

Theology guides Christian charities in their digital decision-making, particularly in a focus on relationality. The approach to digital decisions is generally seen as pragmatic, with a view of how digital technology can help the charity. Although there is an awareness of possible negative effects of digital technology, these usually receive less consideration than the practicality of the digital decisions.

6.3 Implications

As not all Christian charities in New Zealand are navigating digitalisation in the same way, it is important not to assume a particular mindset or approach to digitalisation is held by a Christian charity.

The large number of Christian charities that hold a *digitally reactive* position towards digitalisation are at risk of further digital disruption. Recognising aspects of digitalisation in their organisational mission would help them prepare for possible digital disruption.

As these are not-for-profit organisations, there needs to be a measure of the success of digital strategy that is not based on profit. One aspect that must be included in this measure is the impact of digitalisation on the people and relationships connected with the organisation.

Many Christian charities in New Zealand are experiencing challenges and frustration in their digitalisation journey. They would likely benefit from sharing their challenges and learnings with each other as they journey together.

Digital technology holds both potential benefits and risks for Christian charities in New Zealand. The charities would benefit from more awareness of these benefits and risks.

6.4 Limitation of the Findings

The main limitation of this research is that charities without an email address on the Charities Register were unable to be invited to participate. These charities may have been more likely to be less digitally active than those in the study, given that they appear to not even have an email address.

A second limitation of this research is its timing. Not by design, this data was collected immediately after the first Covid lockdown of 2020, capturing the research population at a unique and perhaps abnormal time. Although there were benefits to the timing in terms of uncovering responses to this unique set of circumstances, it is important to remember that the charities' responses are likely to have been very different if they were not in a time of crisis. The responses in this research can be considered a snapshot in time, and it just so happened to be a moment in history of significant upheaval.

A third limitation is the speed of digital change. Digitalisation continues apace, and technologies, attitudes, and assumptions that seemed assured at the time of the data collection may have been superseded in the intervening time. Likewise, options that at one time would have seemed outlandish may become commonplace. As a common example, some charities may have by now adopted technologies that they indicated they were not considering adopting.

6.5 Recommendations for Future Research

As this study was merely a snapshot in time, and an unusual time at that, there would be a benefit in repeating a similar study at another time to see how the results compare. Of particular interest would be to see how the three positions of *digitally inactive*, *digitally proactive*, and *digitally reactive* hold and are expressed in different circumstances.

There is also a need to understand what successful digitalisation looks like for not-for-profit organisations. The inclusion by Schrage et al. (2021) of a greater purpose other than profit is a step in the right direction, however, a true measure of successful digitalisation for not-for-profits needs to be expressed without any direct or indirect reference to profit.

As digital inclusion is such a high value for Christian charities as they digitalise, more research on how people can be helped to cross the digital divide would be beneficial for charities who are trying to manage a rapidly digitalising community at the same time as including those who are left behind.

More research on the interaction between theology and digital technology would be valuable. As Stott (2017) and Crouch (2022) warn, all technologies come with the possibility of negative effects, and these actual effects may be different for each particular technology. Especially with emerging technologies, there is little knowledge of how the use of these technologies affects people at a personal or societal level, and what the theological implications of these effects are.

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Appendix A: Ethics Approval

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

Auckland University of Technology
D-88, Private Bag 92006, Auckland 1142, NZ
T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316
E: ethics@aut.ac.nz
www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics

6 July 2020

Gudrun Frommherz
Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies

Dear Gudrun

Re Ethics Application: **20/150 The Digital Pilgrim's Progress**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 6 July 2023.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research and as approved by AUTEC in this application.
2. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using the EA2 form.
3. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using the EA3 form.
4. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form.
5. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
6. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
7. It is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard and that all the dates on the documents are updated.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management approval for access for your research from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted and you need to meet all ethical, legal, public health, and locality obligations or requirements for the jurisdictions in which the research is being undertaken.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

For any enquiries please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz. The forms mentioned above are available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics

(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)

The AUTEC Secretariat
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: karludy@gmail.com

Appendix B: Tools

Survey Questions

Please answer all of the following questions with respect to your organization

What digital technologies does your organization currently use?

	used for over 5 years	used for about 1 year	used for less than a year	have not used but are considering	have not considered using
Church Management Software	○	○	○	○	○
Digital Financial Services	○	○	○	○	○
Artificial Intellingence	○	○	○	○	○
VR/AR	○	○	○	○	○
Blockchain	○	○	○	○	○
Internet of Things	○	○	○	○	○
Cloud Computing Services	○	○	○	○	○

What factors are most important for your organization in considering whether to adopt a new digital technology? (Please rank from most to least important)

Budget

Staff skills

Organizational Leadership Preference

Stakeholder preference (including donors and volunteers)

Other organizations' experience

Expert/consultant/salesperson recommendation

Long-term strategic plans

Changes in operational needs

Alignment with organizational mission

What digital processes does your organization currently use?

	Used for more than 5 years	used for about 1 year	Used for less than 1 year	Have not used but are considering	Have not considered using
E-commerce (including for donations)	○	○	○	○	○
E-newsletters	○	○	○	○	○
Digital HR processes	○	○	○	○	○
Podcast	○	○	○	○	○
Livestreaming	○	○	○	○	○
Online meetings	○	○	○	○	○

What factors are most important for your organization in considering whether to adopt a new digital process? (Please rank from most to least important)

Budget

Staff skills

Organizational leadership preference

Stakeholder preference (including donors and volunteers)

Other organizations' experience

Expert/consultant/salesperson recommendation

Long-term strategic plans

Changes in operational needs

Alignment with organizational mission

What digital roles does your organization currently employ?

	employed for over 5 years	employed for about 1 year	employed for less than 1 year	have not employed but are considering	have not considered employing

	employed for over 5 years	employed for about 1 year	employed for less than 1 year	have not employed but are considering	have not considered employing
Chief Information Officer	○	○	○	○	○
Chief Technology Officer	○	○	○	○	○
Digital Strategist	○	○	○	○	○
Digital Designer	○	○	○	○	○
Data Scientist	○	○	○	○	○
Technology Engineer	○	○	○	○	○
User Experience (UX) Specialist	○	○	○	○	○
Social Media Manager	○	○	○	○	○

What factors are most important for your organization in considering whether to employ for a new digital role? (Please rank from most to least important)

Budget

Staff skills

Capacity of volunteers to fill role

Organizational leadership preference

Stakeholder preference (including donors and volunteers)

Other organizations' experience

Expert/consultant/salesperson recommendation

Long-term strategic plans

Changes in operational needs

Alignment with organizational mission

Approximately what percentage of your annual budget is allocated to digital (including equipment, software, digital services, staff in digital roles, etc)?

○ Less than 1%

- ○ 1-5%
- ○ 5-10%
- ○ More than 10%

In the next budget cycle, this percentage is likely to ...

- ○ Decrease significantly
- ○ Decrease a little
- ○ Stay about the same
- ○ Increase a little
- ○ Increase significantly

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your organization's use of digital data and analytics?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Data and analytics inform our strategic decision making	○	○	○	○	○
We access our data and analytics often	○	○	○	○	○
Data and analytics are understood across our organization	○	○	○	○	○
We plan to increase our use of data and analytics	○	○	○	○	○
Data and analytics are confusing and hard to understand	○	○	○	○	○
We know which digital measurements and analytics are important to our organization	○	○	○	○	○
Digital measurements and analytics contribute to our organizational measure of success	○	○	○	○	○

Concerning your organization's interactions with donors, do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Digital solutions are important in our donor management	○	○	○	○	○
Digital solutions increase our engagement with donors	○	○	○	○	○
Digital solutions help us better understand our donors needs	○	○	○	○	○
We plan to increase our use of digital solutions in donor management	○	○	○	○	○
Donors experience frustration when attempting to engage with us digitally	○	○	○	○	○

Concerning your organization's interactions with volunteers, do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Digital solutions increase our engagement with volunteers	○	○	○	○	○
Digital solutions increase our engagement with volunteers	○	○	○	○	○
Digital solutions help us in volunteer recruitment	○	○	○	○	○
We plan to increase our use of digital solutions in volunteer management	○	○	○	○	○

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Volunteers experience frustration when attempting to engage with us digitally	○	○	○	○	○

Concerning your organization's fundraising, do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Digital solutions haver made it easier for us to fundraise	○	○	○	○	○
We plan to focus more of our fundraising efforts on digital channels in the future	○	○	○	○	○
Most of our fundraising is through digital channels	○	○	○	○	○
Traditional fundraising methods are less effective nowadays	○	○	○	○	○
We know how to use digital channels well for fundraising	○	○	○	○	○

Concerning your organization's engagement with your community, do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
People in our community can easily find us online	○	○	○	○	○
Our online presence is a natural extension of our physical organization	○	○	○	○	○

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Our website and social media channels deliver a consistent message	○	○	○	○	○
Our website and social media channels are updated often	○	○	○	○	○
The quickest way for people to contact us is online	○	○	○	○	○

Concerning your organization's attitudes and beliefs, do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
We embrace new digital technology	○	○	○	○	○
We consider the pros and cons carefully before implementing new digital technology	○	○	○	○	○
We are an organization that innovates	○	○	○	○	○
We are constantly improving our systems	○	○	○	○	○
We give our teams freedom to fail	○	○	○	○	○

Concerning your organization's mission, do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Digital technology is critical to fulfilling our mission	○	○	○	○	○

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Digital technology creates obstacles to fulfilling our mission	○	○	○	○	○
Digital technology has caused us to reconsider our mission	○	○	○	○	○
We can achieve our mission in new ways with digital technology	○	○	○	○	○

Indicative Interview Questions

1. How does your organization make decisions about whether to use a particular digital technology?
2. How does your organization manage the use of digital technology?
3. How does your organization plan staff training and recruitment regarding digital skills and roles?
4. If money were not an issue, what would your organization do differently regarding the use of digital technology?
5. If everyone in the organization (staff, leadership and other stakeholders) were on board, what would your organization do differently regarding the use of digital technology?
6. What digital technology or change in digital culture has had the greatest impact on how your organization operates? Please explain how this has impacted your organization.
7. What future digital technology has the greatest potential to negatively impact your organization's ability to accomplish your mission? Please explain how this would impact your organization.
8. What future digital technology has the greatest potential to positively impact your organization's ability to accomplish your mission? Please explain how this would impact your organization.
9. How has digital technology changed your organization's recruitment and mobilization of volunteers?
10. How do you see digital technology changing recruitment and mobilization of volunteers in the future?
11. How has digital technology changed your organization's fundraising?
12. How do you see digital technology changing fundraising in the future?
13. How has digital technology changed how your organization interacts with those you serve?
14. How do you see digital technology changing how you interact with those you serve in the future?
15. How does theology inform your decision-making regarding digital technology?

Appendix C: Analysis of the Three Positions Towards Digitalisation

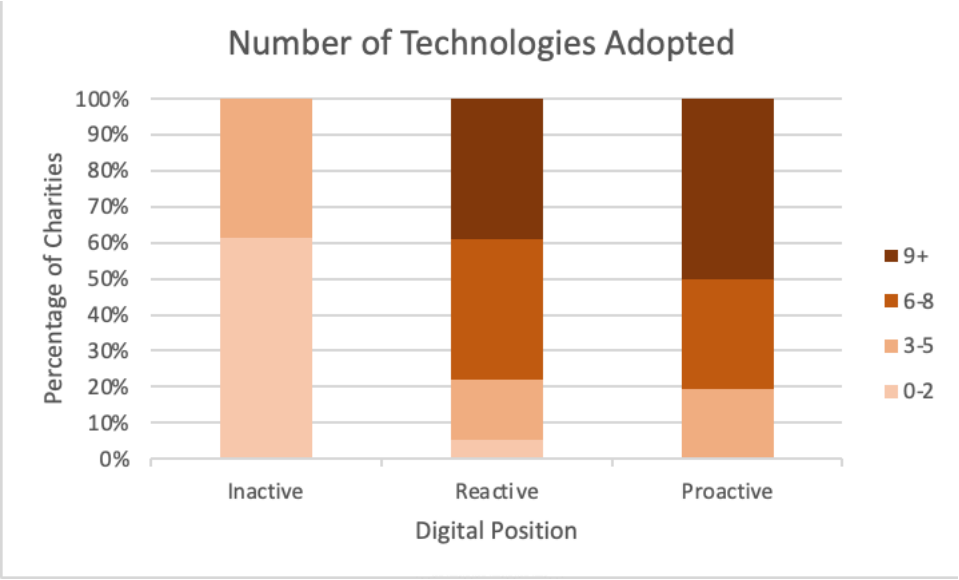
The answers to the survey question regarding adoption of online meetings by the charities resulted in the emergence of three distinct positions towards digitalisation. Those that answered that they had been using online meetings for several years are labelled *digitally proactive*. Those that answered that they had adopted online meetings in the last year were labelled *digitally reactive*, and those that answered that they were not considering adopting online meetings were labelled *digitally inactive*.

Charity Type and Church Size

Although 40% of the *digitally inactive* charities were churches with congregations of less than 50, and no church with a congregation size greater than 500 was in the *digitally inactive* charities set, there were churches of every size in the *digitally reactive* and *digitally proactive* charities sets. This indicates that small size did not prevent churches from being *digitally proactive* charities, although it may have made it more likely for them to be *digitally inactive* charities. Both the *digitally reactive* and *digitally proactive* positions included churches of all sizes. Approximately half (49%) of all churches belonged to the *digitally reactive* charities set, compared to only 25% of non-church charities. Also, none of the charities classified as "networks/denominations" were in the *digitally inactive* category.

Technology Adoption and Digital Hiring

A large majority of *digitally proactive* charities were using cloud computing (90%) and digital financial services (79%). *Digitally proactive* charities were more likely than other charities to employ people in digital roles, with between three times the proportion of *digitally proactive* charities than *digitally reactive* charities employing a digital designer (33% versus 11%), and more than twice the proportion of *digitally proactive* than *digitally reactive* charities employing a social media manager (42% versus 18%). This is significant as The Economist (2012) highlighted the value of getting people with the right skillset and mindset on board.



Number of Digital Technologies Adopted by Digitally Proactive, Reactive, and Inactive Charities. Source: Author

Although there is a distinct difference between *digitally proactive* and *digitally reactive* charities in their patterns of hiring for digital roles, their overall patterns in adopting technology are quite similar. Over 60% of *digitally inactive* charities had adopted two or less of the digital technologies mentioned in the survey, whereas close to 80% of both *digitally proactive* and *digitally reactive* charities had adopted six or more. This indicates that *digitally inactive* charities exhibited significantly different decision-making regarding technology adoption, but that there is no obvious distinction between the technology decisions of *digitally proactive* and *digitally reactive* charities.

Factors in Adopting Technology and Employing for Digital Roles

Comparison of Factor Ranking for Adopting Technologies by Digitally Proactive, Reactive and Inactive Charities. Source: Author

Comparison of Factor Ranking in Employing for Digital Roles by Digitally Proactive, Reactive and Inactive Charities. Source: Author

The most important factor for *digitally inactive* charities in adopting digital technology was "budget", which indicates that the anticipated financial cost of using digital technology was a barrier to adoption. Regarding employing for digital roles, however,

the most important factor for these charities was volunteer capacity. This indicates that these charities were looking first to their volunteers to accomplish work. Given that these volunteers may have been among the stakeholders in these charities that were opposed to using digital technology, this may also have influenced *digitally inactive* charities' lower adoption of digital technology, reflecting those volunteers' preference to use non-digital methods to accomplish the work.

The *digitally inactive* charities considered their stakeholders' preferences as relatively more important factors in their digital decision-making than other charities. The average rank of "stakeholder preference" in adopting digital technologies for *digitally inactive* charities was over half a ranking point higher than that of *digitally reactive* charities and over 1.5 ranking points higher than that of *digitally proactive* charities. Similarly, the average rank of "stakeholder preference" in employing for digital roles was over one ranking point higher than that for *digitally proactive* charities and almost one ranking point higher than that for *digitally reactive* charities. Stakeholders for charities could be donors, volunteers, or those that the charity serves.

Digitally inactive charities also considered "leadership preference" relatively more important in their digital decision-making than other charities. This could be a reflection of the small charities that populate this category, which often tend to have one leader who is responsible for most of the decision-making.

Digitally reactive charities ranked budget as the most important consideration in both adopting digital technologies and employing for digital roles. Although, as mentioned earlier, their use of digital technology was more like *digitally proactive* charities than *digitally inactive* charities, the factors that contributed to their digital decision-making more closely mirrored those of *digitally inactive* charities, with the mean ranking of the importance of "staff skills" and "long-term strategic plans" ranking almost equally for both sets of charities. The importance of "alignment with organisational mission" also ranked significantly lower for *digitally reactive* charities than for *digitally proactive* charities. Budget ranked highly for this set of charities, in contrast to *digitally inactive* charities, and this could reflect that *digitally reactive* charities were likely to be using considerably more digital technology than *digitally inactive* charities. Although *digitally*

reactive charities were less likely than *digitally proactive* charities to employ people in digital roles, they were considerably more likely to do so than *digitally inactive* charities. That *digitally reactive* charities gave much more weight to "budget" than "alignment to organisational mission" in these decisions makes it more likely that they were choosing options that appeared cost-saving on the surface, but were actually inhibiting their ability to get full value from these digital technologies and digital roles in the long run.

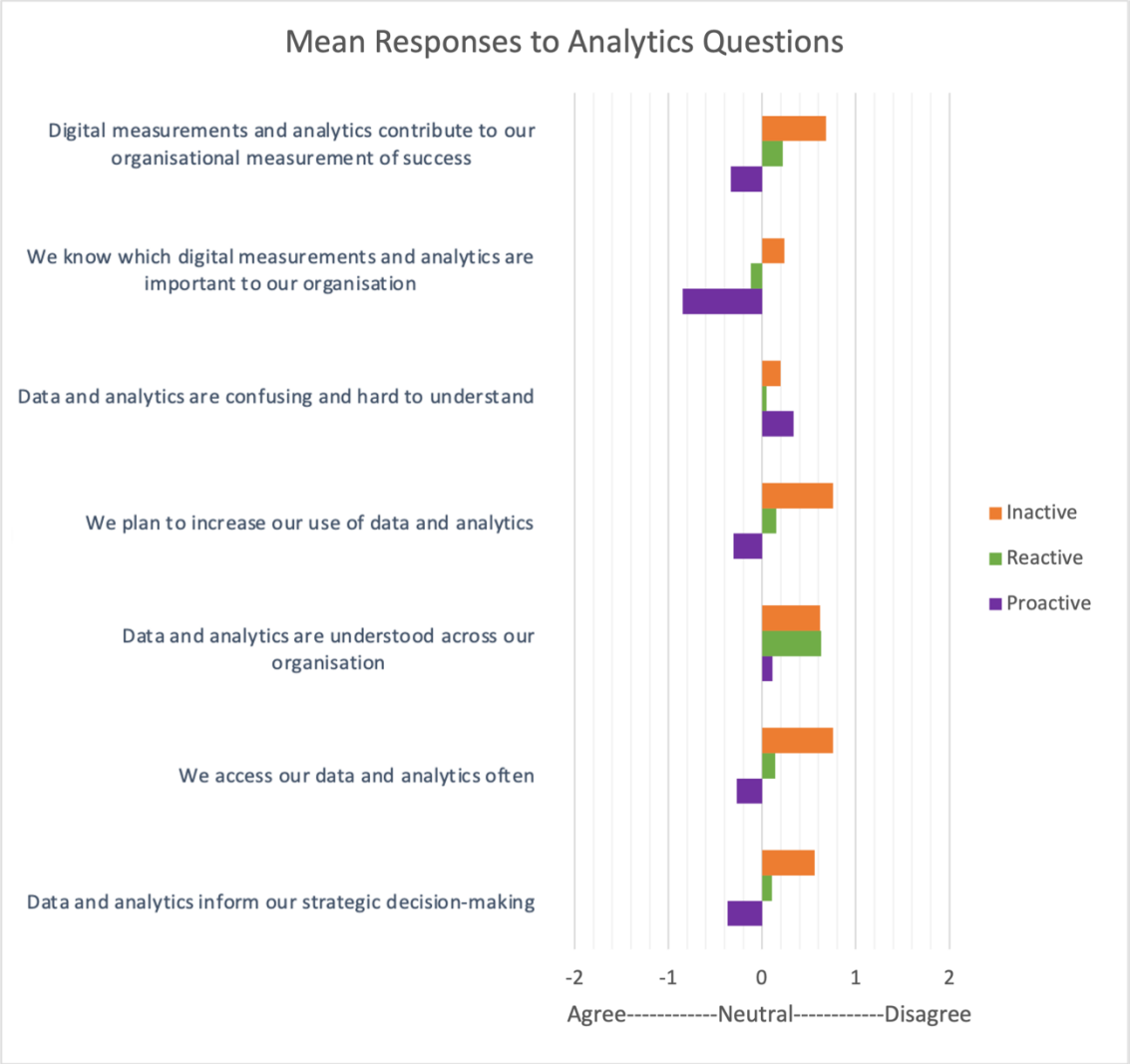
Although "budget" was on average the second most important factor in both adopting digital technology and employing for digital roles for *digitally proactive* charities, the mean ranking score for *digitally proactive* charities was almost one ranking point lower than that of *digitally reactive* charities for both decisions. This indicates that although "budget" was an important factor for *digitally proactive* charities, it did not dominate the thinking of these charities.

Digitally proactive charities were very mission-driven in their decision-making for both adopting digital technology and employing for digital roles, with "alignment with organisational mission" ranking on average as their most important factor (versus the 5th ranked factor for *digitally reactive* charities and even lower for *digitally inactive* charities). They also valued long-term strategy more than other charities, ranking it the 4th most important factor in adopting digital technology and 5th most important in employing for digital roles. This mean rank was almost 1 ranking point higher than that of *digitally reactive* charities for adopting digital technology and over 1 ranking point higher for employing for digital roles. This indicates that *digitally proactive* charities were connecting digital decisions to their long-term strategy more than other charities.

Digital Investment

Digitally inactive charities tended to spend very little money on digital technology or roles and did not plan to change, with over two-thirds (69%) of *digitally inactive* charities having a digital budget of less than 1%, and five out of six *digitally inactive* charities (83%) indicating that their digital budget was likely to remain the same.

Analytics



Mean Responses to Analytics Questions by Digitally Proactive, Reactive and Inactive Charities. Source: Author

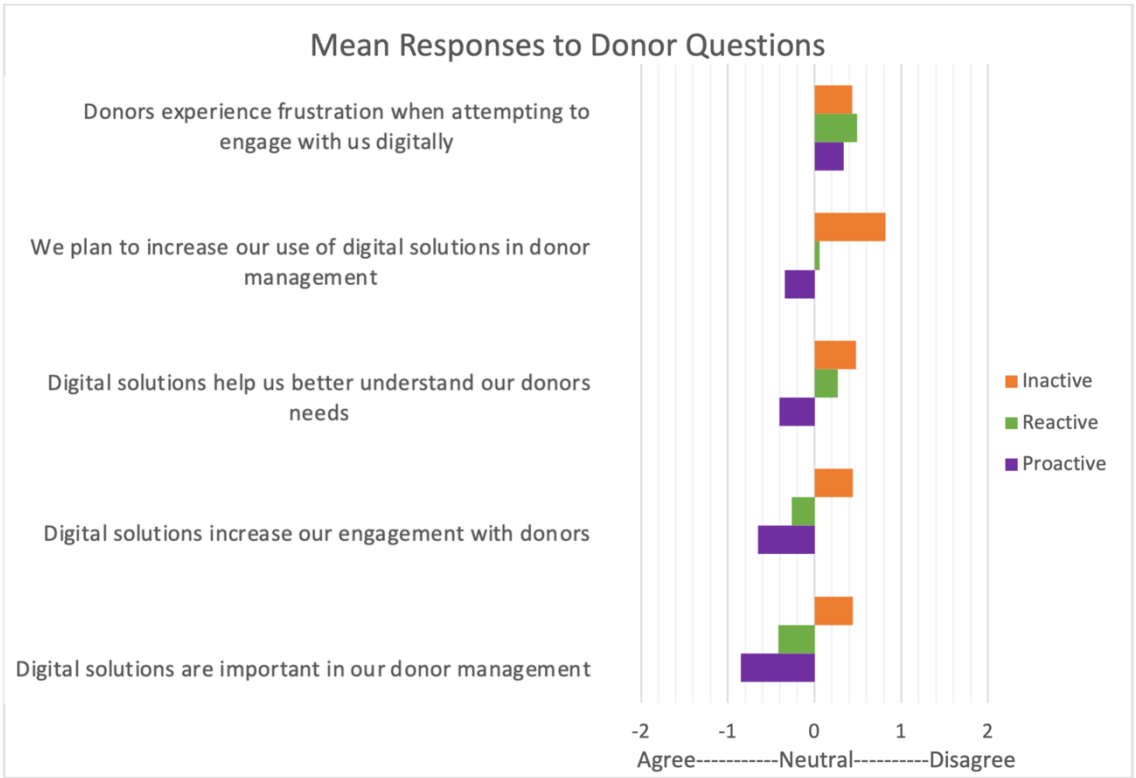
Digitally proactive charities were the only category to on average agree that data and analytics were accessed often, informed strategic decision-making and contributed to their organisational measure of success. Both *digitally reactive* and *digitally inactive* charities on average did not access analytics often and generally did not use their analytics to inform strategic decision-making or consider them in measuring their organisations' success, although the responses of *digitally inactive* charities disagreed more than those of *digitally reactive charities*.

Digitally proactive charities also on average agreed very strongly that they know which digital measurements are important to their organisation. Although they on average disagreed that data and analytics are understood across their organisation, this disagreement was much less than for the other categories (0.1 for *digitally proactive*,

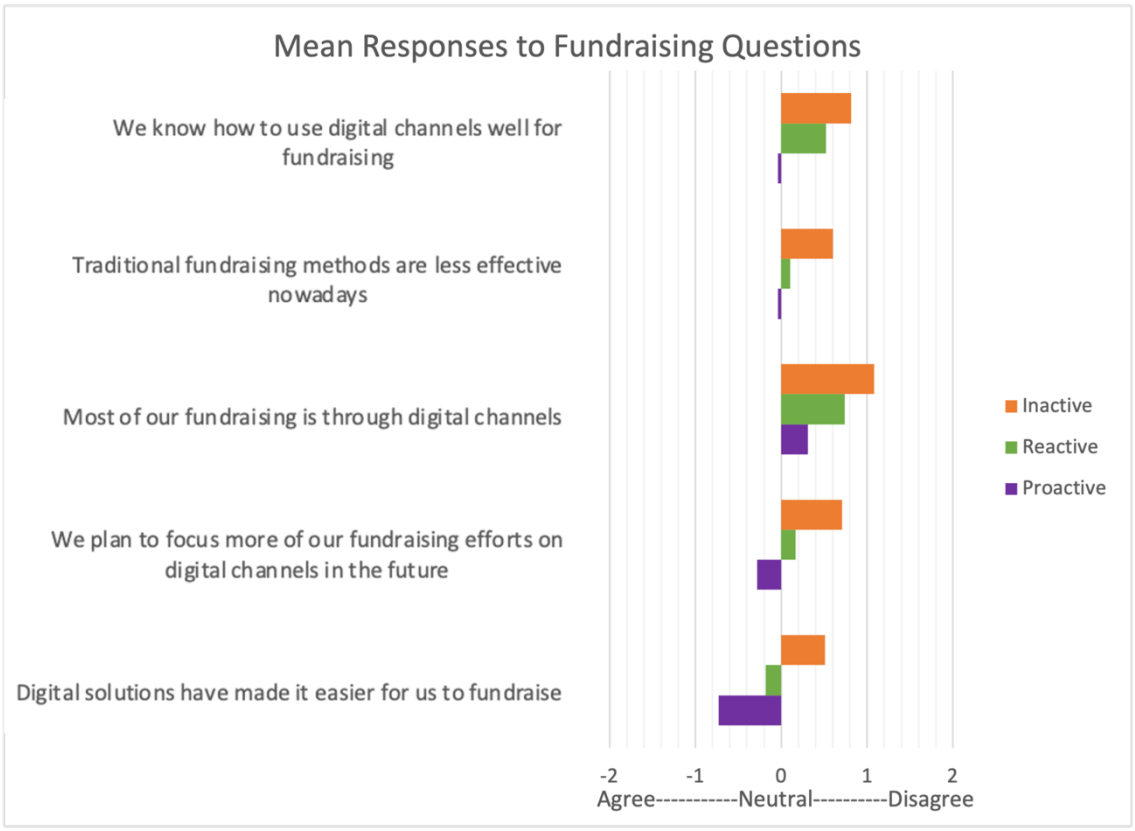
versus, 0.6 for both *digitally reactive* and *digitally inactive*). This indicates that *digitally proactive* charities both saw the value of analytics and were actively using analytics, having incorporated analytics into their operation and strategic decision-making. They also, unlike other charities, planned to increase their use of analytics.

The mean scores for *digitally reactive* charities to the questions regarding analytics were mostly close to neutral, apart from the significant disagreement that data and analytics are understood across their organisation. This indicates that the clearest understanding about analytics for these charities is that they know that analytics is not well understood in their organisations. The mean response to this question was almost identical to that of *digitally inactive* charities. However, *digitally inactive* charities had stronger negative responses regarding accessing analytics often, analytics contributing to their measure of organisational success, and planning to increase the use of analytics. From these responses, it seems that *digitally inactive* charities are clear that they do not see analytics as meaningful to their operations. *Digitally reactive* charities, however, seem unsure of the value of analytics to their organisations.

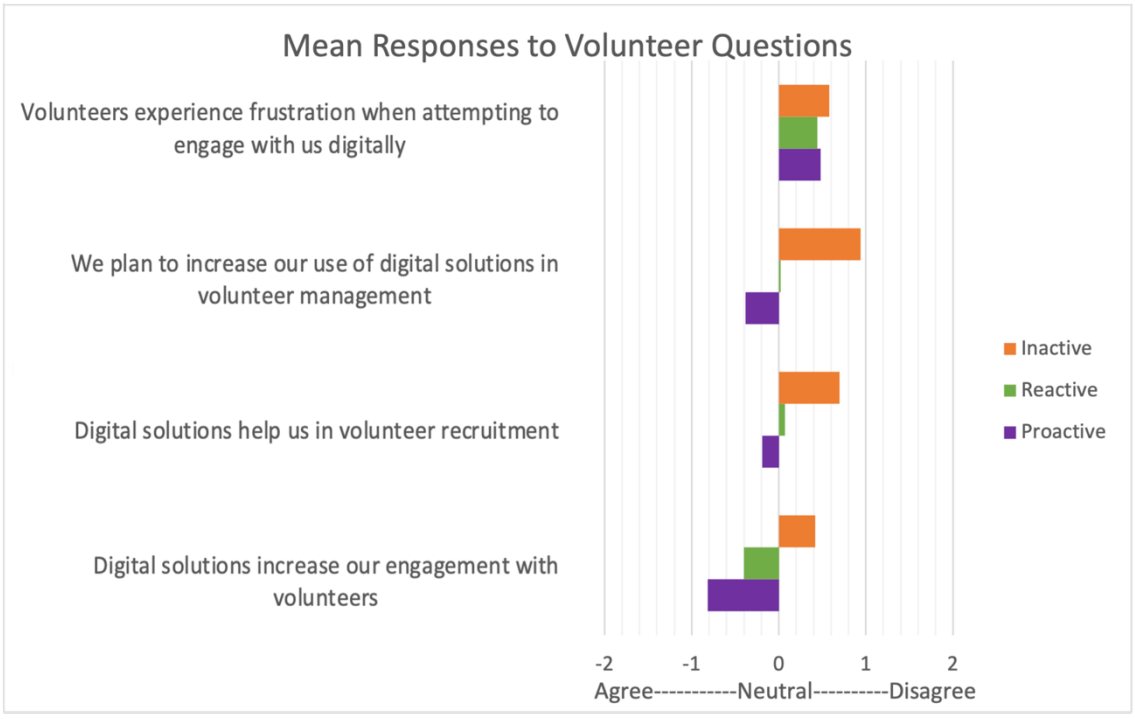
Donors, Fundraising and Volunteers



Mean Responses to Questions About Donors for Digitally Proactive, Reactive, and Inactive Charities. Source: Author.



Mean Responses to Questions About Fundraising for Digitally Proactive, Reactive, and Inactive Charities. Source: Author.



Mean Responses to Questions About Volunteers for Digitally Proactive, Reactive, and Inactive Charities. Source: Author

Digitally proactive charities reported similar or greater levels of frustration in the areas of donor and volunteer management than other charities. For example, they were more likely to report that donors experience frustration when attempting to engage

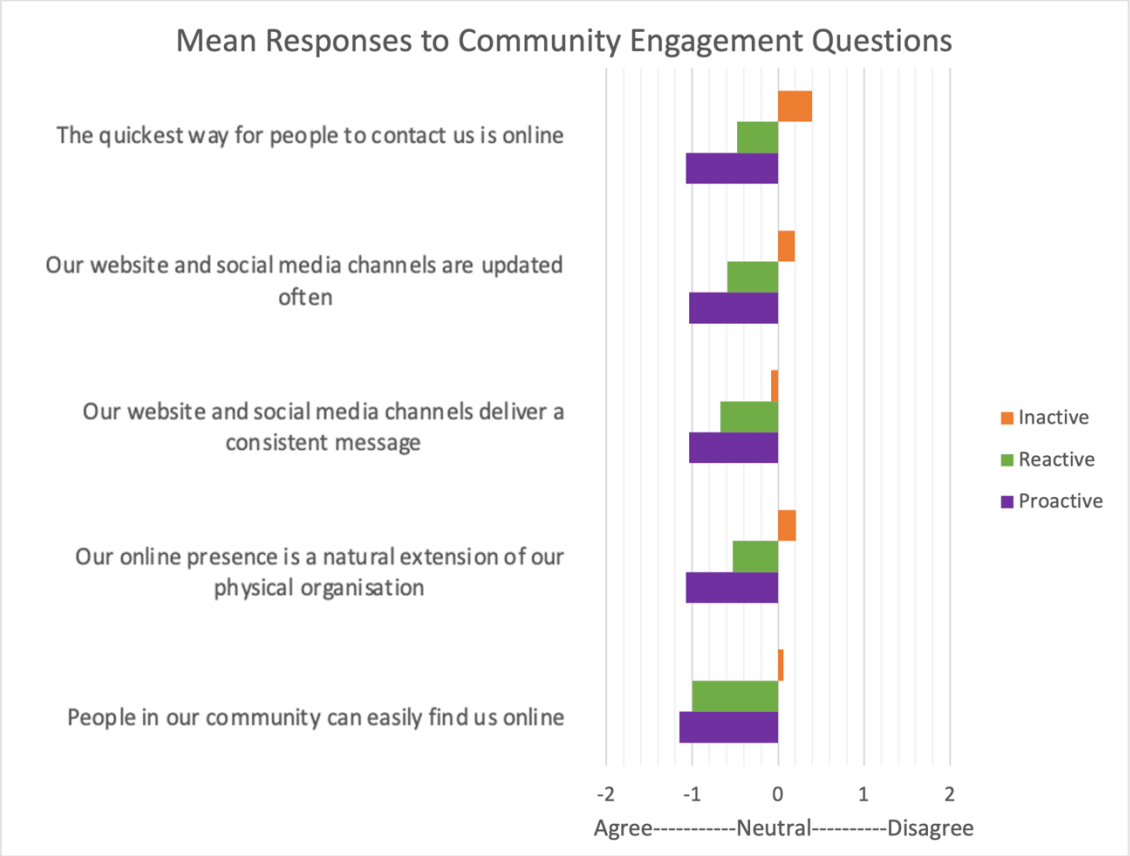
digitally. This may reflect that these charities were paying more attention to these concerns than other charities, or that the donors of these charities had higher expectations of digital service.

Although *digitally proactive* charities reported that most of their funding was not through digital channels, they indicated that digital solutions had made it easier for them to fundraise and they planned to increase their use of digital fundraising. This is despite them not always being confident that they knew how to use digital channels well for fundraising.

Digitally inactive charities disagreed much more strongly than other charities that traditional fundraising methods are less effective nowadays. Together, this likely indicates that donors of these charities were comfortable using non-digital channels, and this may well have been their preference. For churches, stakeholders were likely to include the congregation. Given the resulting decisions of these charities, this likely reflected substantial resistance by stakeholders of *digitally inactive* charities to adopting digital technology and employing people in digital roles.

As a group, *digitally reactive* charities generally reported some value from using digital technology in donor management, volunteer engagement and fundraising, although again less than *digitally proactive* charities. However, they reported an average disagreement in seeing digital solutions help in volunteer recruitment. They reported that they did not know how to use digital channels well for fundraising, and that digital solutions did not help them understand donors' needs better, both in contrast to *digitally proactive* charities. *Digitally reactive* charities also reported that they were on average not planning to increase their use of digital technology in these areas. It appears that these charities were experiencing difficulty in getting more than minimal value out of digital technology in their operations, and as a result were reluctant to invest in greater use of digital technology in these areas.

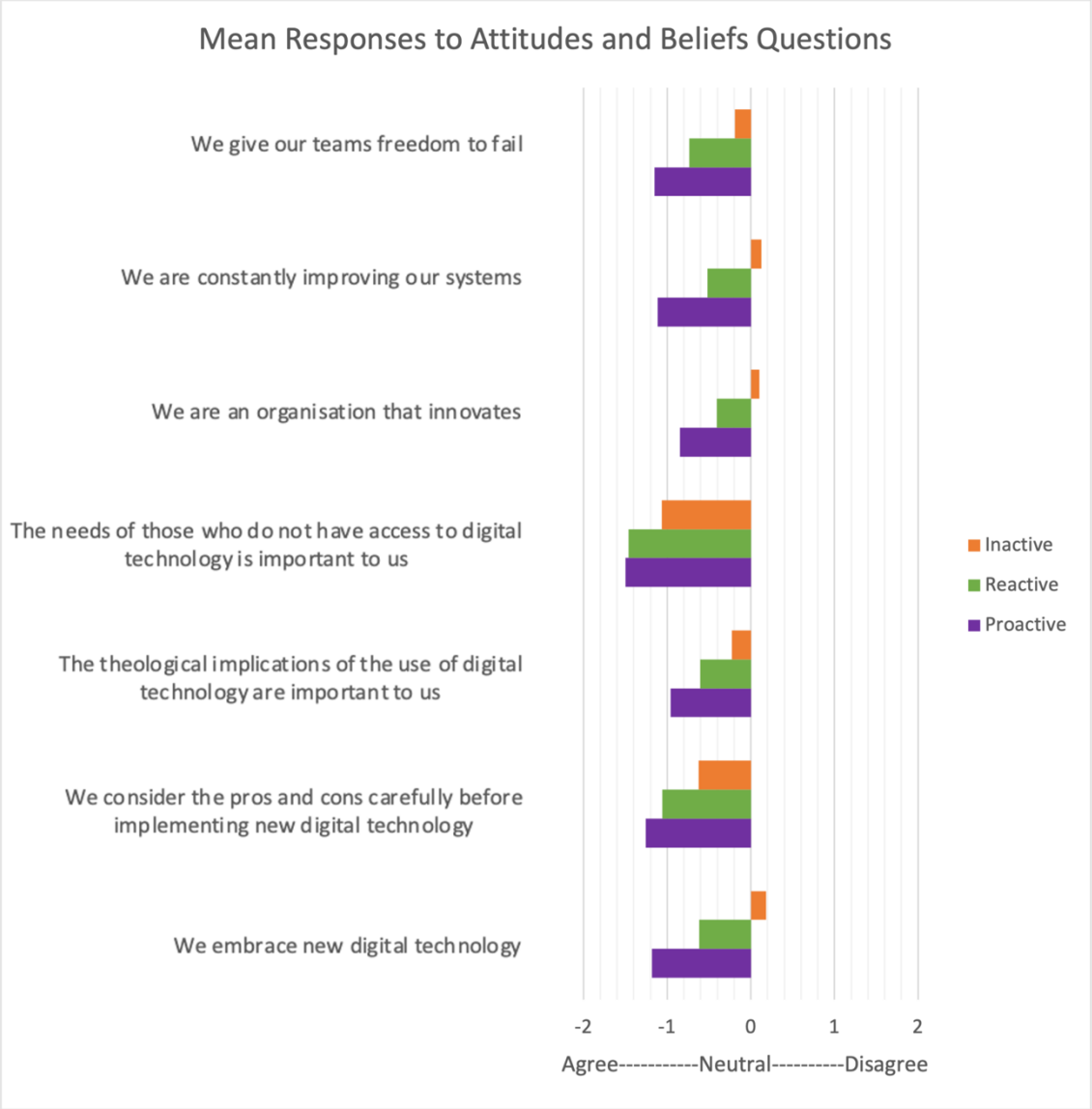
Community Engagement



Mean Responses to Questions About Community Engagement for Digitally Proactive, Reactive, and Inactive Charities. Source: Author

Digitally proactive charities agreed on average more than the other categories of charities that the easiest way to contact them was online, their website and social media channels were updated frequently and delivered a consistent message, and that their online presence was a natural extension of the physical organisation. The *digitally reactive* charities also agreed with all of these statements but less strongly. The *digitally inactive* charities however disagreed with all of these statements, with their strongest disagreement coming for the statement that the easiest way to contact them is online.

Attitudes and Beliefs



Mean Responses to Questions About Organisational Attitudes and Beliefs for Digitally Proactive, Reactive, and Inactive Charities. Source: Author

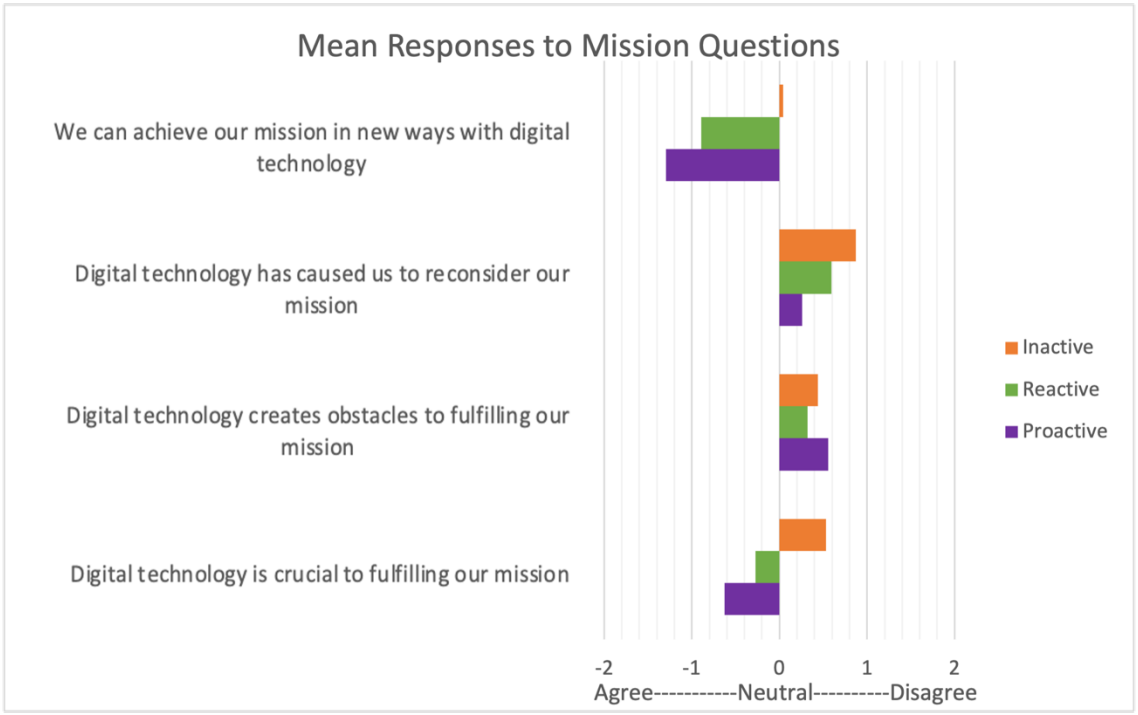
Digitally inactive charities generally identified themselves as organisations that did not embrace new technology, did not innovate, and were not constantly improving their systems. Although they agreed that the theological implications of technology were important, their average responses indicated less agreement than other charities. Their average agreement that the needs of those who do not have access to digital technology are important, and that they give their teams freedom to fail, was also markedly weaker than that of other charities.

Although *digitally reactive* charities reported, on average, agreement that they embraced new technology, that they were constantly improving their systems, and

that they considered themselves innovative organisations, their level of agreement was lower than that of *digitally proactive* charities on all of these measures. These measures indicate a generally positive attitude towards technology by these charities.

Digitally proactive charities agreed on average more than other charities that they were organisations that innovate, that they were constantly improving their systems, that they gave their teams freedom to fail and that they embraced new technology. These are clear indications of a group of organisations that were comfortable with both digital technology and the culture that facilitates digitalisation. They were also more likely to agree that the needs of those without access to digital technology are important, although only marginally more than *digitally reactive* charities. They also agreed more that they considered the pros and cons carefully before implementing new digital technology, indicating that such a value need not be an impediment to successful adoption of digital technology. They were also the group of charities that was most likely to agree that the theological implications of technology are important to them.

Mission



Mean Responses to Questions About Organisational Mission for Digitally Proactive, Reactive, and Inactive Charities. Source: Author

Unlike other charities, the *digitally inactive* charities did not see digital technology as critical to fulfilling their mission and did not consider that they could achieve their mission in new ways with digital technology. They also considered mission alignment relatively less important than other charities in digital decision-making, likely a reflection of their view that digital technology is not relevant to their mission.

Perhaps most significantly, *digitally proactive* charities agreed more strongly than other charities on average that digital technology is critical to fulfilling their mission and that they could achieve their mission in new ways with digital technology. This perspective, which sees an alignment with the use of digital technology and fulfilling their mission, was reflected in both their high adoption of digital technology, but also in attitudes that facilitated the successful implementation of digital technology and the development of an effective digital culture.

Digitally reactive charities generally agreed that digital technology is critical to fulfilling their mission, and strongly agreed that they could achieve their mission in new ways with digital technology. They did indicate that they were, on average, experiencing more obstacles in fulfilling their mission through digital technology. This indicates that these charities saw the value of digital technology for their mission, although they were less confident of this assessment than *digitally proactive* charities. This lower confidence may have been as a result of difficulties that they were experiencing.

Summary

The responses from *digitally inactive* charities indicate a group of charities that do not see digital technology as an important or relevant aspect of their operations. They tend not to use many digital technologies. Budget plays a large role in their decisions regarding adoption of digital technology and hiring for digital roles, however, leadership and stakeholder preference play a greater role for these charities than others. Also, changes in operational need are less influential in their decision-making.

Digitally proactive charities, on the other hand, see digital technology as integral to their operation and they are looking to increase their use of digital technology. Although budget is still important in their decision-making, it is less important to them

than aligning these decisions with their organisational mission. They place a much higher value on alignment with organisational mission and long-term strategic plans in their decisions regarding adopting technology and hiring for digital roles than other charities. They are more likely than other charities to hire for digital roles.

Digitally reactive charities use digital technology at a similar rate to *digitally proactive* charities however in the factors behind the decisions to adopt digital technology or hire for digital roles they more closely resemble *digitally inactive* charities in their focus on budget, and their low estimation of alignment with organisational mission and long-term strategic plans. Although generally positive towards the idea of using digital technology, they are much less assured in their responses than *digitally proactive* charities.