The Marketing and Branding of the Church in America

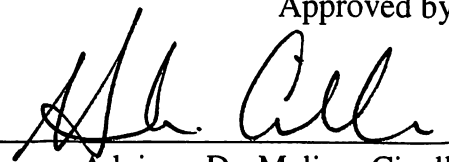Joshua David Gregory

THE MARKETING AND BRANDING OF THE CHURCH IN AMERICA

By
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A thesis submitted to the faculty of the University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College

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ABSTRACT

JOSH GREGORY: The Marketing and Branding of Church in America

(Under the Direction of Dr. Melissa Cinelli)

The objective of my thesis is to examine the church and its efforts to market to the

consumer-centric society that is America. In the United States, churches have evolved

and changed in many ways since our ancestors came to America. In what we call the

"Bible Belt," the area from Texas to Florida, there is a church on nearly every corner.

The question becomes "Is variation a necessity?" One might say that all religions offer

the same transaction in that they exchange the meaning of life for some investment by the

believer (Twitchell, 2004). My intention is to focus specifically on Christianity in the

context of America. There is evidence that in order to solidify good brand equity, there

must be a memorable story, but brands do more than tell stories, they create community.

What is so interesting to me about Christianity is that there are so many different brands

for what is ultimately the same story of Jesus Christ. Through a survey as well as in depth

literature review, I address key issues in today's current church market by analyzing

consumer trends and opinions.

Apart from my literature review, I conducted in-depth interviews with leaders in

different churches and with non-religious people in and around the community of Oxford,

Mississippi. This has given me insight into how the local church markets and brands

itself to people. The research completed also consisted of a survey that was administered

electronically that obtained information about how people are affected by the church in various ways.

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Chapter I: An Overview of Marketing and the American Church

Marketing is everywhere. When the terms "marketing" and "the church" are placed next to one another, the overall reaction tends to be negative. "Marketing" has traditionally conjured thoughts of business manipulations or the scheming to lure unwilling customers. Today, marketing is viewed not as a negative business concept, but as a positive mechanism for any type of organization to "facilitate and expedite satisfying exchange relationships" (McDaniel, 1989). When marketing a church, the question is raised as to what is being exchanged. Is it a sense of belonging to a certain type of community? Is it spiritual development being exchanged for time and resources of the consumer? It comes back to the business principle that it is all about the consumer. When businesses are not succeeding, they look at how they can tailor their product to the target market of the particular product. However, for the church it is a bit different, because the marketing of the church deals with the branding of a belief system. These belief systems can be very intricate. They can be based upon scripture, tradition, money, etc. Naturally, people want to be a part of a brand because of the story and meaning it gives them. It is often times the same with churches. A consumer of the church has preferences just like a consumer of any household good has preferences. Susan Fournier (1998) concluded in a study that,

"Consumers are involved in relationships with a collectivity of brands so as to benefit from the meanings they add into their lives. Some of these meanings are functional and utilitarian; others are more psychosocial and emotional. All, however, are purposive and ego centered and therefore of great significance to the persons engaging them. The processes of meaning provision, manipulation, incorporation, and pronouncement authenticate the relationship notion in the consumer-brand domain" (Fournier, 1998).

There is an interesting relationship between church and society. Peter Berger viewed the church-society relationship as one in which the "dynamics of consumer preference" tends to bring about changes in the "commodity" being marketed by the church (1967). Berger contends that in a pluralistic religious environment and one increasingly characterized by secularization, religion has to be marketed (Berger, 1967). It seems that most Americans would agree with the opinion that marketing and religion do in fact go together. Basically, a church can either modify its service offering in order to better meet consumer needs or it can hold to its traditional structure without wavering (McDaniel, 1989). The real choice for the church is to either bend to consumer's desires, or attempt to get consumers to value what they are already offering. Today, more churches in America appear to be choosing the first option. According to a national survey conducted by *The Review of Religious Research*, church growth was found to be positively related to the broadcasting of church services on radio and television, yellow page advertising through use of a block ad, newspaper advertising, marketing surveys to the general public, the offering of social and service organizations, and sponsorship of sports teams. While creative religious marketing is somewhat newer, the marketing of religion is not. When

the printing press was invented by Gutenberg, much of the early advertising was to sell

Bibles in the fifteenth century ("Martin Luther," 2013). In America, the need for religious

marketing came from the First Amendment right to freedom of religion, something the

nation's founding fathers believed was fundamental to establishing a democracy. With no

state-mandated religion, religions began to compete for parishioners by using marketing

techniques (Einstein, 2008).

The branding of Christianity began with the labeling of differing belief systems,

and out came multiple different denominations each offering something similar, but not

the same as the other brand. Some churches offer status, some have offered salvation, and

some have offered health, wealth, and prosperity. Churches in America today range from

churches that stick to their traditions, to churches that tailor themselves to the target

market they are trying to attract.

The story of Christianity has resulted in many different brands of church. The

church in America has changed in many ways since our nation was founded. The New

York Times' David Brooks wrote this about a pastor of an American megachurch:

"Americans have built themselves multimillion-dollar worship palaces," he argues.

"These have become like corporations, competing for market share by offering social

centers, child-care programs, first-class entertainment and comfortable, consumer

Christianity" (Brooks, 2010). This is an intriguing and accurate take on the marketing of

megachurches in America.

Attitudes, Perceptions, and Statistics of Americans and Church

According to the U.S. Religious Landscape Survey done by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, 78% of people in the United States profess to be a part of Christianity while 4.7% identify with other religions and 16.1% identify themselves as unaffiliated (US Religious Landscape Survey, 2008). The unaffiliated include atheists (1.6%), agnostics (2.4%), and those who associated themselves with nothing in particular (12.1%). The Protestant population is characterized by significant internal diversity and fragmentation, encompassing hundreds of different denominations loosely grouped around three fairly distinct religious traditions- evangelical Protestant churches (26.3% of overall adult population), mainline Protestant churches (18.1%) and historically black Protestant churches (6.9%). Catholicism, which accounts for 23.9% of the population, has experienced the greatest loss in affiliation. In the American church environment, there is nearly double the amount of Protestants in the U.S. compared to Catholics (US Religious Landscape Survey, 2008). The Landscape Survey confirms a close link between Americans' religious affiliation, beliefs and practices, on the one hand, and their social and political attitudes on the other.

Table 1: Major Religious Traditions Among All Adults in the U.S.

Religious Tradition	%
Christian	78.4
Protestant	51.3
Evangelical Churches	26.3
Mainline Churches	18.1
Hist. Black Churches	6.9
Catholic	23
Mormon	1.7
Jehovah's Witness	0.7
Orthodox	0.6
Other Christian	0.3
Other Religions	4.7
Jewish	1.7
Buddhist	.7
Muslim	.6
Hindu	.4
Other World Religions	<.3
Other Faiths	1.2
Unaffiliated	16.1
Don't know/Refused	.8
	=100

*Due to rounding, figures may not add to 100 and nested figures may not add to the subtotal indicated

These statistics indicate a highly competitive market for religion in the U.S. At the macro level, all religions offer the same transaction in that they offer to show the meaning of life in exchange for an investment by the believer. This investment could be time, financial resources, or a particular skill. In a world with thousands of religions, Christianity makes up the largest portion at roughly 33% ("Major World Religions," 2013). In Christianity, the Bible is the sacred text that carries the brand and allows the belief system to be passed along. With religious texts, there are different interpretations of the text, which then allows for differences in the belief system. These differences are what typically lead to denominational changes. Before the Reformation in Europe, there were about eight mendicant orders competing for market share of the Church of Rome.

The Reformation was the beginning of a new era in church history. When Martin Luther posted his "95 Theses of Contention" to the Wittenburg Church door in 1517, a revolution occurred ("Martin Luther," 2013). He was a major influence in the beginning of Protestant Christianity and his "95 Theses of Contention" was a form of marketing. The major denominations in America today include Catholic, Baptist, Methodist, Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Lutheran. There were 217 different denominations listed in the 2006 Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches ("Fast Facts," 2006). One of the reasons, if not the main reason, people came to America was for religious freedom. People in America that are affiliated with churches all seek some sort of spiritual communities, many of which, as seen by the vast amount of denominations, are different in various aspects. These differences occur in doctrines, interpretations of scripture, and traditions. James Twitchell, author of *Branded Nation,* says this of brand affiliation: "Brand affiliation is as much a part of belief communities as secular ones; in fact, perhaps even more pronounced. That's because religion is a collectively produced commodity and, as such, depends on continually iterating the reward of joining as well as the price of deaffiliating…You are either with the brand or against it" (Twitchell, 2004). A good indication of where religious marketing is heading is evidenced by the fact that Wal-Mart, the monster of all retailers, has jumped on the religious retail bandwagon (Einstein, 2008). In 2003 the company sold more than $1 billion in Christian books and music titles, and they are quoted as saying that they are "looking at this as a huge opportunity for the future" (Seybert, 2004).

The Pew Survey discussed earlier revealed that the largest gains made in religious competition were made in the group of people who considered themselves to be

unaffiliated. People moving into the unaffiliated category outnumber those moving out of the unaffiliated group by more than a three-to-one margin. However, a substantial amount of people say that as children they were unaffiliated with any particular religion but have since come to identify with a religious group. This is nearly 4% of the overall adult population. This means that more than half of people who were unaffiliated with any particular religion as a child now say that they are associated with a religious group (US Religious Landscape Survey, 2008). Some other highlights of the survey done by The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life that give insight to the church in America and the competitive market are below:

- Among people who are married, nearly 37% are married to a spouse with a different religious affiliation. (This figure includes Protestants who are married to another Protestant from a different denominational family, such as a Baptist who is married to a Methodist.)
- The Midwest most closely resembles the religious makeup of the overall population. The South, by a wide margin, has the heaviest concentration of members of evangelical Protestant churches. The Northeast has the greatest concentration of Catholics, and the West has the largest proportion of unaffiliated people, including the largest proportion of atheists and agnostics.
- Members of mainline Protestant churches and Jews are older, on average, than members of other groups. Roughly half of Jews and members of

mainline churches are age 50 and older, compared with approximately four-in-ten American adults overall.

- Members of Baptist churches account for one-third of all Protestants and close to one-fifth of the total U.S. adult population. Baptists also account for nearly two-thirds of members of historically black Protestant churches. *Statistics from the The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life: Religious Landscape Survey.

These statistics reveal that competition definitely occurs in America not only amongst professing Christians, but other religions as well.

Chapter II: A Competitive Market

According to John Dickerson of the New York Times, "Evangelicalism as we knew it in the 20th century is *disintegrating*...Evangelical ministers from the United States reported a greater loss of influence than church leaders from any other country, with some 82 percent indicating that their movement was losing ground"(Dickerson, 2012). It appears to be evident in America's evangelical churches today that they are doing what they can to maintain and not lose parishioners. The whole idea of a competitive market for churches is in direct correlation with the idea that churches can be developed into full-fledged marketing machines by distinguishing their denomination from other denominations. These differences, which are primarily based on belief systems and interpretation of scripture, are where the branding of a denomination begins. Lawrence Moore, author of *American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture*, has some very interesting insight to why American churches are run differently. Below is an excerpt from James Twitchell's *Branded Nation*, referencing Moore's work:

> With no state protection, suppliers have to behave almost like athletic teams, continually playing against one another, racking up runs or believers. Such competition makes them concentrate on innovative marketing, something European religions have never attended to- hence their relatively low turnout today. American religion has had to generate excitement, frisson, some kind of

emotional payoff, even though sometimes the sensation is hidden beneath a stern exterior...The result is a thriving evangelical subculture, complete with its own music, magazines, movies, and other forms of entertainment, including Christian rock concerts, theme parks, and cruises (Twitchell, 2004).

In some ways churches are run like businesses and have subcultures to go along with them. This insightful quote allows one to think about intentions and examine motives for what they are doing. According to Twitchell, branded religion is big business. He states, "If religion were a company, it would be number five on the Fortune 500, its $50 billion in revenues puts it just behind IBM. In America, the religion business has become a marketing free-for-all" (Twitchell, 2004). Historically, some Protestant ministers did preach against greed and wealth, however, just as many found an alliance between spiritual affairs and a market-driven economy. Marketing became and has become a necessity. The story of the church is relatively the same in that it discusses the existence of God, the afterlife, and salvation, however, the way that churches go about these different aspects varies greatly. Many interpret the scriptures in different ways, leading to denominational splits and denominational dogma.

The American consumerist culture is naturally competitive from the brands that are worn, to the sports teams that are cheered for, and to the way religion and the church are approached. The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life discussed how the marketplace for religion remains competitive. Dickerson also states, "The pulse of evangelicalism is also shifting, in many ways for the good...Evangelicals are still a sophisticated lot, with billions in assets, millions of adherents and a constellation of congregations, radio stations, universities and international groups. But all this machinery

distracts from the historical vital signs of evangelicalism: to make converts and point to Jesus Christ (Dickerson, 2012)."

In our society in America today, it appears that most Americans tend to tailor religion to fit their own personal needs. According to Cathy Lynn Grossman, one of the key findings based on newly released research reveals America's drift from clearly defined religious denominations to faiths cut to fit personal preferences (Grossman, 2011). In America, many people claim they have accepted Jesus as their savior and expect to go to heaven, but many also say they haven't been to church in the past six months except for special occasions such as weddings or funerals. George Barna (2011) says, with a bit of exaggeration, that "America is headed for 310 million people with 310 million religions. In 1991, 24% of Americans were 'unchurched.' Today, it's 37%" (Barna, 2011). According to Barna, "We are a designer society. We want everything customized to our personal needs- our clothing, our food, our education." Now we also want to customize our religion. Barna (2011) laments, "People say, 'I believe in God. I believe the Bible is a good book. And then I believe whatever I want." He implies that people look at the Bible as a good book, but some don't take interpretation of the scripture seriously, which also leads to church division. It appears he is disturbed by some people identifying themselves as Christians when they stray from the teachings of the Bible. These rifts tend to be what lead to different denominations. Some churches tend to be based on taking scripture for face value, others may lean towards relevance in our culture today, others may hold fast to traditions, and some may encompass all of these qualities.

"The severe declines in church attendance, due to everything from changing social codes to the pedophile priest scandals of the Catholic Church, demonstrate why marketing has become necessary. While earlier polls suggested that religious attendance was closer to 40 to 45 percent, now the number is closer to 35 percent and church leaders must have seen this decline long before it appeared in any research numbers. As theologian Tom Beaudoin has said, 'I think we are well past the day when the majority of American Christians have their religious identity formed in church' (Religion Surges, 2004). I would add that non-Christians are also finding their religious identity outside of established institutions. Attendance numbers at most traditional religious houses of worship have been declining due to increased pressure from two key sources—individuals' freedom from religious affiliation, which means competition from other religious institutions, and significant competition from external media sources, which provide similar if not identical content as the religious institutions. People are free to find their faith whenever and wherever they choose, which may or may not be in the confines of a religious institution. We shouldn't be surprised then that religion—whether in the form of a film or a church—is being marketed in the current commercialized culture. In order to be heard above the noise of the rest of society, religion, too, must participate in order to survive (Einstein, 2008)."

Chapter III: The Branding of Church and Denominations

Jesus Christ knew his audience and positioned His Word to fit the audience (Twitchell, 2004). Churches that have had success in marketing are ones that have targeted people who have yet to take Christianity or faith seriously. America has become a consumer-focused environment since World War II, and even more so in today's generation of Millennials. Cheryl Russell, a former editor of *American Demographics* magazine, calls this environment that is saturated with consumption, "the personalized economy" (Russell, 1993). Consumers now seem to expect personalization from the church they attend, which makes tailoring their offer to attract new customers an attractive prospect for modern churches.

There is not a lot of product differentiation between Protestant church communities because the message is so similar. There is a large supply of church in America, especially in the south, which is why denominations need separation by branding. "Brands are commodity products that have been given a name, an identifying icon or logo, and usually a tagline as a means to differentiate them from other products in their category (Einstein, 2008)." Branding is about image and perception, and church denominations in America are no exception to this. Branding also assists in creating a personal identity: people communicate to other people who they are by the brands that are used (Parente, 2006). Brands are used for creating identity and strong brand image

comes from a strong story (Parente, 2006). The suppliers of religious experience since the

Protestant Reformation have typically been known as denominations, and inter-

denominational competition has been intense (Twitchell, 2004). Traditionally,

denominations have been stereotyped. For example, Episcopalians were the blue bloods,

while Catholics were the poor and immigrant class. However, the branding of faith,

religion, and the church has changed over time as churches have become more

"nondenominational" (Einstein, 2008). Churches today prefer to run the church in a way

that they see fit, that is attractive to consumers. "There is no contradiction that Americans

in large numbers say that they believe in God, while most mainline denominations have

experienced declining membership for decades. Recent surveys show that 70 to 90

percent of Americans have some faith in God, yet only about 40 percent attend church or

temple on a regular basis," according to James Twitchell (2004).

In 1995, America's six largest mainline Protestant denominations had 21.3

million members, down 25 percent from 1965. Of these denominations, Methodists,

Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and the United Church of Christ have been hit the hardest.

They have lost more than a quarter of their consumers in the past two decades. Growth

has slowed for Southern Baptists as well. The only traditional mainline denomination to

gain adherents has been the more liberal Unitarian and Univeralist churches. This growth

is partly attributed to the willingness to include a growing wing in the church that is

considered "New Age." From a marketing perspective they have been doing an

exceptional job of niche marketing (Twitchell, 2004). In niche marketing, the marketing

efforts are concentrated on a small, but significant and well defined segment. These

markets do not naturally exist, but are created by identifying specific needs and wants of

consumers (Niche Market, 2013). The denomination fluctuation chart can be found in Appendix A-2.

As was mentioned earlier, the Reformation and the "95 Theses" posted by Martin Luther as charges and marketing ploys against the Catholic Church, prompted the Protestant Church to begin to formalize and distinguish itself into different "brands." There were different views that led to different movements. The theological and doctrinal issues that started the Wesleyan Movement which transformed to Methodism had an abrupt impact on the democratization of religion. It was formed on the thoughts of Jacobus Arminius, which were taken up by John Wesley, who also adopted and asserted the importance of individual will (Cody, 1998). Presbyterianism developed much from the teachings of John Calvin and created another brand of Protestant Christianity that made its way into the denomination in America today ("John Calvin," 2013). The denominalization of Christianity allowed church services to change outwardly, and the brand's story can be found inside the church. Perhaps the most important aspect and main reason for different denominations forming is the different interpretations of the Bible. 63% of Americans, including majorities of many religious traditions, believe their religion's most sacred texts are the word of God and this belief is most common among Christians. While a large majority of Christians believe that the Bible is the word of God, the various Christian denominations are divided over whether or not the Bible should be interpreted literally, word for word. A majority of historically black (62%) and evangelical (59%) Protestant churches say the Bible should be interpreted literally. By comparison, mainline Protestants, Catholics and Mormons are more likely to say the Bible should not be interpreted literally (U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, 2008). Other

important aspects of denominationalism are the various rituals, regulations, traditions, and creative endeavors of the congregation within the particular denomination (Twitchell, 2004).

Denominational Dogma

Example: The Episcopalian Church in the twentieth century

One specific example of a brand of Christianity is the Episcopalian denomination. A few generations ago, the Episcopal Church was at the top of Protestantism and was considered a luxury brand of faith. More presidents of the United States in the 20th century were Episcopalians than any other denomination (Twitchell, 2004). The brand brought a promise of social affiliation, but in the middle of the twentieth century, the brand began to lose ground. The shift in the Episcopalians' brand image is reflected in the following joke: A newcomer to heaven asks Saint Peter why the first few rooms are so raucous—reeking of alcohol, laughter, and dancing. "Why, those are the Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians," explained Saint Peter. "But why is it so quiet in the last room?" asks the newcomer. "Oh, those are the Episcopalians. They drank, laughed, and danced on earth. They don't need to do it here." From a marketing perspective the decline of the Episcopalian church can be attributed to the neglect of the brand's identity. In 1950, *Fortune* Magazine reported that about a third of CEOs were Episcopalians, and the Church as an institution reflected the business model (Twitchell, 2004). Although the Church's formal membership has always been small—from a peak of 3,647,000 in the late 1960s, down to about 2 million today—the Episcopalians' strength was never in number, but in power. The denomination began to struggle in numbers and this led to The Church Ad Project, formerly the Episcopal Ad Project. It started in the 1990's and was

used to try and help reposition the Episcopal Church into a more marketable church that appealed to more than solely upper-class individuals. The ads are interesting in that they are clever and sophisticated, but they are also ironic for attempting to reposition the brand by not offering anything distinctive (Twitchell, 2004). Examples of advertisements used by the Episcopal Church in the 90's can be found in Appendix B. These ads appeared to make people who had fallen away from the faith or the Episcopal Church feel guilty. They were ploys to draw people back into the church with catchy phrases and humor.

Evangelical Denominations

According to Lifeway Research, an affiliate of the Southern Baptist Convention, and the Barna Group, a majority of young people raised as evangelicals are quitting church, and often the faith entirely (Dickerson, 2012). "While America's population grows by roughly two million a year, attendance across evangelical churches- from the Southern Baptists, to Assemblies of God, and nondenominational churches-- has gradually declined, according to surveys of more than 200,000 congregations by the American Church Research Project" (Dickerson, 2012). Some believe that evangelicals have not adapted well to cultural shifts, such as same-sex marriage. Most recently, evangelical pastor Louie Giglio, visionary of the Passion Conference in Atlanta, where thousands of evangelical Christian students come together to worship, was asked not to pray at President Barack Obama's Inauguration speech because of a statement from nearly a decade earlier stating that he supported the biblical view of marriage between a man and woman (Taylor, 2013). The result of statements like this casts evangelicals to the public as angry and repressed bigots. In 2007, the Institute for Jewish and Community Research, in a survey of 1,300 college professors, found that 3 percent held "unfavorable

feelings" toward Jews, 22 percent toward Muslims, and 53 percent toward evangelical Christians (Dickerson, 2012).

Denominational Splits

According to a study conducted in 2007 by LifeWay Research, Protestant churchgoers are likely to switch from church to church. This study, surveyed 632 Protestant adults who said they switched churches. Of those who switched churches, 76% call themselves "devout Christians." Most of these people who switched churches say their old church failed to engage their faith, or failed to put their talents to work, or seemed hypocritical and judgmental. However, 42% of the people say they switched because another church offered more appealing doctrines and preaching or the preacher and church members' faith seemed more "authentic" (Grossman, 2007).

According to the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life's U.S. Religious Landscape Survey conducted in 2008, 16% of Protestants were raised outside of Protestantism, while more than 80% were raised in the same Protestant family with which they are currently in (54%) or have switched from one Protestant family to another (29%) (U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, 2008). See why people change churches statistics in Appendix A-1.

Table 2: Percentage of People Changing Affiliation within Protestant Traditions

% who switched affiliation from

	Outside Protestantism	Another Protestant Family	% raised as a member
Protestant	16%	29%	54%
Evangelical Churches	18%	31%	51%
Mainline Churches	16%	30%	54%
Hist. Black Churches	10%	21%	69%

*all figures =100 horizontally (U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, 2008)

The branding of faith and religion makes sense in our current cultural environment. Remaining relevant in our American culture today means at a minimum being heard among the multitude of competing messages. "The branding of faith, becomes shorthand for reaching the new religious consumer" (Einstein, 2008). Lee Clow, creator of Apple's "Think Different" campaign, states:

Brands aren't just a way of remembering what you want to buy and more. They've become part of the fabric of our society. Brands are part of our system of ordering things—they even create context about who we are and how we live. Brands have become badges for people. They articulate who you are and what your values are. (Clifton and Maughan, 2000, p. 71)

The church that one attends in America allows for people to have their values assumed

simply by the church they choose to associate themselves with.

Chapter IV: The Megachurch

Megachurches must be included in this discussion regarding the marketing and

branding of church in America because they are the epitome of church "business."

Megachurches in America today have evolved into full fledged marketing machines.

Revisiting a quote by David Brooks from the overview, "Americans have built

themselves multimillion-dollar worship palaces." He argues: "These have become like

corporations, competing for market share by offering social centers, child-care programs,

first-class entertainment and comfortable, consumer Christianity" (Brooks, 2010).

According to the dictionary, a megachurch is a church, usually Protestant, with a very

large congregation, typically housed in a complex offering sophisticated multimedia

presentations and a range of secular facilities and services (Dictionary, 2013). According

to the Hartford Institute for Religion Research, the term megachurch generally refers to

any Protestant congregation with a sustained average weekly attendance of 2,000 persons

or more in its worship services ("Megachurch Definition"). If one looks at any medium

sized city today, it is likely that they will come across one of these "megachurches" also

referred to as seeker churches. "Seekers" are people who are searching for answers about

faith and God. These new churches are the result of an interesting combination of

marketing, population shift, consumer demand, consumption communities, the

entertainment economy, and the yearning for a feeling of epiphany and

the bandwagon effects that generate it (Twitchell, 2004). These churches are easily recognizable and many look like small college campuses, with large areas of parking, signage, and more.

Most megachurches tend to have very conservative theological views. Over 70% of megachurches are located in the southern Sunbelt of the United States, and the highest concentrations are found in California, Texas, Florida, and Georgia ("Megachurch Definition"). Most megachurches are found in growth cities and suburban areas such as Los Angeles, Houston, Dallas, Atlanta, Orlando, Phoenix, and Seattle. Some of the more prominent churches occupy around 50 to 100 acres of real estate in major traffic areas. According to Ed Stetzer of Lifeway Research, quoted by Cathy Lynn Grossman of USA Today says, "It is increasingly difficult to discern what 'church attendance' is. Does it consist of the people gathered in one room on Sunday morning; the people watching via video in a nearby location; those meeting with 25 others in a home streaming from another state, or individuals watching the stream on a monitor alone?" (Grossman, 2010). It is hard to judge the exact number of those attending these megachurches. The average megachurch has an attendance of 3,943 persons (Megachurch Definition"). They tend to grow immensely in their first 10 years and are typically led by charismatic male pastors. There are nearly 1,600 megachurches in the US ("Megachurch Definition"). They tend to host a multitude of social, recreational, and aid ministries, allowing the church to be run in a "business-like" fashion.

Megachurches operate as businesses. Senior pastors of megachurches are typically supported by teams of 5 to 25 associate ministers, and often hundreds of other full time staff. According to the Hartford Institute for Religion Research, the 406

megachurches surveyed in 2005 averaged 20 full time paid ministerial staff persons, and 22 full time paid program staff persons. The average number of volunteer workers who gave more than 5 hours per week was 284 ("Megachurch Definition"). One of the most controversial subjects when talking about these large churches is the church's budget and financial operations. There have been scandals surrounding the use of money in this context for a long time, especially in televangelism. When pastors and leaders with multimillion dollar assets make financial mistakes or become greedy, they are scrutinized under a different microscope in America. Megachurches bring in large quantities of money each week through weekly tithes and offerings from their congregations. The recession hurt many smaller churches in the department of giving, however, megachurches were less affected. Only 6% of megachurches reported that the church's financial health was in serious difficulty.

"The Protestant church in America is experiencing the same brand shifts that occur when Sam's Club or Costco come to a particular town. Consumers move first in trickles, then later in droves" (Twitchell, 2004, p. 81). The trend, as stated earlier, is that people are heading away from traditional denominations in America. Other names that are synonymous with megachurches are "seeker-sensitive" or "full-service" churches. One of the focal selling points of these churches that are shifting from denominationalism is community. Many megachurches have "community" in the name of their church. It seems that the goal of most megachurches is not to fill the preacher's pockets, but to increase the number of parishioners and church members. While pastors of these churches stress the aspect and value of community, many members of these types of churches thrive off of anonymity. People are able to attend and receive all of the major

benefits of association, but do not have to be known or spend a lot of time investing. According to Cathy Lynn Grossman, for evangelical churches today, the word is 'big' (Grossman, 2011). *Outreach Magazine* published America's top 100 largest Protestant churches and the top 100 fastest-growing churches. The largest church in America is Lakewood Church out of Houston, TX, with author and TV broadcaster Joel Osteen as the leader of the 43,500 member congregation. Most churchgoers in America are members of congregations that number fewer than several hundred with no multimedia departments, coffee bars, or other amenities. According to Scott Thumma, there are several things that megachurches should do in order to be successful. One of these points made by Thumma was that a megachurch should "Make it appealing, then make it challenging. Most visitors want to slip in anonymously and experience worship in a user-friendly manner. But don't leave newcomers at the 'spectator stage.' Christianity is about maturing in the faith. The goal of pastors and teachers is to help the body of Christ 'become mature.' Many megachurches provide intentional paths for new persons to move into deeper levels of faith" (Thumma, 2011). In congregations in the United States, the pastor's purpose is to grow their congregants in depth not in quantity. If the latter results from the former then it is the ultimate gain, but not the original intent.

While it appears that churches are seeking to grow in numbers, many pastors emphasize the element of community among the congregation. Dale Jenkins, pastor of Spring Meadows Church of Christ out of Spring Hill, TN, quoted in the Tennessean, says, "The larger a church gets, the harder it is to be friendly. It is ironic too, because a lot of churches get larger because they are so friendly" (Hasbrouck, 2013). Many megachurches and large churches desire to retain an intimate atmosphere, but have a hard

time keeping this atmosphere when the church grows. Jenkins also believes that churches must evaluate the way newcomers are treated. Jim Jenkins, stewardship minister at Brentwood Baptist Church, said the key to maintaining a friendly atmosphere is to make it seem like a smaller church (Hasbrouck, 2013). That is no easy task at Brentwood Baptist, a megachurch in Tennessee with 5,700 attending weekly and 9,000 people appearing on the membership roll. Brentwood Baptist as well as many other churches, focuses on hospitality. A key element to megachurches succeeding is the customization of services. Megachurches may have traditional services, contemporary services, foreign services, or other types to meet the needs of its members. These services are just one part of what megachurches offer. Many megachurches have surrounding "satellite campuses" so that consumers have a shorter commute. These are often times run by "campus pastors" and the lead pastor is shown through electronic media so that the church is still unified under the same leadership. However, Osteen's church only has one campus and is the largest (at over 20,000 members per service) whereas most other megachurches use many satellite campuses. For many of these churches, the high numbers stem from the anonymity that church members enjoy because they want to be associated with that particular brand, but don't necessarily want to be very involved. One of the main goals of megachurches is the aspect of community. The question for these megachurches is "How do you maintain genuine community with thousands of members?" Many pastors and leaders will tell you it is through small groups. According to Jim Jenkins, "You don't grow very close to 1,800 people you're in a room with one day per week. That's why we encourage people to get into small groups, where they are held accountable to each other.

That builds a bond that's deeper. When all those people who are friends gather together in worship, it makes the bond even stronger (Hasbrouck, 2013)."

Ed Stetzer of Lifeway Research in Nashville, said, "You can create a church that's big, but is still not transforming people. Without transformation, the Christian message is not advanced" (Grossman, 2008). In 2008, there was a stall in megachurch growth. However, experts see more troubling concerns than slowing growth: there have been "no measurable inroads on overall church attendance and signs that many churchgoers are spectators, not driving toward a deeper faith" (Grossman, 2008). The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, in their 2008 Religious Landscape Survey, finds that the unchurched remained somewhat untouched. The number who say they attend church at least once a week hovers around 30% year after year, and the number who say they "never" go to church gets larger. People falling into the "never" category often come away from church to find answers for their spiritual life elsewhere. Some people leave megachurches to join other megachurches or churches that seem to fit their style; it could be music, family programs or preaching. Phillip Goff, director of the Center for the American Culture at Indiana University says this regarding megachurch culture: "The megachurch story is not really about growth, it's about shifting allegiances. People want to feel good about who they already are. If church is too challenging or not entertaining, they'll move on" (2008). Megachurches like Willow Creek Community Church are "seeker obsessed" says senior pastor Bill Hybels. He has changed his sermon style to attempt to engage worshipers at every level. We will take a more in depth look at Hybels' ministry and style and compare it to another church, Lakewood Church, which is led by Joel Osteen. Both of these pastors and churches are two of the larger churches in

America. While they have many similarities in media, size, etc., they are branded very differently in doctrine and beliefs.

Branding Megachurches- Lakewood vs. Willow Creek

In recent years, no one has been questioned more about his riches than Joel Osteen, the pastor of Lakewood Church in Houston. "God has blessed me with more money than I could imagine from my books," says Osteen, who gave up his $200,000 salary about five years ago, when royalties from book sales started flowing in. Osteen adds, "I don't think it has changed our lifestyle, it has just given us the opportunity to help more people." In 2008, Lakewood's budget was $70 million, up from $50 million in 2005. Lakewood embodies every aspect of the term megachurch. The full broadcasting of services throughout 100 countries in the world takes approximately $7 million to operate. $95 million was put into making the facility a more intimate church atmosphere. Osteen has been criticized for his "light theological message" (Bogan, 2010). He remains very positive and says he does not want to be "too religious" in hopes to reach as many as possible with a message of hope for the "everyday person (2010)." According to Nathan Carlin, co-author of "Joel Osteen as Cultural Self Object", "Osteen is responding to the psychological needs of our culture in a theologically accessible way," (Miller and Carlin, 2010). Carlin and his co-author Christine Miller also highlight 4 key reasons as to why Osteen's church is such a successful megachurch from a marketing standpoint. He says Lakewood's vision statement ("to make a positive impact upon the city of Houston by creating a city-wide family center in which all are welcome—a place where all

individuals and families can grow and flourish in faith and discover God's plan for their lives") reflects a kind of market mentality with regard to religious practice, which is one reason that it is so successful in terms of numbers. They embrace an "Everyone is welcome!" mentality to the absolute maximum. The second strategy Carlin and Miller discuss are religious symbols at Lakewood. Osteen's church is different in that "churchy" architecture is avoided, worship performances are concert-like in style, and the only symbols are a globe and an American flag, in an attempt to brand Lakewood as a place where the "American Dream" can be achieved. Osteen is berated by critics for preaching what is known as "the health and wealth gospel." This message is a strategic in that sin and evil are never discussed and only positive messages of prosperity are portrayed. The third strategy used by Lakewood is their ecumenical spirit. The controversial issues between denominations, politics, and doctrine are avoided at nearly all costs, making the environment more appealing to his viewers. There is a promotion of unity and Osteen affirms his 'competitors' which makes it all the more appealing. Lastly, Miller and Carlin highlight Lakewood's "light" theology as a key strategy. Osteen is incredibly encouraging to his members and preaches a message of welcoming and encouragement. When questioned to what he attributes his success, Osteen responds, "Our message is very positive. There are a lot of negative things happening in the world and in people's lives. What we share is hopeful, and I think that resonates" (Miller and Carlin, 2010). Apart from a foundation in Baptist theology, Osteen's message and influences fall into the theological category of Pentecostal, with the Word of Faith teaching being most controversial. This type of teaching says that health and prosperity are guaranteed in the atonement of Christ. Osteen is quick to defend that when he speaks of prosperity he is not

referring to just money, but happiness in relationships, health, and finances, however "concern has been expressed that these churches are offering a watered-down version of the gospel or that God has become a product for consumers" (Ensminger, 2008). These four marketing strategies have helped make Lakewood into the marketing machine that it is in the United States. The strategies are attractive to the majority of consumer's because it does not step on toes with its positive and encouraging message and "light" theological stance. Osteen's brand of church also appeals to a racially diverse congregation. The economically disadvantaged are drawn to the church's positive outlook and is extremely attractive to those seeking a self-esteem boost or emotional high. (Miller and Carlin, 2010).

In the megachurch community, bigger seems to be better. The music is big, as are the parking lots, screens, childcare facilities, gymnasiums, curricula and programs. The large size of the church requires that things be run very business-like behind the scenes. In fact, at Willow Creek Community Church the day-to-day- operations are run by a Stanford MBA graduate and the Willow Creek Association is run by a Harvard MBA. The church employs 260 full-time staff and 220 part-time staff (Ensminger, 2008). The campus of Willow Creek resembles that of a small college campus. The brand that has been created by leader and pastor Bill Hybels is one that is seeker-friendly. Actually, at Willow Creek the target market is people that are skeptical. The 4,540 seat auditorium is used consistently with its four interchangeable services (Twitchell, 2008, p. 94-95). The sermons given at Willow Creek are quite different than those at Lakewood. While they are not incredibly intense on doctrinal issues, they are incredibly personal and attempt in every way to engage people personally. Willow Creek, like other evangelical

megachurches, is technologically up to speed with a great website as well as surveys to help the church better market to their parishioners and potential consumers. The three basketball courts, food court that seats 750 people, multiple auditoriums, and bookstores make it seem like a mall or airport terminal. It really is its own community. Harvard Business School sent some MBA students to have a look at the church in 1991, sixteen years after it was founded, to analyze operations. They were amazed at the numbers, which topped $12 million in revenues (today it is more than double that), of which just over half went to staffing and operations, about 30% to operating costs and salaries, 12% to debt reduction for the $34 million dollar facilities, and 2% to miscellaneous (Twitchell, 2008, p.97-98). Because Willow Creek is nondenominational, The Willow Creek Association (WCA) formed in 1992 as a network of more than two thousand churches that all contribute about $200 annually to receive a newsletter, discounts for Willow Creek's religious publications, and invitations to pastors' conferences. These churches that are a part of WCA are essentially franchising their churches into a Willow-esque format. In 1995, there were $22 million in revenues. Of this, $13 million came from member contributions; the rest came from food sales, the church store, and fees from the WCA. Hybels received a salary of $85,000 and a housing allowance (Twitchell, 2008, p.99). Willow Creek Community Church is a well oiled marketing machine that knows how to brand itself. The pastor thrives off of sincerity and authenticity. He has said, "We don't think our success is about marketing. You can't market Jesus" (Twitchell, 2008, p.100). The beauty of this is that the marketing story that Hybels promotes is the story of Jesus. When he was 23 and founded Willow Creek Community Church he learned several key things for the future of the church. He learned that men are the crucial

adopters in religion and women and families follow the men. He also realized that men like to be leaders rather than forced to do things, and there birthed Hybels target of the 'seeker.'

One of the reasons pointing to the success in numbers are that both churches are gentle and far from forceful with their messages. Willow Creek Community Church markets to its consumers and is intensely focused on the needs of its audience by using different media outlets to make its message one that is compelling (Twitchell, 2008, p.108). Both churches have massive budgets, employees, and spending that contribute to their extensive use of media and technology. One of the major differences is that Willow Creek meets on multiple campuses while Lakewood is in one location. The reason these two have exploded into leading megachurches is directly related to their marketing. They consistently adapt to what consumer tendencies are and distinguish themselves from other churches. The marketing for each church is slightly different in that Willow Creek is more 'seeker-friendly' and Lakewood is geared more towards showing how to improve self-esteem and life quality.

Megachurch Conclusions

Megachurches are like the giant shopping malls of the church world. They offer state of the art media, technology, facilities, music, and entertainment. Budgets exceed the millions and Christian books, CD's, and other items gross in billions in the United States every year. Most megachurches have coffee shops, bookstores, church camps, concert music, jumbotrons, and anything else you could possibly imagine. Scott

Thumma, a professor at Hartford Seminary, reported that the average megachurch income was $6.5 million in 2007, up from $4.7 million in 1999. About 50% of this was spent on salaries with the rest divided evenly between missions and buildings. Thumma says nine out of ten congregations doubled in size between 2002 and 2007. In megachurches, 26% of families earn more than $100,000 per year (Bogan, 2010). Furthermore, questions over tax-exempt status and megachurch financial statements have been a growing concern for years.
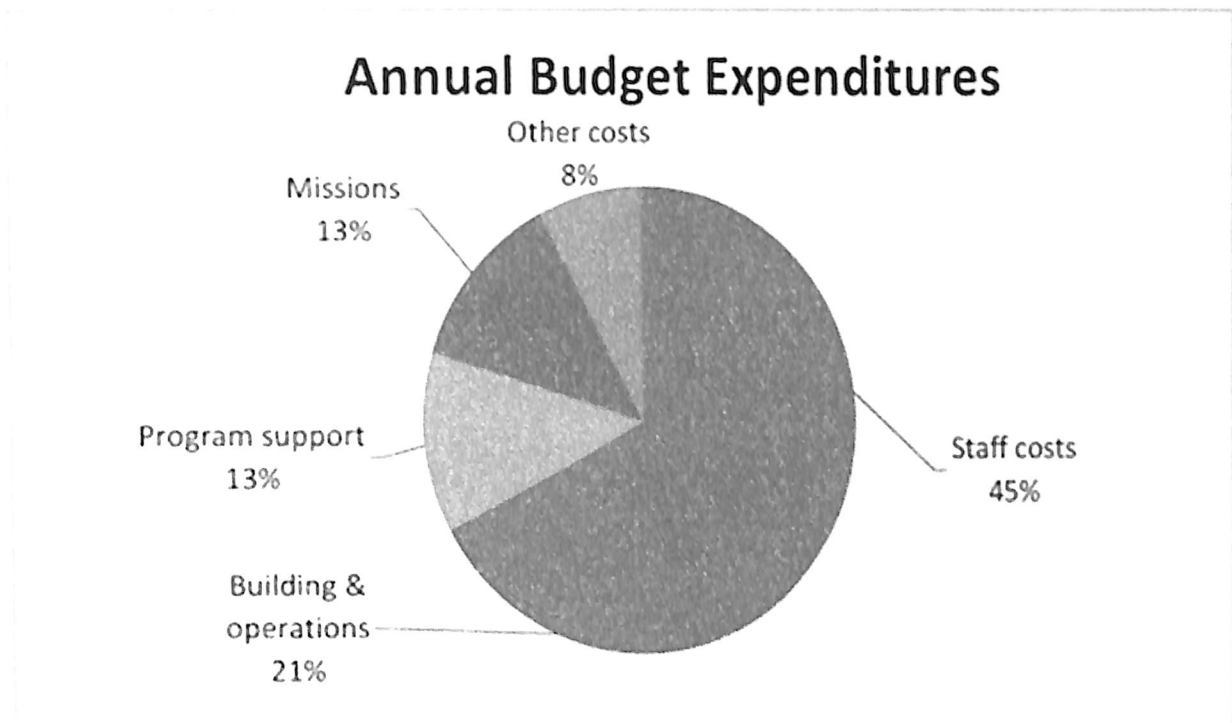

Figure 1: Annual Budget Expenditures

(Bird and Thumma, 2011)

These average budget expenditures are interesting because one would think the church's allocation for missions would be higher.

The similarities found in nearly all megachurches are that they are 'seeker-friendly' and encourage participation from the unchurched. They typically talk much more about God's love and heaven as opposed to God's wrath or hell. Pastor Rick

Warren, who pastors Saddleback Church in California, warns ministers to keep their 'seeker services' light when it comes to scripture reading so that these 'seekers' will not leave turned off to the message that is presented. As we see in history, the church has changed a lot over time. The story remains the same, but the brands continue to evolve. The megachurch happens to be the latest in the ever-evolving story of Christianity, and this story has gotten more effective at keeping up with the times (Ensminger, 2008). Tables for more information regarding megachurches can be found in Appendix C.

Chapter V: Church Communication

In order to solidify a brand, promote activities, and be an effective marketer, one

must be able to communicate. The church is no different. Mark Batterson, lead pastor at

National Community Church in Washington D.C. said, "The church ought to be the most

creative place on the planet. We're called to be trend-setters and culture-creators and if

we are going to reach emerging generations, we've got to utilize emerging technologies

to get our message across." Tim Schraeder, editor and contributor of *Outspoken:*

Conversations on Church Communication says plainly:

> "The early church didn't have the modern technologies that are in churches
>
> today. There were no billboards or direct mail campaigns to announce Jesus was
>
> coming. The disciples didn't tweet or blog the Sermon on the Mount or other
>
> messages Jesus gave during his ministry. The one thing the early church did have,
>
> however, was captivating stories worth telling...Marketing isn't a term that is
>
> found in our Bible and to some it may seem odd to lump the idea of church and
>
> traditional marketing together. However, at its core, the ideas of marketing today
>
> are very central to how our faith has grown throughout the years. (Schraeder and
>
> Hendricks, 2011)."

Regardless of the size, location, or demographic of a church, communication is essential.

The technological era that the world is in currently makes communication easier for

everyone. Most churches these days have websites complete with audio and video streaming, creative logos, Facebook and Twitter accounts, YouTube channels and more. Willow Creek Association, as well as many other churches today, has their own marketing departments designed to run church communications through marketing, public relations, IT, etc.

The Center for Church Communication is a non-profit organization that helps with church communication. They also run the website www.churchmarketingsucks.com which helps promote effective ways to market and communicate within churches. The slogan of the website is "Frustrate. Educate. Motivate." They help churches with content and material on how to market in general, stating vision and mission statements, branding, publicity, legality and copyrighting, design, technology, as well as writing and editing ("Church Marketing Sucks," 2011).

Communicating the Brand

As discussed previously, branding is essential in the creation of an image for a church. The brand image of a church will affect the way that that particular church communicates in its design, online presence, staffing, etc. Steve Manning, managing director at Igor, a branding and naming company in San Francisco says:

> "A brand creates an image in the mind of the consumer. It says something
>
> different at your firm [church], something worth more than business [church] as
>
> usual. If your firm [church] is a commodity, your customers will choose you
>
> solely on the basis of price or getting something for free. If you've got a brand,

you're selling a lifestyle and you can sell anything you want" (Schraeder and Hendricks, 2011, p. 78).

Communicating Creatively

Creative teams for churches must also decide if social networking, podcasting, webcasting or mobile integration helps or hurts their communication strategy (Schraeder and Hendricks, 2011, p.28). Curtis Simmons, the vice president of marketing and community for Fellowship Technologies discusses the importance of knowing the What, Who, How, and Where techniques with marketing a church: know <u>what</u> the story is that is being communicated, know <u>who</u> the audience is and tailor the message, know <u>how</u> to deliver the message clearly, and know the channels <u>where</u> the message should be delivered (Schraeder and Hendricks, 2011, p.31). Creative communication necessitates the ability to see things through a different lens. For example, megachurches like Willow Creek find creative ways to market their content towards the 'seekers' that attend their church.

Technology

The internet has revolutionized the way communication is done in the world. Depending on the type of church, technology is utilized in different ways. In contemporary nondenominational churches, it is common to see large video screens, video and audio streaming online, presence in social media networks, etc, whereas in a

traditional church, hymnals and tradition trump technology. Paul Steinbrueck founded OurChurch.com, which helps churches build effective websites. He speaks of the importance of an effective website and estimates that as many as 80% of people looking for a church start their search online (Schraeder and Hendricks, 2011, p.128). Churches are also using the content of their technological endeavors to reinforce the brand of their church. It is common to find church belief statements online as well as calendars of upcoming events so that all possible information is being communicated to parishioners. The value of communication among churches in America today is of immeasurable importance for church growth to occur and to keep up with ever increasing technology.

Overall, the church in America has evolved into one of the most fascinating and somewhat controversial businesses. The importance of distinguishing the brand or story that the church is telling has become an essential part of the American church culture. It seems that the church culture in America will continue to evolve and change over time, tailoring more to the needs of its consumers. The megachurch in America will most likely continue to evolve and it will be interesting to see the state of the church in America in the upcoming generations.

The church culture in America is diverse. There are churches that meet consumer needs across a lot of different areas. The religious makeup of America has always been primarily Christian, but the market for churches has become increasingly competitive and differentiated. As churches continue to see what consumers are interested in, the branding of the church becomes more important. The megachurch in America has revolutionized the way that churches operate from a business standpoint. The large budgets, creative marketing, and communication skills used by these churches shows how the church in

many ways is conducted like a business. However, there are several gray areas about how

consumers react to a church operating like a business and other aspects of a church. I

have completed two studies to help fill these gray areas and the knowledge gap

concerning these issues to provide clarity to the public and church leaders.

Chapter VI: Research and Conclusions

The first research method that was used to gain better perspective on the marketing and branding of church in America was a series of depth interviews with various people. The process was informal and involved facilitating questions to the interviewee. The responses were based on their knowledge, opinions, and experiences of the subject matter. In depth interviews were chosen because they provide a sense of detail that a survey cannot provide.

Methods

Participants. I conducted five in-depth interviews with a range of different people. Of the five, four were male, one was female. Of the five, three are students and the other two are in positions of leadership in a ministry. The subjects gave verbal consent to be recorded and consent for the content of their responses to be used to further my research.

Procedure. The interviews occurred at a time agreed upon by both parties. They lasted between fifteen and forty minutes. They were conducted in a quiet environment and the audio was recorded. The content of the interviews consisted of questions from a general list of topics regarding the church as a business, marketing and the church, and church perspectives. A full list of questions can be found in Appendix D. Below are the participants:

Jacob Smith- Director of Campus Crusade for Christ at Ole Miss,

Ordained Baptist Minister, Elder of Grace Bible Church of Oxford, mid

40's. The interview lasted for 17 minutes on October 18, 2012.

Blake Adams- Student in his senior year at the University of Mississippi.

Raised in the Methodist Church in a Christian home and is from

Hattiesburg, MS. He does not consider himself a Christian and is not

attending church, however, he was involved in a church throughout his

high school years and has a lot of experience with churches. The interview

lasted for 39 minutes on October 29, 2012.

Sam Lockhart-Student in his senior year at the University of Mississippi.

Raised in a Southern Baptist church in Brandon, MS. Currently does not

attend church, but does associate himself as a Christian and has a lot of

experience with the church. The interview lasted for 30 minutes on

October 29, 2012.

Dr. James Clark- Pastor of a 1,300 member congregation in Nashville,

TN. His father was also a pastor and he is in his mid 50's. Woodmont

Baptist Church uses new media to broadcast its services across the

Nashville metropolitan area. The interview lasted for 39 minutes on

November 5, 2012.

Caroline Dunn-Student at the University of Mississippi, 20 years old. She

is from Eustis, FL. She grew up going to church at a young age every

Sunday and stopped going as a Junior in high school. She does not

associate herself with Christianity any longer, but with the world. She is a

member of the Secular Student Alliance. The interview lasted for 40 minutes on November 14, 2012.

Results

The information obtained from depth interviews provided a well-rounded perspective from each respondent. The interviews conducted had similar themes on issues dealing with marketing and the church.

Perspectives on Church Marketing. While the responses varied, most respondents agreed that churches do indeed need to market themselves in some form or fashion. Dr. James Clark, pastor of Woodmont Baptist Church said, "I think it would be really foolish to think that churches don't need to market... [Marketing] really is something we wrestle with, what is the best way to get our message out?" Clark stated that repetitive marketing was an important aspect of getting people to come. Clark's church has been broadcasting services and small commercials on several broadcasting networks across Nashville for decades. The downside of marketing the church through broadcast media is that it becomes expensive. Only one respondent was adamant about marketing and the church not going together on the premise of it being hard to "promote" a supposedly selfless organization. This response was from Caroline Dunn, who was raised in the church and now considers herself a humanist. "It's an odd mix of business that is not officially a business," agreed Sam Lockhart. Through all of the respondents, there seemed to be a general theme of gaining size in numbers. If the church truly believes that what they are saying and living is important, the general idea was that they should market this to people in a way that is effective. It was also very clear that all respondents agreed on what constituted bad church advertising. Billboard advertisements as well as any advertisement

demanding or judging was viewed as ineffective. This raises the question of what constitutes effective church marketing. Several respondents agreed on the values of authenticity and relationships. Dunn, whose view of the church was more negative than other respondents, stated how she likes the values and aspects of community that some churches embodied. Jacob Smith, who is an elder at a local church in north Mississippi, said that three crucial aspects to marketing a church are having a good children's ministry, great biblical teaching, and relevant worship. He said, "If you focus on those three areas, your church will do well." Dr. Clark, who was the veteran church leader of the respondents, says that there is a fine line between an authentic faith and a judgmental faith. According to Clark, in order to appeal to people the church needs to be reverent, relevant, and relational. The theme of authenticity in relationships and the aspect of honest community were consistent across respondents.

Business, Finances, Budgeting, Money. One topic of conversation that was impossible to avoid was the discussion of money surrounding the church. Lockhart's statement, that the church is "an odd mix of business that is not officially a business," is a solid summary of how people answered questions regarding the topic of money. Blake Adams said, "My first thought is that church is not a business and shouldn't be a business. I don't think Jesus viewed it as a business, and when you focus on numbers, and you focus on buildings, that you are losing a part of what you are. You begin to focus on how much money or how many people..." He went on to say later that he didn't think it should ever be run like an organization or business. He agreed that there was a need for some structure. All respondents believed it was wrong for churches and pastors to be financially prosperous, but they also agreed that they did not quite know exactly how

churches should be run, whether that be from a personal opinion or a biblical worldview. Dr. Clark spoke of having a clear set of core values, a mission statement, organization, and accountability which are all aspects used in companies and have a very similar structure to a business. His church has a finance committee that is responsible for overseeing the church budget, salaries, checks and balances, etc. He stressed the importance of trust in the church. He spoke of the age old struggle that his deacon body wrestles with, dipping their hands into finances instead of ministry needs, which is why his church and typically most Baptist churches have their own finance committees. He said that in his church, deacons focus on the spiritual health of the church and a separate finance committee made up of faithful church members oversees the budget. Clark and his pastoral staff also choose not to see what church members are giving so that he and the staff do not treat church members differently based on what they give. Smith said that the main thing that financial resources go to are staff and facilities, with very little of the funding going to marketing. Smith and Clark's churches have marketing strategy teams, but neither are included in the churches' budgets. One insightful thing that Sam Lockhart said was,

> "marketing is kind of like presenting an idea so that it is favorable to the person
> that is hearing it, so you do tailor your message to the consumer and I think any
> form of convincing people of an idea, which Christianity is, that is the goal, and
> the best way to do that is to tailor your message to your audience...So is it run
> like a business? I don't think that is the goal of most churches, to make money."

The overarching theme from the respondents was that in some ways the church needs to be organized and managed like a business, but operations and finances should remain

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authentic to the core values of the church, meaning that the church is giving to the community and financial integrity is valued. Perhaps the theme most agreed upon was that churches and pastors should not be making lavish amounts of money. Rick Warren's church, Saddleback, commends him for no longer taking a salary at his church and using his book sales as his only source of income. Warren tithes that money back into the church he leads. Clark said that people and consumers watch the pastor extra carefully, including the car that he drives and the house he lives in. There was an element of living above reproach that both pastoral respondents spoke of. Other respondents mentioned churches or televangelism where pastors and leaders used people in order to profit for themselves. To the public in America, a pastor gaining financial prosperity and success at the expense of their parishioners is not accepted well.

Insight into the Megachurch. Within megachurches, there is also the discussion of finances, however, the insight gained through the respondents dealt mainly with the size of the churches and the financial themes discussed in the section above. Four of the five respondents hinted that the success of these megachurches hinges on the success small groups. Jacob Smith stated that successful megachurches are churches that do a really good job with small groups. He says, "As the church grows, the pastor can't shepard all these people and the community group leaders are to become mini pastors." Although these churches are massive in numbers, if people are not engaged in the authenticity and community that was discussed earlier, then people in America will not want to be a part of it. Dr. Clark discussed the investment by members being incredibly important for the sense of belonging that consumers desire to feel when associating themselves with the church. Another aspect discussed by respondents was the desire for megachurches to

grow in number, which can be positive and negative. One of the positive themes with the megachurch was that it can meet the needs of a lot of people in a lot of very specific ways. It may be a particular ministry, class, or other market segment whose needs are met there. On the other hand, the negative theme was that many of these megachurches are so big it is very easy for people to remain anonymous and not get plugged into the church. Dr. Clark has this to say about small groups and anonymity in church:

> "A megachurch that I studied some was Southeast Christian out of Louisville. They have 20,000 members and see about 18,000 members on a weekend...What they learned very early on was the value of a small group, every member of their church is assigned to a small group, an accountability group, and suddenly the big church becomes a lot smaller. And everybody wants to remain very anonymous, and we have them here at our church as well. They come on Sunday morning and they are out, and they have been coming for three years. By saying you are going to join us and be accountable, then we want you in a small group...The thing I liked at Southeast Christian is that not only are you in a small group, but that small group has accountability in itself, every classroom, trashcan, bathroom, all are cleaned by members of the church. Everyone is investing, everyone is getting plugged in. I will tell you another thing, the larger the church is you have the danger of losing individuality, but you also have the ability to offer a spectrum of care that you can't do in a small church. For example, I was a youth minister at a church in Louisville while I was in seminary, and a guy from our church left our church to go to Southeast Christian and when I asked him what prompted him to leave our church, he said it was because his wife was brutally murdered and

stabbed to death, and there was a group in that church whose spouses had been murdered. That's a pretty intense segment. He said for the first time in his life that he had found a group of people who knew exactly what he was going through, and God bless them that they were able to do that."

Typically, it was assumed that these megachurches had very large budgets, creative marketing, and a prominent leader and teacher. Smith stated that, "Usually, it is centered around a personality and the speaker or pastor is a very gifted guy."

Competition, Denominations, Branding. "I think one of the hardest things churches have to deal with today is denominationalism because people 30 and under care absolutely nothing about it. I mean, people don't come to our church, young folks don't come to our church because we are a Baptist church," says Clark. The younger respondents responded by saying people want other people to think and believe the way that they do, and this is why some churches end up forming. Most pastors would probably tell you that the worst strategy for starting a church is to actually split from a fruitful church over something small to form another one. In this area of questions, people responded similarly to their general thoughts on marketing and the church in that the sense of authenticity and community is desired. Churches that stand for their values and don't change the essentials of the Christian faith are the churches that were spoken of respectfully by respondents. The issue here becomes what exactly people consider to be the essentials of the Christian faith. This is how church splits begin to form. It was important to the responders (all except Caroline) that churches remain faithful to the Bible and following Jesus. Caroline was more concerned with the community of people being accepting despite major differences in belief. However, the main commonality

expressed by others was that people do want to identify themselves with a brand in some form or fashion. This brand may be a specific denomination or it may not be a denomination and would prefer terms like "interdenominational" or "nondenominational." Lockhart said that a lot of splits are based on methodology or theology. Most of these thoughts were shared by the others. Blake Adams, who was raised in the church but no longer attends and does not consider himself a Christian, had some insight on branding beliefs,

> "Naturally your branding is going to change because they are going to want to go forth and teach people their way as opposed to yours and they are going to want to attract people who are like minded so their target market changes. I definitely think that splits happen because there is no way around it, people will begin to emphasize different things than others will, especially religion to those who have it in their lives. The religious probably think their religion is the most important thing to them. The difference may be big enough to cause a split."

Each person's responses indicated thoughts towards a competitive church market that wants parishioners, but not in an aggressive or rivalry-like way. One specific aspect of churches competing that was viewed as negative by multiple responders was that churches that attempt to force beliefs on other people are offensive and ineffective. Both Caroline and Blake discussed the importance of feeling valued and cared for rather than told who they are and who they should be as well as being told they are wrong. Dr. Clark discussed how important it was for denominations or brands to be consistent. At his church he said he repeats terms and core values often so his church members will start to associate themselves with their church slogan, "Connecting people to God, to each other,

and to a greater world," as well as phrases like "transformative relationships." Brand associations and perceptions are formed by consumers over time, and all of the responses were unique to each religious background.

Technology, Websites, Broadcast Media, Social Media. The views regarding the use of technology were similar in that all respondents agreed it is important to remain relevant with the times. Many churches are branded in a very traditional way that chooses not to use a lot of new media and technology, and these churches may have a loyal membership, but they are most likely not attracting new members, especially young people. Both church leaders discussed their churches and personal usage of social media such as Twitter and Facebook. They both spoke very highly of the effectiveness of websites stating their beliefs as well as uploading content such as blogs, audio sermons, videos, and more. The other respondents talked about their generation's use of media and technology and how a lot of the resources used and consumed in the American church market can be found online. People can go to a church's website and know exactly what a church stands for and who their leaders are of that church. Dr. Clark's church is heavy into broadcast media and is broadcasted locally and weekly. Televangelism was looked at negatively for the most part by each respondent. However, podcasts, and other media content was seen positively because the access is so easy for people. Media has helped promote, define, and brand churches in ways that weren't possible 10-15 years ago. One theme that continued to be brought up was the recognition of today's market. In the technological era, it is becoming more important for churches to build up a strong presence in media outlets.

Conclusion. The interview process was crucial for identifying images and

perspectives of how the church is formed in people's minds. The variety of responses

regarding topics about the church and marketing, finances, megachurches, branding, and

technology all proved to be valuable information. The respondents who were not church

leaders responded with concerns about budgets and money that is allocated to certain

aspects of the church. All respondents recognized an importance for communication of

values and beliefs through branding and technology. These interviews were executed for

the purpose of discovering the ideas that people hold in their minds towards the church. It

was important for me to find people from various backgrounds ranging from church

leaders, a humanist, churched, Christian and non-Christian. The wide variety helped

responses to be balanced. The findings help establish a reference and preliminary

framework for the rest of my research. The insight the interviews provided assisted in the

creation of the survey instrument. A full list of questions asked in these interviews can be

found in Appendix D.

Study 2

I conducted a survey via Qualtrics and it was posted on Amazon's Mechanical Turk (www.mturk.com) to be completed by a random collection of respondents with a variety of religious preferences and backgrounds. The process of making the survey began by applying and receiving permission and approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Mississippi. A series of questions was asked to a random population of people. These questions all dealt with consumer attitudes and perceptions of marketing and the church as well as various other questions about their church experience. Demographic information was also asked for on the survey. The survey was posted on Mechanical Turk over six weeks between December of 2012 and January of 2013. The survey is titled "Marketing and Religion."

Methods

Participants. Respondents were 188 U.S. citizens who were registered with the mTurk website (50.9% Male, 49.1% Female; median age: 30). Participants received $0.20 for completing the survey.

Procedure. The survey was posted on the internet for 6 weeks. Respondents were asked about their attitudes towards church and marketing, exposure to and importance of marketing for churches, importance of church attributes, and short answer questions. The full survey is reproduced in Appendix D.

Results

Exposure to Church Marketing. Participants were asked how frequently they see

various forms of Church marketing. A table of reported frequencies is given below.

Participants indicated that they were exposed to word of mouth marketing more

frequently than any other type of marketing message (all $ps < .001$).

Table 3: Exposure to Church Marketing

Marketing Format	Frequency
Billboards	3.64
Social Media	3.68
Website	4.1
Televangelism	4.00
Print Media	4.12
Personal Selling	3.46
Word of Mouth	4.77
TV ads	3.47

Effectiveness of Church Marketing. I was first interested in determining whether

different types of church marketing differed in their effectiveness between genders. I

found that gender did not have an effect on the perceived effectiveness of different forms

of church marketing (all $ps > .28$). Next, I was interested in the effect of age on

perceived church marketing effectiveness. The perceived effectiveness of each form of

marketing was regressed on age. I found that age had no effect on the perceived

effectiveness of billboards ($p = .11$), websites ($p = .13$), televangelism ($p = .19$), print

media ($p = .26$), word of mouth ($p = .32$), or television ($p = .37$). However, there was an

effect of age on the perceived effectiveness of social media and personal selling.

Specifically, the perceived effectiveness of social media decreased with age ($\beta = -.028$; t = -2.03, p < .05). Additionally, the perceived effectiveness of personal selling decreased with age ($\beta = -.028$; t = -2.09, p < .05).

Importance of Church Attributes for picking a church (Christians). I was interested in finding out what people who associated themselves as Christians thought about certain church attributes. Respondents indicated that all attributes were viewed as at least somewhat important (all *ps*<.001). Because consumers tend to say that all attributes are important, I did an additional test to see which attributes were more important than the others. First, I found the average importance rating across all attributes and respondents (M=5.18). Next, I compared average importance ratings for each attribute to this overall average. A church stating their beliefs clearly (t=4.08, p<.05), spiritual growth (t=3.98, p<.05), and finding a sense of belonging (t=2.709, p<.05) were all seen as relatively more important than other attributes. I found that personal growth (t=1.712, p=.09) was marginally more important. People generally thought networking (t=-3.321, p=.001), small groups (t=-3.476, p=.001), and being multi-generational (t=-2.057, p=.042) were relatively less important. I wanted to see if there was a difference in how important these attributes were in regard to gender. The table below shows average means for men and women.

Table 4: Importance of Church Attributes for Picking a Church

Attribute	Male	Female
Multi-Generational	4.4	5.22
Belonging	5.36	5.72
States Beliefs Clearly	5.49	5.91
Small Groups	4.19	4.91
Religious Tradition	4.91	5.17
Networking Opportunities	4.4	4.76
Personal Growth	5.13	5.72
Spiritual Growth	5.43	6.07
Accountability	5.09	5.15

The church being multi-generational ($t=-2.55$, $p<.05$), having small groups ($t=-2.08$, $p<.05$), and spiritual growth ($t=2.22$, $p<.05$) were more important to women than to men. In addition to gender, I was also interested in how age affected the importance of these attributes. Respondents were divided into two groups, older than and younger than 40. Only one attribute differed in importance between the age groups. Younger respondents thought that small groups were more important than older respondents ($t=-2.31$, $p<.05$). Employment status and level of education had no affect on the perceived importance of these attributes (all $ps>.14$).

The church as business. I asked 8 questions about the extent to which people believe the extent to which church should behave like a business. Responses to these 8 questions were averaged to form a single adaptation scale (Cronbach's $\alpha=.76$). Overall, people do not think the church should behave like a business ($m=3.71$; $t=-3.28$, $p<.05$). People who identify as Christian have stronger beliefs on this subject than non-religious people ($m_{religious}=3.42$, $m_{non\text{-}religious}=4.19$; $t=4.22$, $p<.05$).

Six questions on the scale measured the extent to which people believe the church should change based on cultural shifts. Analysis revealed again that Christian people believed that the church should adapt less than non-religious people ($m_{religious}$=3.49, $m_{non-religious}$=4.5; t=4.96, p<.05). Non-religious people believe that the church should adapt to cultural changes (m=4.5, t=2.77, p<.05). The final two questions in the scale ask about the church competing for parishioners. Both religious and non-religious people believe that the church should not engage in competitive activity over parishioners (m=3.22, t=-6.89, p<.05). The last question asked whether the salary of the pastor should increase as donations to the church increased. Both religious people and non-religious people believed that the pastor's salary should not increase as donations increase (t=-4.85, p<.05), but non-religious people felt more strongly about this than religious people ($m_{religious}$=3.58, $m_{non-religious}$=2.72; t=2.92, p<.05). In addition to looking at differences in religious and non-religious people, I was also interested in looking at age differences. I found that older people think the church should adapt less than younger people do (β=-.024; t=-3.39, p<.05).

Pastor's Role in Church. I asked people questions about the extent to which they believed the pastor should be involved in both spiritual and business functions of the church. People believed the spiritual roles were more important than the business roles ($m_{spiritual}$=5.24, $m_{business}$ =4.17; t=9.39, p<.05). I found that religious people and non-religious people differ in whether the pastor should engage in business activities (t=-2.75, p<.05). Religious people believe that the pastor should be involved in business operations (t=2.68, p<.05) while non-religious people are neutral on the topic (t=-1.4, p=.16).

Other Findings. The first question I asked was whether people saw clear differences between denominations. While everyone agreed that there were clear differences between denominations (t=9.87, p<.05), Christian people believed this more strongly than non-religious people ($m_{religious}$=5.46, $m_{non-religious}$=4.73; t=2.69, p<.05). Next, I was interested in whether churches should be tax-exempt and considered non-profit. Non-religious people believed that the church should not be tax-exempt (m=2.88, t=-2.44, p<.05) while religious people believe it should maintain its tax-exempt status (m=4.71, t=4.59, p<.05). Finally, the last question I asked was whether church leaders should have a genuine belief in their teachings. While everyone agreed that the pastor should have a genuine belief in his teachings (m=5.87, t=15.23, p<.05), religious people believe this more strongly than non-religious people ($m_{religious}$=6.25, $m_{non-religious}$=5.32; t=3.61, p<.05). Demographic information can be found in Appendix D.

Discussion

After looking at these two studies, this research has allowed me to understand the market that churches find themselves in, but also what is considered effective by consumers. Study 1 revealed that most people agreed that marketing does need to occur with churches, but there are effective and ineffective ways of doing it. People in America today are often looking for authenticity to go with church as well as financial integrity. It seems okay for the church to be run in a business-like fashion as long as the church does not operate for profit. Megachurches are seen as the epitome of the church operating and functioning with a business structure, and with so many members it almost has to be managed in a business-like way. It was also revealed through the study that these megachurches are highly effective when it comes to marketing and branding. The use of

technology and media has allowed for these churches to communicate their brand message effectively. Consumers want the church's brand to be clearly communicated and authentic in the way the message is delivered.

In Study 2, the data revealed a lot of intriguing insight to America's church market. According to the study, word of mouth marketing is the most effective in the minds of consumers. This coincides with the desire for consumers to find legitimacy with the brand they want to identify with. Women viewed each attribute of church as more important than men did, which I found to be interesting. Those who associate themselves as Christian believed more strongly about different aspects of church such as small groups, spiritual growth, and accountability, than do their non-religious counterparts. This is especially true when distinguishing the differences in denominations. When it comes to the church being run as a business, people believe the pastor should stay away from anything that could be considered financial control. There is significant evidence to prove that marketing the church is necessary. There is also valid evidence to prove that some methods of marketing, such as word of mouth and print media, are more effective ways to reach out to consumers. The church as business was largely discussed in the short answer portion of the survey. The responses advocated that the church was first and foremost about serving and that finances and prosperity should not be a focus at all. One respondent stated, "Churches should not be run as a business. They should exist only to serve the part of the community that chooses to subscribe to that particular denomination's beliefs. This practice is bad for attendees because it essentially changes the entire dynamic of churchgoers being a spiritual asset to being a financial asset." The responses to the church behaving like a business were negative. One of the major themes

was that the church should not portray itself as a business for profit. The focus of these two studies was to get into the minds of consumers and see their thoughts and perspectives about the church.

Conclusion

The marketing and branding of church in America is a topic that will continue to be discussed. Ultimately, I believe that people are looking for authenticity in churches. This includes marketing, finances, teaching, community involvement and leadership. There were a wide variety of responses on the short answer portion of the survey revealing negativity towards churches not being authentic. There was also a lot of negativity regarding the church being run as a business. The majority of consumers are turned off by the notion of church as business for profit. I believe marketing the church needs to occur, but there are still many gray areas. I think the term "Christian" has become more convoluted in America's current spiritual climate. People will identify with a brand without inspecting why they want to be a part of it. Megachurches will continue to be successful in reaching their target market, which is primarily unchurched people. It remains important for churches to communicate effectively what exactly they are about, so that consumers are informed about the church's beliefs. However, the direction a church may take in regard to marketing is up to each individual church. They can really target and convey their message in whatever way that they please. I believe this discussion will continue to be relevant in our culture as we continue to advance in technology and other ways to communicate. Our society is one that will continue to

remain consumer-centric for a long time. In conclusion, I think that variation in the way church is conducted is a necessity, but when running a church becomes more like a business, it becomes out of bounds in the minds of Americans. It is important for people to become informed about the brands that they associate with, and this becomes increasingly important when dealing with one's belief system.

Limitations. Overall, the survey sample turned out to be good. The response was predominantly white (73.7%) and educated with some college, a college degree, or some post graduate work. This may limit the ability to look closely at certain markets that are not white and are uneducated. The depth interviews were conducted with only white, college-educated individuals. There were a few outliers in age causing the mean to be skewed with one 84 year old respondent. Out of all 188 respondents, there were 167 valid surveys that were able to be used. Some respondents did not complete the survey, while some responses were unable to be used.

Recommendations for Future Research. If the sample size were increased, it would help give a greater scope of people in America. I would recommend getting data from people of many socio-economic levels, especially those of a lower status. It would be interesting to also have asked respondents to indicate their current salary to see if there was any correlation with the way they thought about the church as business. I would have also liked to have asked whether or not respondents who were members of a church would agree that parishioners should give regularly to their local church. I would also recommend doing a few more depth interviews with people who have never really been exposed to church before or who claimed to be atheist, agnostic, or no religion.

Recommendations for Management. I would highly recommend that pastors be very specific and clear about the brand they are communicating to consumers and to not waver on important issues. The most effective type of church marketing seen by consumers was word of mouth. I think that if church leaders can communicate to their congregants the importance of knowing why they are associated with a church, the church will be a lot healthier. In turn, the church will be marketed on a very personal level when it is being talked about with human interaction. After the research that has been presented, I couldn't recommend more strongly that churches operate with a financial system in place that values integrity, giving, and service, because the majority of respondents stressed these things as important and how churches that do not operate this way are looked upon negatively. I think church leaders should continue to stay up to speed with effective ways to communicate their brand via technology, websites, social media, etc. It will also be important for church leaders to remain authentic, because consumers want to be able to identify with a trustworthy church. A lot of recommendations could be made towards churches in specific communities on a case by case basis. I would recommend that pastors become as familiar with their community as possible demographically so that they can effectively position their church.

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Appendix A: Denomination Fluctuation Chart

WHY PEOPLE CHANGE CHURCHES

Why they left their old church*

• Disenchanted with the pastor or church 51%
• It wasn't fulfilling their needs or the reasons they attended 44%
• Something changed about the church 33%
• Felt out of place at church 31%
• Could not agree with church teachings or positions on issues 27%

Why they chose a new church*

• Beliefs or doctrines of the church 89%
• Authenticity of church members/pastor 88%
• Quality of the preaching 87%
• Prefer the worship style 80%
• Found more evidence of God's work/changed lives 76%
• New church cares for the community 76%

*Respondents could name more than one reason

Source: Lifeway Research survey of Protestants. Based on 415 respondents who switched churches but had not made a residential move; margin of error is +/- 3.9 percentage points

HOW MANY 'BELONG?'

Among U.S. Protestant churches, small congregations dominate, suggests a recent survey that asked those who attend worship services at least a few times a year to estimate how many people 'belong' to their church

Denomination type	Less than 100	100-500	500-2,000	2,000+	Don't know
All Protestants	25	48	17	7	3
Evangelical denominations, such as Southern Baptist or Assemblies of God	27	46	17	8	1
Non-denominational evangelical, such as Houston's Lakewood Church or Willow Creek near Chicago	22	38	21	18	1
Mainline denominations, such as Methodists or Evangelical Lutherans	21	53	19	5	3
Historically black churches, such as African Methodist Episcopal or National Baptist Convention	28	46	15	10	1

Source: 2008 Religious Landscape Survey, Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life

Note: Not all totals are 100% due to rounding

(Grossman, 2007).

A-2

Family	Denomination	5 Years 2000> 2005	10 Years 1995> 2005	40 Years 1965> 2005	55 Years 1950> 2005
Liberal Protestant					
	Episcopal	-3.66%	-11.38%	-34.27%	-7.02%
	Presbyterian-USA	-8.38%	-12.87%	-45.62%	-27.94%
	United Church of Christ	-11.11%	-16.84%	-40.87%	-38.09%
	TOTAL	*-7.22%*	*-13.18%*	*-40.63%*	*-23.93%*
Moderate Protestant					
	Church of the Brethren	-5.26%	-9.99%	-33.88%	-30.82%
	Evangelical Lutheran-ELCA	-5.37%	-6.54%	-14.66%	21.80%
	Reformed Church of America	-6.76%	-11.91%	-30.06%	-5.16%
	United Methodist	-3.19%	-5.43%	-27.04%	-16.35%
	TOTAL	*-4.09%*	*-6.02%*	*-23.12%*	*-5.54%*
Roman Catholic					
	TOTAL	*8.56%*	*14.69%*	*49.49%*	*141.44%*
Latter Day Saints					
	Church of LDS	9.25%	20.78%	218.06%	412.07%
	Community of Christ	31.57%	1.44%	7.12%	44.36%
	TOTAL	*9.82%*	*20.08%*	*199.92%*	*374.91%*
Conservative Protestant					
	Baptist General Conf	1.36%	7.51%	67.38%	219.62%
	Christian and Missionary Alliance	17.76%	39.82%	565.41%	636.56%
	Cumberland Presbyterian	-5.84%	-7.32%	3.23%	-0.42%
	Evangelical Covenant	16.79%	28.98%	79.33%	127.51%
	Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod	-4.43%	-5.92%	-9.36%	45.73%
	N.A. Baptist Conf	1.19%	8.49%	-11.27%	14.67%
	7th Day Adventist	9.52%	22.02%	164.57%	306.80%
	Southern Baptist Conv	1.94%	3.88%	51.06%	129.81%
	Wisc Evang Lutheran Synod	-0.90%	-23.98%	-12.53%	2.06%
	TOTAL	*1.75%*	*3.40%*	*43.17%*	*117.28%*
Pentecostal & Holiness Protestant					
	Assemblies of God	7.00%	20.56%	181.82%	406.26%
	Church of God-Anderson	7.73%	12.66%	76.23%	135.70%
	Church of God-Cleveland	13.17%	34.55%	393.27%	766.04%
	Church of Nazarene	-0.49%	5.21%	83.57%	177.99%
	Free Methodist of N.A.	5.38%	-11.90%	10.77%	35.50%
	Salvation Army	-6.14%	-5.76%	48.28%	103.99%
	TOTAL	*5.65%*	*14.93%*	*148.29%*	*289.53%*
	TOTAL - All of the above	5.43%	7.26%	27.04%	85.42%

(Fast facts)

Appendix B- Examples of Advertisements Used by the Episcopal Church

B-1

Turnabout is fair play. Selling church affiliation à la Madison Avenu

69

Appendix C-
Additional Tables and
Demographic
Information

C-1

These groups account for 80% of all megachurches

Nondenominational	40%
Southern Baptist	16%
Baptist, unspecified	7%
Assemblies of God	6%
Christian	5%
Calvary Chapel	4%
United Methodist	2%

C-2

In terms of theology of the congregations, the label that 336 megachurches, surveyed in 2011, selected to best fit their membership's orientation were as follows:

Evangelical	71%
Pentecostal	8%
Charismatic	5%
Seeker	5%
Missional	4%
Moderate	4%
Funamentalist	1%
Other	1%

("Megachurch Definition")

USA's 5 biggest megachurches 2008

Name	Location	Senior Pastor	Denomination	2008 attendance	2007 attendance	% change
Lakewood Church	Houston	Joel Osteen	Non-denominational	43,500	47,000	-7.4%
Second Baptist Church	Houston	Ed Young Sr.	Southern Baptist Convention	23,659	24,280	-2.6%
North Point Community Church	Alpharetta, GA	Andy Stanley	Non-denominational	22,557	19,582	+15.2%
Willow Creek Community Church	South Barrington, IL	Bill Hybels	Non-denominational	22,500	20, 700	+8.7%
LifeChurch	13 locations in six states and online at secondlife.com	Craig Groeschel	Evangelical Covenant Church	20,823	19,907	+4.6%

* Source: Lifeway Research, for *Outreach Magazine's* annual list of 100 largest U.S. Protestant Churches from church attendance in spring of 2008

*All of these churches remain in top 10 for 2012, churches that are in current top 5 not listed but with similar numbers are Southeast Christian Church of Louisville, KY (22,496), and Phoenix First Assembly of God (22,500) ("10 Largest Churches in America").

*Numbers based on weekly attendance, not membership

Demographics. I believe the sample I obtained was great. It was 50.9% male, 49.1% female. The age ranged from 18-82 and the median age was 30. Below are tables with information regarding employment, race, and education.

C-4

Employment

Type of Employment	%
Full Time	40.7
Part Time	20.4
Unemployed	14.4
Student	15
Homemaker	4.8
Retired	4.8

C-5

Race

Ethnicity	%
American India/ Native American	3.0
Asian	6.0
Black	8.4
Hispanic	7.8
White	73.7
Pacific Islander	.6
Other	.6

C-6

Education

Type of Education	%
Some High School	1.2
High School Degree	13.8
Some College	31.1
College Degree	34.1
Some post Graduate Study	8.4
Post Graduate Degree	11.4

Of the sample, 26.3% said they were a member of a church and 73.7% said they weren't. In regard to the number of days people attended church per month, 68.1% of the sample said they attend 0 times per month. The range was from 0-30 and the median was 0. As children, the median was 4 days per month. 6.7% said they attended 4 times a month and 7.1% of the sample said they attended once per month.

C-7

Denominations

Denominations	%
Baptist	14.4
Catholic	16.2
Atheist	10.2
Agnostic	9.6
Non-Denominational	18.6
No Religion	12
Presbyterian	3.6
Other (Lutheran, Episcopal, etc.)	7.8

Appendix D- List of Questions for In-Depth Interviews and Survey

D-1

Each person interviewed gave a brief history and background as explained briefly above.

Interviewees were asked these questions with various follow up questions going deeper

into other areas:

1. What do you think about marketing and the church?
2. What kind of church marketing have you been exposed to?
3. What kind of media does your church use/have you seen in the church?
4. Do you believe the church is run like a business?
5. What do you think about money and the church?
6. What do you think about different denominations?
7. Do you feel like denominations compete with one another?
8. Why do churches split?
9. What do you think about the Megachurch in America?
10. How are the needs met of consumers of the church?
11. Do you think some churches use the Gospel message for financial gain?
12. What are some positive memories associated with church marketing as well as negative ones?
13. What do you think about televangelism?
14. Why aren't involved in a church? (directed towards the 3 students not attending church)
15. What does day to day marketing look like for a church?
16. What do you think church members get out of being affiliated with your church? Or church in general? (directed to the two pastors)
17. How do you feel about the use of social media by the church?
18. Do you think marketing and Christianity go together?

Church Benefits

Please enter your mTurk worker ID number.

Thank you for participating in this research study.

We are interested in Americans' opinions about organized religion. Specifically, you will be asked about your opinions on the role of Church leaders in the Church, the role of religion in your life and your exposure to religious messages.

Please take your time and read each question carefully before providing an honest, accurate response. You may feel that some of the questions we ask are personal in nature -- please remember that all information you provide today is anonymous and confidential.

Please press the arrows at the bottom of the screen to continue.

How important are each of the following attributes when choosing a Church?

	Not at all Important	Very Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neither Important nor Unimportant	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Extremely Important
Church states beliefs clearly	O	O	O	⦿	O	O	O
Church provides personal growth and development	O	O	O	O	⦿	O	O
Church provides networking opportunities	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Church provides spiritual growth and development	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Church has strong religious tradition	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Church offers accountability to members	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Members of Church are multi-generational	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Church provides a sense of belonging	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Church participates in small groups	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

Current Church Marketing

How often do you see each of the following forms of marketing being used by a Church?

	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often
Televangelism	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Social Media (e.g. Facebook)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Word of mouth	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Personal Selling (e.g. door-to-door communication)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Television Advertisements	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Billboard Advertisements	○	○	○	○	○	○	◎
Print Media (e.g. newspaper)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Website	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

How effective are each of the following forms of marketing in changing your attitude or opinion towards a Church?

	Very Ineffective	Ineffective	Somewhat Ineffective	Neither Effective nor Ineffective	Somewhat Effective	Effective	Very Effective
Website	○	○	○	○	◎	○	○
Word of Mouth	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Print Media	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Billboard Advertisements	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Television Advertisements	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Televangelism	○	○	○	○	◎	◎	○
Social Media	○	○	○	○	○	◎	○
Personal Selling	○	○	○	○	○	◎	◎

Block 6

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Supply/Demand

The Church should adapt to the demands of current and potential Church members.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

The Church should adapt to changes in popular culture.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Church teachings should not stray away from core beliefs or values.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Church values should adapt to remain attractive to the public.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

The Church should not be influenced by changes in national or state laws.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

The Church should not be influenced by cultural shifts in beliefs.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

The Church should tailor its offering to remain competitive.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Churches should compete with each other for parishioners.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

The Pastor's salary should increase as donations to the church increase.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Pastor Input

Please indicate the extent to which you believe that a Church leader (e.g. Priest, Pastor, etc.) should serve each of the following roles within his/her Church:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Oversight of Elders	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Teaching Bible Study	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Preaching Sermons	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Forming Church Vision	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Finances (Accounting)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Management	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Spiritual Leadership	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Fundraising	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Block 7

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Random Questions

It is important that a Church leader has a genuine belief in his/her teachings.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Modern Churches should still be qualified for tax-exempt status.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Modern Churches are still non-profit associations.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

There are clear differences in the teachings and practices of different Christian denominations.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

There are clear differences in the beliefs and practices of people who identify with different Christian denominations.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Demographics

The following information is being collected for categorization purposes only.

Please answer the questions in this section openly and honestly.

What is your gender?

- Male

- Female

How old are you?

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- Some High School

- High School Degree

- Some College

- College Degree

- Some Post Graduate Study

- Post Graduate Degree

Would you describe yourself as...

- American Indian / Native American

- Asian

- Black / African American

- Hispanic / Latino

- White / Caucasian

- Pacific Islander

- Other

How would you describe your current employment status?

- Employed Full Time

- Employed Part Time

- Unemployed / Looking for Work

- Student

- Homemaker

- Retired

Are you currently a member of a church?

- Yes

- No

In an average month, how many days do you attend a church service or function?

What Denomination do you associate yourself with?

- Baptist
- Presbyterian
- Methodist
- Episcopalian
- Catholic
- Lutheran
- Church of Christ
- Mormon
- Non-Denominational
- Pentecostal
- Other

Do your parents attend church?

- Yes
- No

Thinking back to your childhood, in an average month, how many days did you attend a church service or function?

Open-Ended

We are interested in the opinions people have about the Church being run as a business (e.g. marketing itself, generating income, etc.). You may have noticed that some of the questions we asked earlier dealt with these topics.

We would also like to give you the opportunity to express your opinions on these topics in your own words.

Please use the spaces provided below to give us additional information about your thoughts.

What are your thoughts about a Church being run like a business? Do you believe that this practice is good or bad for the Church and its attendees?

What are your thoughts about Church's efforts to market themselves? Do you believe Churches should advertise themselves to attract new attendees? Do you believe the Church's message *should* be advertised?

Do you have any additional thoughts on this topic that you would like to share with us?

Block 8

Survey Code

Your final task is to return to this survey's posting on Mechanical Turk and, in the box provided, enter the 10-digit random survey code provided below:

${e://Field/random}

Note: It is important that you complete this final task in order to receive credit for full completion of the survey.

Thank you for participating in our study today.