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# Buyer Attitudes and Demographics at three Adventist Book Center, Camp Meeting Sales

Glen Robinson

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BUYER ATTITUDES AND DEMOGRAPHICS  
AT THREE ADVENTIST BOOK CENTER  
CAMP MEETING SALES

by

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September 1, 1989

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study is designed to help develop a more comprehensive and accurate picture of Adventist Book Center customers, contribute toward a growing pool of market information at Pacific Press and encourage a continuing scientific approach toward market analysis.

This study was directed at Adventist Book Center campmeeting customers on the weekend featuring that campmeeting's auditorium sale. Research took place in the Adventist Book Centers located in Keene, Texas; Apopka, Florida and Gladstone, Oregon. A total of 330 responses were collected.

Findings showed that Adventist Book Center customers tend to buy conservative products en masse. They typically live 78 miles from the nearest ABC, yet still manage to visit 6.8 times each year. When they do visit, 26% of them plan on spending at least \$50. These customers learn of their products primarily through advertising in Seventh-day Adventist periodicals. Their main product interest lies in Ellen G. White books and topical books. Despite being more likely than average to have a VCR or personal computer in their homes, they show little interest in videos or Books on Tape products.

The report concludes with recommendations for further study.

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## THE QUESTIONS UNDER STUDY

This study is designed to help develop a more comprehensive and accurate picture of Adventist Book Center customers, contribute toward a growing pool of market information at Pacific Press and encourage a continuing scientific approach toward market analysis. Data from this study contributes to a growing data base already comprised from research on book sales and author manuscript submission habits. Each of these studies contributes a portion to the total picture, which will eventually become complete through further research.

This study helps us at Pacific Press learn who the people are that buy our music, periodicals and trade books. Specifically, this study helps us discover: (1) how often they go to Adventist Book Centers; (2) How much they spend when they go to camp meeting sales; (3) what they intend to buy and what they end up buying; (4) where they hear about it; (5) what general products are they interested in; (6) where they live in relation to ABCs; (7) who they are, including age, race, education, occupation and income; (8) what home electronics they own; and (9) what Adventist broadcasts they receive. In addition, the questionnaire seeks to find out what market exposure specific products are receiving and if there is such as thing as a "market saturation point."

The next section will deal with Methodology.

## METHODOLOGY

This study was directed at Adventist Book Center camp meeting customers on the weekend featuring that camp meeting's auditorium sale. The rationale for focusing on this particular weekend was that, as a rule of thumb, 20% of Adventist Book Center sales occur during camp meeting season, and 20% of camp meeting sales occur during that particular weekend, making it the top ABC sales weekend of the year. There are inherent advantages and disadvantages in selecting a specific weekend for the questionnaire presentation (See limitations of study, p. 4).

Research took place in the Adventist Book Center located on the camp meeting grounds in Keene, Texas; Apopka, Florida; and Gladstone, Oregon during the 1989 camp meeting season. These camp meetings reflect a diversification in regions, including the southeastern, southern and northwestern United States.

A table was manned during Saturday night and Sunday ABC sale hours. A total of 330 responses were collected from ABC customers over the three weekends of this study. Participants were asked to fill out a one-page (front and back) 8 1/2 X 14 inch yellow questionnaire on their buying habits. (See sample of questionnaire in Appendix A.) In return, they were told they would receive a coupon worth \$1 off any purchase of a Chapel Records or Pacific Press product. Responses were compiled, entered into the computer and tabulated at Pacific Press.

## LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

The decision to focus on ABC sales during the camp meeting auditorium weekend has some inherent problems, specifically relating to skewness of population sample. The nature of the auditorium sale weekend would seem to draw a population different from the customer norm for Adventist Book Centers. Further, because the study was done on three weekends, the sample might be dominated by those customers who, because of work conflicts, might not visit an Adventist Book Center during the week. Finally, camp meeting itself tends to draw Seventh-day Adventists that may have a slightly different demographic base than the typical Adventist.

On the other hand, Pacific Press has no demographics for ABC customers as of yet. Thus we can freely compile the information from this study, knowing that it is at least a starting point from which Pacific Press can build a greater and more accurate picture of its ABC customers. One must remember, however, that the demographics supplied here reflect the camp meeting auditorium sale weekend, and are not a reliable reflection of ABC customer demographics as a whole.

In addition, questionnaire response might have improved had the questions been limited to one side of the sheet. Some respondents failed to fill out the second side. However, because their views are still valid, the responses they did submit are

included in the study.

Further, when offered the \$1 discount coupon in return for filling out the questionnaire, some potential respondents refused, based on the fact that they did not plan on buying any Chapel or Pacific Press products. This may have caused a slight skewing of the response in favor of those buying Pacific Press products, but in the opinion of the researcher, this possible skewness is insignificant. In any case, the problem of skewing here may not be one that can be remedied.

Finally, Pacific Press' director of advertising suggested, unfortunately too late for inclusion, that this questionnaire ask for the respondent's zip code and exposure to advertising in Adventist periodicals. The researcher recognizes the value of this information, specifically to advertising, and regrets not having included it in this study. The researcher recommends that further studies of ABC customers include these two items.



## FINDINGS

For the purposes of this specific study, the Findings section will list responses to the questionnaires according to frequencies of response, percentages or sample mean (average), whichever is most appropriate. The figures presented here are done so specifically to show the type of individual that responded to the survey.

The raw data from this study has greater potential, however, than is shown from these primary figures. Contingency tables can give a more focused picture of respondent's views on specific products. Because of the exhaustive work involved, it is not realistic to consider doing contingency tables on all products evaluated by the respondents. As an example, however, this study will use contingency tables and subsets to take a look at two groups: (1) those who spend more than \$50 per ABC camp meeting visit; and (2) those who have read the book They're All Dead, Aren't They.

### General Findings

1. Including today, about how many times have you visited an Adventist Book Center in the past year?

The average number of times respondents visited ABC overall was 6.9 times. By conference, respondents in Texas visited most frequently, an average of 8.6 times, with Oregon (6.2 times) and

Florida (5.7 times) following (see Fig. 1).

2. Do you shop at other Christian bookstores?

A total of 72% said yes, with 28% saying no.

3. If yes, how often?

A total of 49% said they shopped at other Christian bookstores Less than at ABCs. Twenty-five percent (25%) of responses fell into the More category, and 26% said they shopped at both stores the same.

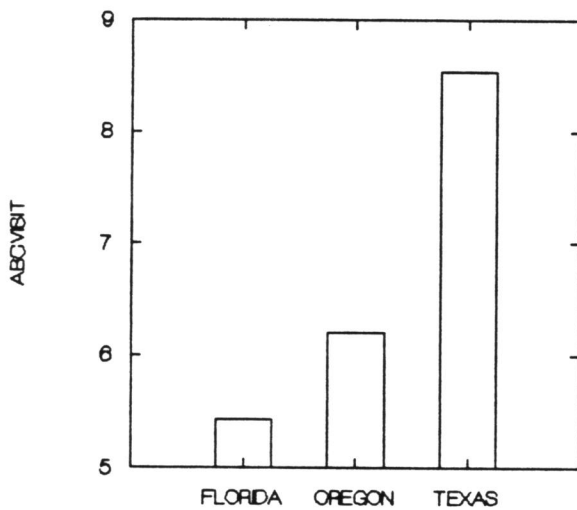


Fig. 1. Visits to ABCs by conference.

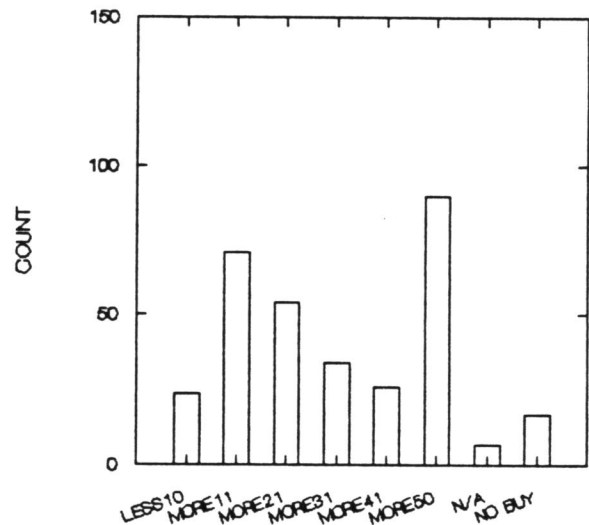


Fig. 2. Amount spent at last ABC visit.

4. The last time you visited an Adventist Book Center, about how much did you spend?

The majority of respondents (28%) said they spent more than \$50 during their last ABC visit. Other responses were \$41 to \$50 (8%), \$31 to \$40 (11%), \$21 to \$30 (17%), \$11 to \$20 (22%), \$10 or Less (7%), No Purchase (5%) and Not Applicable (2%) (Fig. 2).

5. Why did you come to the ABC sale today?

Looking for a particular product was the most common reason given for coming to the Adventist Book Center sale, with 45% of the respondents indicating so. Thirty-six percent (36%) said they came because they were Curious, 1% said they were both Curious and Looking, and 18% indicated Other.

6. If you are looking for a particular product, what is it?

Of those who responded, 49% said they were looking for a particular book at the Adventist Book Center Sale. Fourteen percent (14%) said they were looking for recorded music or sheet

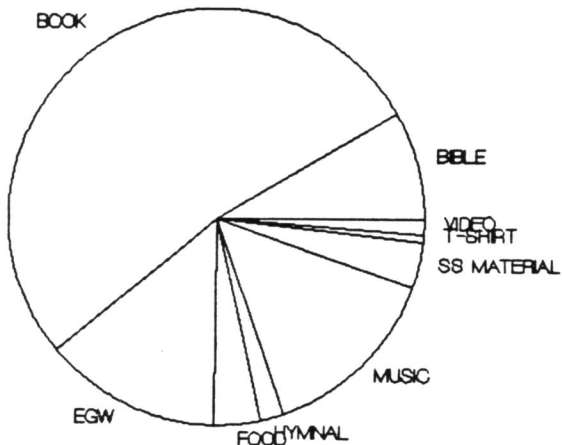


Fig. 3. Specific product looked for by customers.

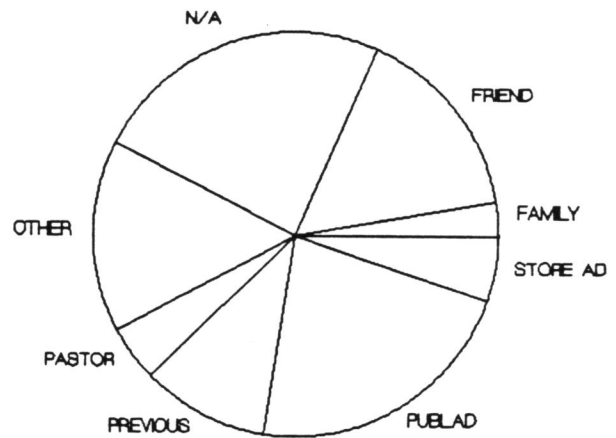


Fig. 4. How they learned of the product.

music. Another 14% said they were specifically looking for a Spirit of Prophecy product. Eight percent (8%) said they were looking for a Bible, 4% said they were looking for vegetarian food, 4% said they were looking for Sabbath school materials, 2% said they wanted to buy a hymnal, and 1% each responded that they came looking for a specific video or a T-shirt (see Fig. 3).

**7. How did you learn of the specific product you were looking for?**

Twenty-two percent (22%) of respondents indicated that they learned of the product by seeing it in a church publication advertisement. Sixteen percent (16%) said the product was recommended by a friend, 5% heard of it from their pastor or church staff and 3% said family was their source of recommendation. Five percent (5%) heard of the product from store advertising and 10% saw it during a previous store visit. Fifteen percent (15%) and 24% indicated Other and Not Applicable, respectively (see Fig. 4).

**8. Are you buying any additional products besides the product you planned to purchase?**

Respondents indicated yes, they were planning to buy additional products 57% of the time. Only 5% said no, they would not buy additional products. Thirty-seven percent (37%) responded Don't Know.

**9. How much do you anticipate you will spend today?**

A total of 26% indicated they planned on spending more than \$50. Total respondents for other categories were \$11 to \$20 (21%), \$21 to \$30 (19%) \$0 to \$9 and \$31 to \$40 (both 9%), \$41 to \$50 (6%). Two percent (2%) indicated they would not make a purchase, and 8% indicated the question was not applicable.

**10. Whom are the products you are buying intended for?**

The vast majority of respondents here indicated that their purchase was intended for personal use (90%). Other responses

were Family (4%), Friend (3%) Church and All (both 2%).

11. With 5 being most and 1 being least, please indicate your interest in the following product categories:

Twenty product categories were listed with a Likert scale to the right of each category. Participants were asked to rate their interest in each product category. Because of the length and nature of this question, respondents did not necessarily respond to each product category. Value of response is evaluated by taking an average of those responses that were included in the returned surveys. Following is a list of those product categories and how they were rated by participants using an average of Likert Scale responses.

PRODUCT INTEREST SCALE

RANKING	PRODUCT	SCORE
1	Ellen G. White Books	4.108
2	Topical Books	3.690
3	Recorded music--general	3.578
4	Bibles	3.541
5	Devotional Books	3.538
6	Storybooks for adults	3.399
7	Vegetarian foods	3.336
8	Witnessing materials	3.315
9	Storybooks for young children	3.007
10	Recorded music--children	2.846
11	Vegetarian cookbooks	2.844

12	Gifts	2.797
12	Storybooks for teenagers	2.797
14	Children's activity books	2.794
15	Sabbath School materials	2.703
16	Children's picture books	2.697
17	Books on Tape	2.361
18	Other	2.351
19	Video	2.230
20	Accompaniment tapes	2.094

**12. What kind of Christian music do you listen to?**

Contemporary was the music preference most indicated, with 34% of respondents choosing that type of music. Traditional also had a strong showing (20%), followed by Hymns (16%) and All (14%). Other responses were Classical (1%), Gospel (6%), Instrumental (5%), Sacred (2%) and Praise (2%)(see Fig. 5).

**13. Are you more likely to buy recorded music on a cassette tape or on a compact disc?**

Eighty-three percent (83%) indicated Cassette as their preferred form in which to buy recorded music. Other responses were Compact Discs (10%), Both (.38%), Don't Know (4%) and Neither (4%).

**14. Personal and household profile.**

The following section dealt specifically with customer demographics.

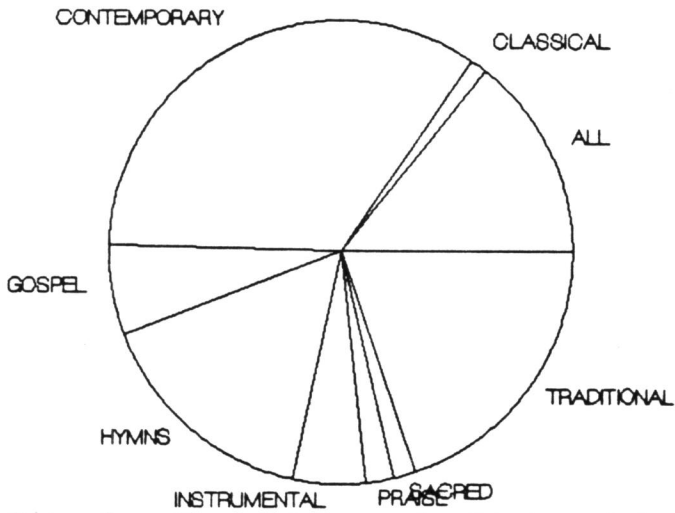


Fig. 5. Christian music listened to by respondents.

**A. In what year were you born?**

The mean birthdate for respondents was May of 1946, making them approximately 43 years old. The mean birthdate according to conference was slightly different. In Texas, it was

March, 1949 (age 40); in Florida it was April-May, 1946 (age 43) and Oregon it was March of 1943 (age 46).

**B. Sex:**

Female respondents generally outnumbered males (62% to 38%). In Texas, the percentage was 55% female and 45% male. In Florida, it was 70% female and 30% male. In Oregon, it was

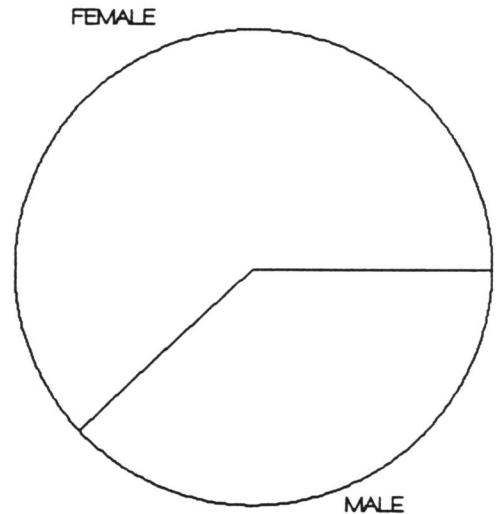


Fig. 6. Sex.

63% female and 37% male. In each case, however, females were clearly in the majority (see Fig. 6).

**C. Race:**

Respondents were predominantly White (87%), with Hispanic and Black tied for a distant second (5% each). Asians got 2.3% and Other responded .7%

**D. Marital Status:**

Though respondents are predominantly married (75%), a full 25% are unmarried through divorce (6%), death of a spouse (3%) or never having been married (16%).

**F. Denominational employee?**

Denominational employees are a minority, with 82% responding No and 18% saying Yes.

**G. Occupation**

Spouse occupation--Twenty-four percent (24%) of respondents said their spouses worked in a White-collar/Professional position. Other responses were Retired (17%), Self-employed (13%), Blue collar/labor (12%), Homemaker (12%), Service Industry (6%), Government Employee (3%), Paid Local Church Staff (3%), Teacher (3%), Unemployed (2%), Student (1%), and Other (3%) (see Fig. 7).

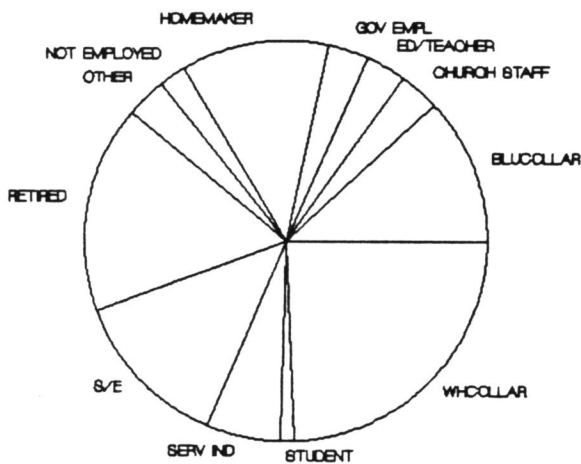


Fig. 7. Occupation of respondent's spouse.

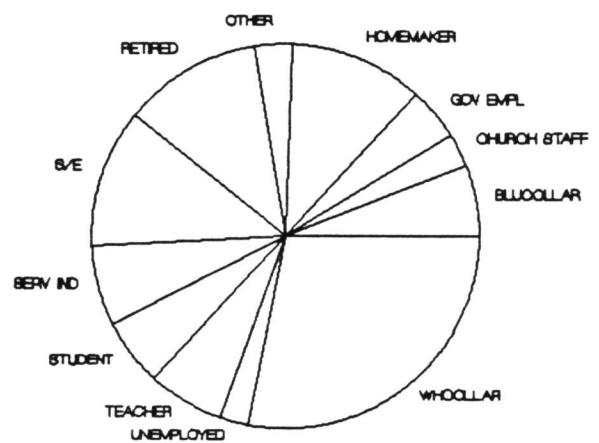


Fig. 8. Occupation of respondents.



Self occupation--Twenty-eight percent (28%) of respondents said they were employed in a white collar/professional position. Other responses were Self-employed and Retired (both 11.5%), Homemaker (11.2%), Service Industry (6.8%), Teacher (6.4%), Blue collar/labor (6%), Student (5.6%), Government Employee (4.4%), Paid Local Church Staff (2.8%), Unemployed (2.4%) and Other (3.2%) (see Fig. 8).

**H. Education**

Spouse education--Six percent (6%) of respondents said their spouses had some high school education, while 22% said their spouses had obtained a high school diploma. A total of 33% said their spouses had some college education, with 25.5% stating their spouses were college graduates and 13.5% saying their spouses had post-graduate education (see Fig. 9).

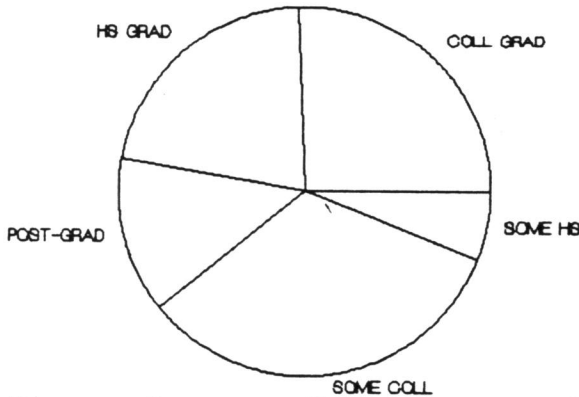


Fig. 9. Education of respondent's spouse.

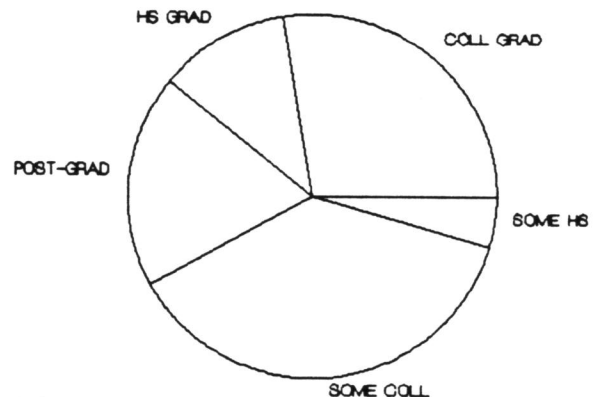


Fig. 10. Education of respondents.

Self education--A total of 4.5% of respondents said they had

only some high school education, with 11.5% stating that they had graduated from high school. Thirty-seven percent said they had some college, 28% said they were college graduates and 19% had post-graduate education (see Fig. 10).

**I. Approximate annual family income in 1988:**

Income among respondents was measured in a series of brackets (\$10,000 to \$19,999). Responses according to brackets were: Less than \$10,000 (7.5%), \$10,000 to \$19,999 (23.1%), \$20,000 to \$29,999 (31.1%), \$30,000 to \$49,999 (26.5%), \$50,000 to \$74,999 (8.7%) and \$75,000 and Over (3.1%). Average income for all respondents was \$27,923, with the average for each conference being \$31,500 (Texas), \$26,850 (Florida) and \$28,721 (Oregon) (see Fig. 11).

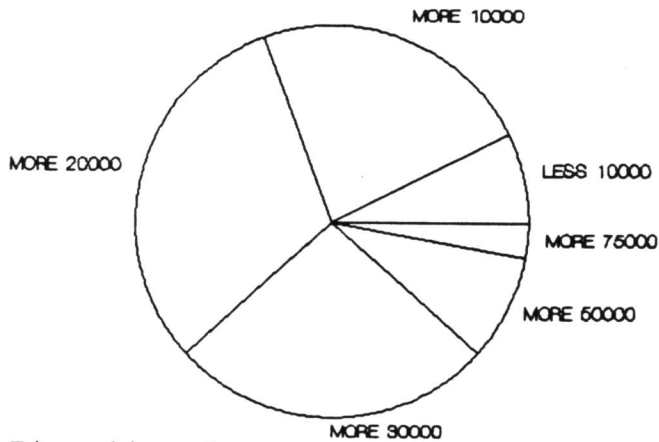


Fig. 11. Income

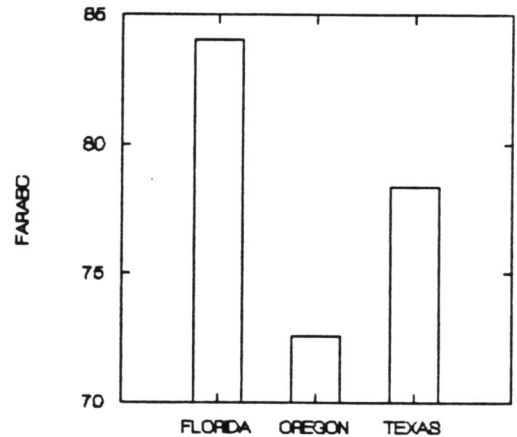


Fig. 12. Distance from nearest ABC.

**J. Which of the following do you have in your home?**

**Cassette tape player**--A total of 96.5% of respondents said they owned a cassette tape player, with 3.5% saying no.

**Videocassette player**--A total of 56.4% of respondents said they had a videocassette player in their home. Forty-three point six percent (43.6%) said they did not.

**Cable TV service**--Only 27.8% of respondents had cable TV service in their homes, while 72.2% said they did not.

**Compact disc player**--Only 15% of respondents said they owned a compact disc player at home, and 85% said they did not.

**Personal computer**--Twenty-seven percent (27%) said they had a personal computer in their home (the national average is 15%); 73% said no, they did not.

**K. How far do you live from the nearest Adventist Book Center?**

The average distance from the nearest Adventist Book Center overall was 78.3 miles. Based on conference, respondents in Oregon were the closest (72.5 miles), followed by Texas (78.4 miles) and Florida (84 miles).

**L. Do you listen to an Adventist Radio Network station?**

Thirty-five percent (35%) of respondents indicated that they listened to an ARN station, with 57% indicating No and 8% saying Don't Know (see Fig. 14).

**Do you receive Three Angels Broadcasting in your area?**

Twenty-two percent (22%) of respondents said yes to this

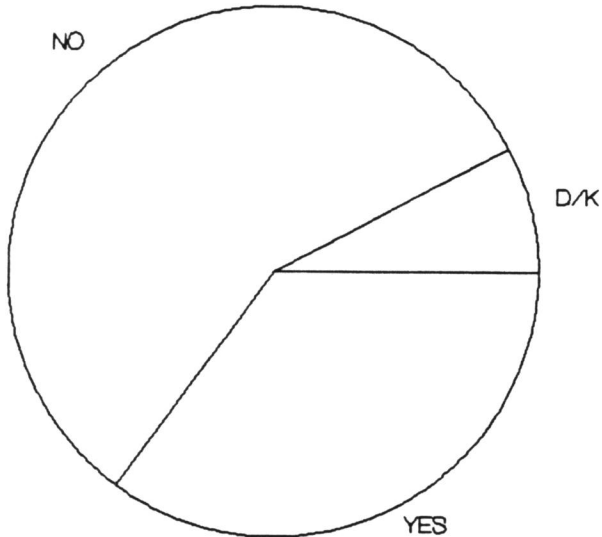


Fig. 13. Respondents who listen to ARN station.

question, with 42% responding No and 36% responding Don't Know.

M. Have you read the book They're All Dead, Aren't They ?

Forty-one point five percent (41.5%) said yes, they had read the book, while 56.2% said they hadn't. Two point three percent (2.3%) responded Don't Know.

Contingencies

As stated at the beginning of this section, contingency tables can be a major asset in drawing valuable information from data. At this point, this study will compare general responses to questions (MEAN) with the responses of (1) those who spent more than \$50 the last time they visited an Adventist Book Center (referred to here as MORE50) and (2) those who said they had read They're All Dead, Aren't They (referred to as READBOOK).

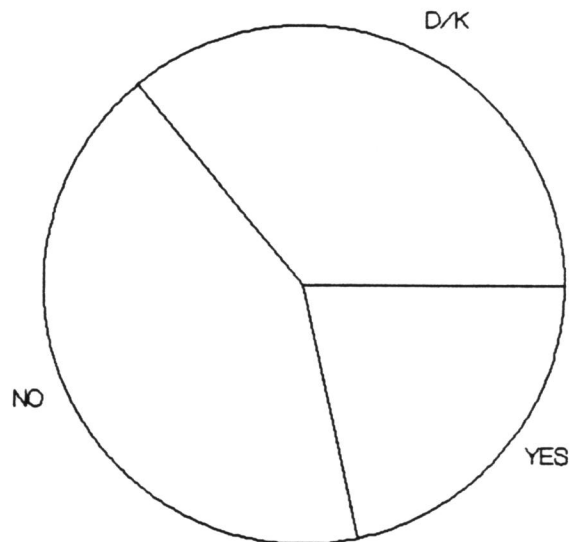


Fig. 14. Respondents receiving Three Angels Broadcasting.

VARIABLE	MEAN	MORE50	READBOOK
Times visit ABC	6.8	6.8	7.4
% learn thru magaz. ad	22%	26%	25%
Denom. employee	18%	18%	23%
Year born	1946	1943	1942
% of Females/Males	62%	64%	71%
% Caucasian	87%	87%	92%
% Married	75%	82%	77%
White collar spouse	24%	23%	22%
White collar resp.	28%	34%	28%
Spouse went to college	72%	79%	74%
Resp. went to college	84%	86%	81%
Average income	\$28,722	\$33,972	\$28,476
VCR in home	56%	64%	59%
Computer in home	27%	32%	23%
Distance to ABC	78 mi	97 mi	79 mi
Listen to ARN station	35%	37%	41%
Prefer traditional music	20%	26%	23%
Prefer contemp. music	34%	33%	30%

Using the above percentages as a guide, the following inferences can be drawn:

Those who spend more than \$50 when they visit the Adventist Book Center tend to read more Adventist periodicals than average, are older (three years older than average), and more of them are married. They and their spouses are more highly educated, they have a greater tendency toward white collar occupations and have a larger income than average. They are more likely than average to have electronic gadgets at home, specifically VCRs and home computers. They live farther away from an Adventist Book Center than average. Their taste in music infers that they tend to be more conservative as Christians than the average ABC customer.

Those ABC customers who have read They're All Dead, Aren't

They tend to visit the ABC more often than average and read Adventist periodicals more than average. They are more likely to be a denominational employee and are four years older than the ABC customer norm. The vast majority of this group is female and Caucasian. They listen more often to ARN stations, inferring they live close to Adventist institutional centers. Their taste in music infers that they also tend to be more conservative.

The following section will present conclusions and recommendations drawn from the general findings shown here.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Perhaps the most difficult, and potentially most dangerous, part of conducting a study comes with the interpretation of data necessary to find significance in all these figures, charts and percentages. The researcher presents the following section on conclusions and recommendations, asking the reader to understand that the area of interpretation is subjective by nature.

### Conclusions

Adventist Book Center customers, at least those who visit campmeeting ABCs on Auditorium sale weekend, tend to buy conservative products en masse. They typically live 78 miles from the nearest ABC, yet still manage to visit 6.8 times each year. When they do visit, 26% of them plan on spending at least \$50.

On the auditorium weekend, almost half (45%) come to the ABC looking for a specific product. Half of those (49%) come looking primarily for a trade book, and another 14% seek an Ellen G. White book.

These customers learn of these products primarily through advertising in Seventh-day Adventist periodicals (22%, compared with only a 5% response for store advertising). When one considers that they only visit the ABC an average of once every other month, whereas they are likely to see their union church paper every other week or once a month, one can see why there is

such a difference in influence.

Page 10 of the Findings Section shows customers' expressed interest in Adventist Book Center products. As stated above, taste in products tend to be conservative, with interest in Spirit of Prophecy books, topical books, general music and Bibles topping the list. Though the ABC customers surveyed here had a slightly larger percentage of electronic appliances at home (VCRs, personal computers), interest in video and books on tape was ranked near the bottom. This study concludes that ABC customers come to the Adventist Book Center with firmly established preconceptions of what they will find there. They are willing to spend money, but they spend it on things they are confident in and which have an established track record. Books on Tape and Videos are relatively new items, and successful sales of these items may come only after effort is expended to establish the credibility and desirability of these products in the minds of ABC customers.

In the section entitled The Questions Under Study, the study brings up the question of the "market saturation point." The last question of the questionnaire asks if the respondent has read They're All Dead, Aren't They. This particular book was selected based on its successful track record (sales of about 23,000 copies) and comments from ABC managers who state that the book has reached its "market saturation point." The study shows that They're All Dead, Aren't They has been read by 41.5% of



Adventist Book Center customers. Whether that percentage reflects a "market saturation point" or not must be determined by marketing. The sales figures and percentage associated with the book may, however, be useful for future reference when other books presumably reach a "market saturation point."

### Recommendations

This study concludes with the following recommendations:

1. This study begins a long-term examination of Adventist Book Center customers. It focused on customers in the southeastern, southern and northwestern regions of the United States. I recommend that this study be replicated at three more camp meeting ABC sales--preferably in the New England states, the Midwest (Michigan, Indiana or Illinois), and in California. This replication study would allow us to confirm the validity of the study we have before us, contribute representative data from those geographical regions, as well as add information missed in this study, specifically zip codes and specifics of SDA periodical advertising.
2. This study focused on English-speaking camp meetings and the corresponding ABC sales. However, every year, thousands of Spanish-speaking Seventh-day Adventists attend their own camp meeting. A future study should examine the behaviors and needs of this market.
3. In the section entitled Limitations of Study, I explained how selecting this particular weekend for the study could skew the

data and hinder the generalizability of the results. I recommend that Adventist Book Center sales be examined at other times of the year. For example, Christmas might be a good time to conduct a survey in cooperation with one of the busier Adventist Book Centers.

4. There are advantages and disadvantages in the use of point-of-purchase surveys, phone surveys and mail surveys. It is the researcher's responsibility to determine which method of data collection is most beneficial and appropriate to use in each situation. There are distinct advantages to confirming a study by replicating it using a second method. I recommend we replicate this study at some future date through the use of a phone survey.

5. In examination of marital status, this study revealed that 25% of the respondents were unmarried. This segment should be represented in marketing strategy.

6. A future questionnaire of ABC customers might benefit by making questions related to trade books more comprehensive. Forty-nine percent of respondents came to the ABC sale looking specifically for trade books. It would be to our advantage to know which trade books those are.

7. In the same manner, recorded music would benefit by suggesting artists to choose from rather than categories. Future questionnaire should move to eliminate subjectivity from categories and attempt to help the respondents have a clear

understanding of their choices.

8. The contingency tables in the Findings section gives a good example of how a more in-depth examination of specific areas of the study might benefit Pacific Press in market analysis or the development of new products. If Pacific Press is interested in establishing a market for Books on Tape, for example, it would be worth their while to take a look at the demographics in which Books on Tape scored most highly. The study recommends a further utilization of this raw data.

9. Finally, it would be beneficial to know not only which books Seventh-day Adventists are buying, but their reading habits as well. When do they read--evening, Sabbath afternoon, at the spur of the moment? Why do they read--out of obligation, boredom, curiosity, search for growth? Do they read to their children? These questions and more should be addressed in a future survey of Seventh-day Adventists.

A sample questionnaire and the raw data compiled and used in this study are included in the following appendices.