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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Take me to church: What ministries are of perceived value for attendees from a nonprofit marketing perspective?

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Church can mean different things to different people. Whilst the opportunity to hear preaching within a conventional church building has traditionally represented the key driver of church value, other ministries such as contemporary worship music, fellowship with others, and small group bible studies are relevant for church attendance amongst certain church attendees. In addition, these church ministries of perceived value may vary on the basis of whether a church attendee is involved in a ministry role or not and if the church is located within an urban or a regional context. To identify the perceived value of church ministries as perceived by church attendees, data from 8,000 respondents of the Australian 2011 National Church Life Survey were analysed. Although sermons and communion represented the church items of perceived value for both leaders and nonleaders regardless of their location, respondents varied considerably in what they deemed as most important for their church in the future. This study provides theoretical and practical implications for religious nonprofit organisations (e.g., churches) relating to the perceived value of church experiences and provides future research opportunities. Specifically, through appropriate market segmentation, target marketing, and positioning, these organisers can design and promote specific ministries to precise church attendee segments.

1 | INTRODUCTION

1.1 | Church foundations

In the Canonical gospels of the New Testament of the Holy Bible, the authors explicitly mention the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Approximately two millennia later, the foundations of the early Christian Church such as evangelism, discipleship and biblical teaching remain across numerous Westernised and Asian contexts. Whilst the foundations of the early Christian Church remain, different areas of ministry have become prominent in the past few decades. Although the opportunity to hear a sermon has consistently attracted church attendance (e.g., Stott, 1990; Ward, Pullman, & Rylance, 1883), people may choose to attend church for alternative reasons such as contemporary worship music (Connell, 2005; Goh, 2008) and to participate in social justice aid programmes (Brown, 2009; Nooney & Woodrum, 2002). It has also been consistently found that attending church and/or church-orientated activities can provide an attendee with mental and health benefits (Abbotts, Williams, Sweeting, & West, 2004; Koenig, Ford, George, Blazer, & Meador, 1993) which has driven attendance, particularly for those that are female, married and have health insurance (Aaron, Levine, & Burstin, 2003). Consequently, churches will actively market several church

ministries through various forms of media to influence people to attend church (Foster, 2010; Webb, 2012).

1.2 | Church attendance in Australia

Despite Australia having some of the largest growing Christian churches worldwide such as Hillsong and Planetshakers, overall church attendance is declining in Australia (Bellamy & Castle, 2004; McCrindle Research, 2014). The number of Australians attending church at least once a month (regularly) has halved from 36% in 1972 to 15% in 2011 (NCLS Research, 2012). McCrindle Research (2012) estimate that whilst 46% of the Australian population is aged under 15–40, only 26% of church attendees within this age bracket attend church regularly. Conversely, the elderly age segment (70+), which represents approximately 9% of the Australian population, is the largest church attending age cohort (21%).

Doe to technological advantages that provide a wide cohort of ministries for various Christian denominations (e.g., Chand, 2015; Jansen, Tapia, & Spink, 2010), it is possible that Australians may choose to not physically attend church, but rather rely on online methods, television or radio as a means of biblical learning. For example, many Australian churches (e.g., Hillsong and Planetshakers)

will provide podcasts of their church sermons to the public that cannot or do not want to attend church. These sermon podcasts can be streamed by the public at a time that is convenient to them. Screen Australia (2014) estimated that 8% of video on demand Australian viewers (those with an internet connection) have watched a religion and ethics documentary over a 6 month period. Furthermore, the Australian Christian Channel, a 24-hr station available on Foxtel, Fetch TV, and Optus (pay-per-view television networks) offers a variety of Christian ministry programmes (e.g., preaching and contemporary worship). It is estimated that this channel reaches 2.2 million households with a potential daily audience of 6.4 million Australians (Wilkinson, 2017). Vision Radio Network attracts listenership from all Australian locations, with a weekly capital city audience estimated to be 2,127,000 (McNair Ingenuity Research, 2012). In the state of Queensland, 96.5 FM, the major Christian radio station, is broadcasted throughout South East Queensland (approximately a 200-km radium from Central Brisbane). 96.5 FM's audience is mostly 25–39 (36.8%), female (52.6%), earn an annual income of over AUS$77,000 (45.0%), and have a university degree (39.2%).

2 | AIMS OF THIS RESEARCH

It is widely acknowledged within the marketing literature that people are heterogeneous (Dibb, Stern, & Wensley, 2002; Kotler, 1980) and may have or perceive different values when considering a product or service (Lusch & Vargo, 2011; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Within a church context, these church ministries (e.g., sermons, communion, and Sunday school) may represent differing levels of perceived value for each individual church attendee. These perceived value differences could be based on various characteristics such as an attendee's age, religious experience, and denomination (Webb, 2012; Webb, Joseph, Schimmel, & Moberg, 1998). For example, youth and young adults (e.g., 18–24) may value numerous social interactions and contemporary worship with visual arts within a large church. Consequently, these attendees may choose to attend a contemporary, youth-orientated church. Conversely, a conservative, elderly believer (e.g., 70+) may prefer traditional delivery of church ministries within an Anglican or a Lutheran church. Furthermore, members that are in leadership (e.g., paid or volunteer) in church-based ministries may place a higher value on certain ministries than church attendees not currently involved in ministry (Chand, 2015; Sanders, 1967).

From a nonprofit marketing perspective, identifying what is of perceived value to potential church attendees is essential for religious marketers (e.g., churches) when designing new ministries or seeking to market to specific segments within their local community (Webb et al., 1998). Regardless of an urban or a regional context, through identifying what perceived value people have in attending church, religious marketers can potentially increase attendance by promoting specific ministries to precise segments. Therefore, identifying what nonprofit ministries are of perceived value to attendees and how these attendees differ provides the impetus for this study.

3 | LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 | Conceptual framework

A conceptual framework (see Figure 1) is provided that guides the research. As outlined in Figure 1, this study aims to identify the perceived value of current and future church ministries as perceived by church attendees. This study compares leaders (people within an active ministry role) against nonleaders (those not in an active ministry role) across both urban and regional contexts. The results from the analysis are then presented and discussed with implications for nonprofit organisations followed by opportunities for future research.

3.2 | Church attendance

Church attendance is traditionally defined as a person being physically present for the duration of a formalised period of communal worship on a Sunday (e.g., Ward et al., 1883) in conventional locations such as cathedrals and purpose-built churches. In the early 21st century, however, church is becoming increasingly diverse, running on different days of the week and in various locations in addition to traditional locations (e.g., churches) such as cinemas, schools, public houses, and university lecture theatres. Within the religious and nonprofit literature, the focus on church attendance is not on where a person attends a church but rather how frequently a person will attend church (Francis, 1992; Jeong, 2014; Johnson, Larson, De Li, & Jang, 2000). Although in the 1970s, attending church weekly would define a person as a regular church attendee, this definition has been modified (McCrindle Research, 2013). A person attending church at least once a month is now classed as a regular church attendee (NCLS Research, 2012).

Within the religious marketing literature, there is considerable debate into whether a Christian believer is required to attend church under the jurisdiction of an ordained minister. Although attending church has been the usual practice for approximately 2,000 years and is strongly encouraged amongst certain denominations such as Catholics and Protestants (Abbotts et al., 2004; Arano & Blair, 2008),
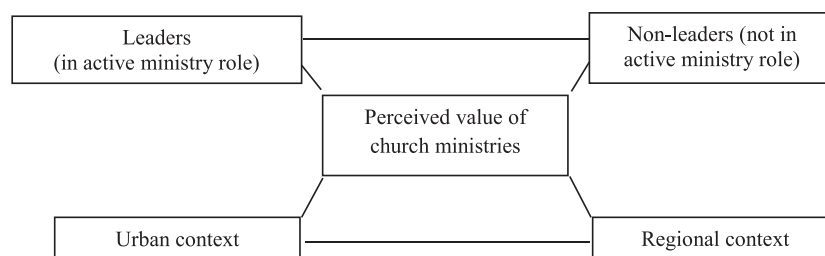

FIGURE 1 Conceptual framework

it can be implied that a person can gain Christian knowledge and gather emotional support through prayer and bible reading or listening to sermons online (Jansen et al., 2010). Although attending church or not is independent of a person's salvation, it is strongly implied that attending church in a local assembly (e.g., purpose-built church) run by ordained ministers honours God and it is what believers are called to do (e.g., Langton, 2014).

Although church attendance is frequently measured as part of religiosity (Benda & Toombs, 2000; Woodroof, 1985), religiosity represents a deeper commitment to religious beliefs and values such as a belief in God, personal prayer, and the dissemination of the gospel (Corwyn & Benda, 2000; Granger, Nhat Lu, Conduit, Veale, & Habel, 2014). A person can, therefore, attend church without a personal belief in God. Conversely, although Christians may exhibit high religiosity, these people may not attend church frequently due to reasons such as they feel an outdated style is employed and/or an incorrect theological stance is utilised by church ministers (McCrindle Research, 2013). Christian believers may, therefore, consider alternative methods such as listening to messages available online (Jansen et al., 2010) or attending bible studies with friends and family (e.g., Benda & Toombs, 2000). In fact, owing to the diversity of ministries available to people, attracting and retaining church attendees is one of the most difficult and pressing issues for churches today (Webb, 2012).

There has also been an increase in the number of atheists or people that adhere to no religion (Hirschle, 2010; McCrindle Research, 2014), which has decreased church attendance over the past few decades. Furthermore, people may choose to not adhere to the Christian faith or attend church for a variety of reasons. First, a sermon can be perceived as long, boring, and irrelevant. Second, there may be a huge focus on money preached within church. Third, people in churches can be viewed as hypocritical. Fourth, churches impose rules and regulations that make an attendee feel guilty if they do not adhere to these practices (Mueller, 2016).

3.3 | Perceived value of church

A church, like any organisation, is required to provide something of value to attract attendees to experience their offerings (Webb, 2012; Webb et al., 1998). Zeithaml (1988, p. 4) definition that perceived value can be viewed as a "consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perception of what is received and what is given" can be employed within a church context. Specifically, church attendees will perceive positive value when the benefits of attending church and experiencing church ministries are greater than the perceived costs (Bolton & Drew, 1991; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001) of experiencing ministries irrelevant or deemed inappropriate by a church attendee.

Although church ministries can be co-produced by church attendees such as prayer and worship, church will usually comprise of a sermon as preached by a minister or a guest speaker. This message has traditionally been the focus of church because the early foundations of the Christian Church as outlined in the New Testament of the Holy Bible and the adherence to specific doctrine has been identified as a driver of attendance and the potential for the development of ministry leaders (Chand, 2015; Sanders, 1967). However, other church elements can be perceived as relevant or more important to churches or their attendees on the basis of a variety of reasons (Tkaczynski, Arli, & Hussey, 2017). For example, the taking of communion is essential for Catholics, whereas contemporary worship music and baptisms may be more relevant for Protestant Baptists. Families with young children are also thought to be drawn to churches with child-orientated ministries such as childminding and Sunday school (Langton, 2014). Churches such as the Salvation Army that focus on social aid can also attract people that wish to volunteer in the community (Brewer, Jozefowicz, & Stonebraker, 2006; Gibson, 2008).

National Church Survey Research (2012) identified from their Australian census data that the four most valued aspects of their church were as follows: preaching or bible teaching, traditional worship or music, sharing in communion, and practical care for one another. In addition to providing purpose and guidance (Mueller, 2016) through the different ministries available, church can also provide an attendee with first an opportunity for praising God, second personal and spiritual development, and third the chance for encouragement and socialisation amongst friends and family (Langton, 2014). Church attendance can also provide mental and spiritual health benefits (Brown, 2009; Koenig et al., 1993). For example, Gallup (2007) analysed 562 American adults that attended church or a synagogue at least monthly and identified that spiritual growth and guidance, and keeps me grounded/inspired as the most important reason for church attendance.

3.4 | Church constraints

Regardless of their size or denomination, many churches will have constraints that will limit their current and future ministry potential. For example, human resource constraints, particularly identifying, nurturing, and retaining church leaders, are some of the greatest challenges faced by the church today (Chand, 2015; Sanders, 1967). It was recently estimated that over 1,700 pastors leave the ministry each year, and approximately only 10% of ministers will retire as a minister in some form (Fuller Institute George Barns and Pastoral Care Inc, 2009). Issues such as conflict with elders and the general church, depression, low pay, and incongruent ministry focuses are common pains that a church leader will experience at some time in their ministry (Chand, 2015).

Church ministry is greatly volunteer orientated. Many church attendees will perform roles voluntarily such as performing worship music or leading youth group as a ministry role (Brewer et al., 2006; Gibson, 2008). However, volunteers that may be heavily involved in one of several ministries may only have a limited window of opportunity to perform these roles. Volunteers, like paid staff, can also be problematic due to a certain level of maturity that is required to share a common church vision regardless of their own agenda or interests. Conversely, although their passion may remain, family and other employment responsibilities can limit what time they can give to their local church (Tkaczynski et al., 2017).

Location constraints are a relevant issue, particularly for regional churches. For example, a pressing concern in sparsely populated countries such as Australia is that young leaders that are located in nonurban areas may relocate to the city after completing high school

for better employment or study options. Once employed or the necessary skills are obtained, these leaders may never relocate back to their home town (Heywire, 2013; Hillman, 2007). Thus, although this younger cohort is particularly relevant for future church ministries and can be trained by their leaders (Adair, 2005), regional churches can face the "vicious cycle" where trained leaders will take their skills with them to their new location and potential new church.

Finances can also be a major church ministry constraint. Within the Holy Bible, it is noted that Jesus Christ spoke more about money and possessions than faith, heaven and hell, largely due to the potential idol that money can present (e.g., Matthew 6: 24 New International Version). Financial giving is frequently negatively portrayed within media, which is a major deterrent to church attendance (e.g., Mueller, 2016). Not surprisingly, declining church attendance has negatively impacted the amount of giving (Azzi & Ehrenberg, 1975; Iannaccone & Everton, 2004) that can limit the budget of church ministries. Less obvious, however, is the potential decreasing of tithing amongst Christians that are regular church attenders. As tithing (10% of a person's income) is largely a personal, confidential payment that an attendee offers to a church, it can be hard for church leaders to monitor changes in financial giving. This has also be compounded with the increasing usage of electronic giving implying that a congregational attendee is not required to place money in an offering bag regardless of whether they have given or not for the financial period (e.g., week and fortnight).

An alternative financial constraint is that although churches have leadership skills and many megachurches may have accountants and financial planners, church ministers in smaller churches that may wish to offer new ministries or to expand via building new, larger premises may not have the financial expertise to successfully manage development (Chand, 2015). Consequently, although the leadership teams motivations might be godly and venerable, unexpected financial costs (e.g., land value and infrastructure) or poor planning for future years can seriously limit a church's success (Chand, 2015; Malphurs, 2005).

4 | METHODOLOGY

4.1 | Census information

To fulfil the aims of this research (see Figure 1), this study analysed data (n = 8,000) from the Australian 2011 National Church Life Survey. These census data are collected once every 5 years across all Christian church denominations within Australia and aims to builds a church attendee profile. It is also employed to compare and contrast results from the Australian National Government (Australian Bureau of Statistics) Census data. In 2011, it was estimated that there were 11.2 million females (50.2%) and 11.1 million males (49.8%) residing in Australia. Further, 14.7 million people (66%) lived in urban locations. There were more females (50.4%) than males (49.6%) residing in urban locations. Conversely, more males (50.1%) than females (48.7%) lived in regional locations (ABS, 2012). Approximately two thirds (67.4%) of Australians were aged between 15 and 64, with the proportion of people aged over 65 is 13.7% (ABS, 2011). Almost three quarters (72%) of people aged 25 to 29 years resided in urban locations in

2011. Conversely, those aged between 70 and 74 had the lowest proportion of urban dwellers (60%) (ABS, 2012).

4.2 | Research design

The questionnaire was quantitative, and the researcher had no input into the questionnaire design. Church ministries of current and future importance were measured in a binary "yes" or "no" format. Respondents were asked to list up to three of the most important ministries for each question. Several profiling variables were analysed that included behaviour (e.g., active ministry role and church frequency) and demographics (age, ethnicity, and gender) that were all categorical. To measure a respondent's usual place of residence, the researcher tabulated respondents' postcodes and then categorised respondents into either urban or rural on the basis of local government divisions that are outlined within the Australian postcodes. Chi-squared analysis was employed to measure differences in the perceived value of church ministries between leaders and nonleaders in both an urban and regional context.

4.3 | Data collection process

Through employing a nonrandom convenience sampling technique, the data collection process commenced when a church contact instructed their congregation to complete an anonymous paper-based self-administered questionnaire on-site after church. This day of data collection was not known by the congregation in advance. If the attendee was visiting a church on the day of data collection, they were asked to answer this questionnaire on the basis of their evaluation of their usual church. Once the questionnaires were completed and handed back to the church contact, the questionnaires were then mailed to National Church Life Survey in Sydney for analysis. A questionnaire could also be taken away from the church location and anonymously mailed to National Church Life Survey by an individual church attendee. Due to the confidential nature of the data collection procedure and the potential for church attendees on the day of data collection leaving the church without completing the questionnaire or refusing to hand it into the data collector, it was difficult to measure response rates. However, all surveys in this study (n = 8,000) were usable.

5 | RESULTS

It was concluded that *Anglican* (27.1%), *Catholic* (26.1%), and *Baptist* (12.8%) represented the largest denomination upon where respondents attended church. Most (64.9%) attended their church *weekly*, with a high focus of a *growing belongingness* to their specific church as a driver of attendance. The majority were of *Australian ethnicity* (68.0%), aged between *50* and *69* (33.4%), and were *female* (57.1%). Although the degree of completed education varied amongst respondents, the most popular category was a *bachelor's degree* (21.3%). Many (65.0%) are *married*, and approximately a half (50.5%) are *employed*. Nearly a half of respondents (48.8%) are currently involved in a *leadership role*, and most were within an *urban* (59.7%) area of Australia.

When comparing (see all columns in Table 1) the leaders with nonleaders, there were significant differences between both groups for all current ministries except for *wider community care* (p = .087) and *social activities* (p = .189). The two ministries listed as most important were *sermons* and *communion* for both leaders and nonleaders, although leaders rated sermons considerably higher (40.8%, p = .00). Interestingly, *small groups* (26.6%) and *contemporary music* (23.7%) were regarded as noticeably more vital for leaders (p = .00), whereas *traditional worship* (23.7%) was most relevant for nonleaders (p = .00). *Building a greater sense of community* reflected a very important ministry role (p = .085) for the future for both leaders (29.6%) and nonleaders (29.2%). *Encouraging use of gifts* was statistically significant (p = .000), whereas the highest ranked future ministry for church leaders (33.7%) was the third highest ministry for nonleaders (23.6%). Importantly, all items were rated higher for church leaders except for *social justice and aid* (14.1%) and *planting new ventures* (6.9%) that were evaluated as marginally more important by nonleaders.

In comparing the urban and regional church ministry differences (see Table 1), it was concluded that *sermons* and *communion* were the two most important current ministries for both leaders and nonleaders,

regardless of the geographic location. Conversely, *wider community care* and *social activities* were ranked again as nonsignificant across both leaders and nonleaders and were also deemed amongst the lowest in important for current ministries for both regional and urban churches. Furthermore, the rankings of the most important items were relatively similar across both contexts (e.g., *reaching nonreached*, and *prayer*) and similarly to finding in the previous paragraph, leaders and nonleaders for urban churches had 11 of the 13 current ministries significantly different amongst both attendee types in a church. However, some differences were noted. Within an urban church, *preaching* (44.4%) was rated as higher than the overall average (40.8%). It was also concluded that nonleaders regarded *traditional worship* (23.1%) and *communion* (32.0%) and *prayer* (26.0%) as more important than the leaders within an urban church. *Communion* was classed as the most important ministry in a regional church for both leaders (39.9%) and nonleaders (36.8%) and was not statistically significant amongst these groups (p = .385). Furthermore, lower ranked current ministries of significant differences for urban churches (*reaching nonreached*, *opening to cultural diversity*, and *presence of a school/preschool*) were ranked similarly for leaders and nonleaders within a regional context.

TABLE 1 Church ministry

	All			Urban			Regional		
	Leaders (%)	Nonleaders (%)	Chi-squared sig.	Nonleaders (%)	Attendees (%)	Chi-squared sig.	Leaders (%)	Nonleaders (%)	Chi-squared sig.
Most important current ministry									
Sermons	40.8	32.8	.000**	44.4	35.3	.000**	36.1	29.9	.007*
Communion	32.8	33.7	.025*	28.5	32.0	.000**	39.9	36.8	.385 NS
Small groups	26.6	11.8	.000**	28.4	12.6	.000**	24.6	10.4	.000**
Practical care	26.3	20.2	.000**	25.4	18.8	.000**	27.6	22.8	.025*
Praying for one another	24.9	27.1	.001*	24.4	26.0	.031*	26.0	29.6	.008*
Contemporary worship	23.7	17.1	.000**	24.8	17.5	.000**	23.1	17.2	.001*
Children/youth ministry	19.1	12.5	.000**	20.7	13.3	.000**	16.8	11.8	.001*
Traditional worship	18.6	23.7	.000**	17.7	23.1	.000**	20.1	24.9	.001*
Wider community care	17.3	18.0	.087 NS	18.3	19.3	.111 NS	16.2	15.6	.502 NS
Reaching nonreached	13.9	10.8	.001*	14.8	10.6	.000**	12.7	11.0	.315 NS
Social activities	11.2	11.6	.189 NS	11.6	12.0	.310 NS	10.2	10.8	.417 NS
Opening to cultural diversity	10.4	11.6	.021*	12.0	13.5	.033*	7.8	8.7	.293 NS
Presence of a school/preschool	6.3	9.4	.000**	4.8	9.3	.000**	8.6	8.7	.261 NS
Greatest ministry for the future									
Encouraging use of gifts	33.7	23.6	.000**	33.4	23.0	.000**	34.7	22.2	.000**
Building a sense of community	29.6	29.2	.085 NS	30.5	29.6	.338 NS	27.5	28.0	.148 NS
Spiritual growth	29.6	23.7	.000**	30.3	25.4	.025*	28.3	20.7	.001*
Ensuring inclusion	28.7	21.2	.000**	30.6	21.4	.000**	27.0	21.1	.013*
Nurturing worship	22.3	22.2	.107 NS	21.5	22.8	.020*	24.3	22.4	.875 NS
Encouraging faith sharing	21.0	13.4	.000**	21.5	13.3	.000**	20.5	14.1	.001*
Creating clear vision	20.5	15.3	.000**	20.4	14.9	.000**	20.8	16.4	.046*
Ministry to children/youth	19.1	18.1	.742 NS	19.0	17.5	.863 NS	19.8	19.3	.581 NS
Growing larger	17.6	16.6	.824 NS	16.8	16.3	.536 NS	19.5	17.1	.488 NS
Social justice and aid	14.1	16.0	.000**	14.7	16.4	.010*	13.1	15.8	.007*
Encouraging new approaches	13.4	8.9	.000**	13.3	9.8	.005*	13.5	8.0	.000**
Planting new ventures	6.9	7.6	.059 NS	7.6	7.5	.569 NS	5.6	7.6	.012*

*p < 0.05 (significant).

**p < 0.001 (highly significant).

NS = not significant.

The greatest ministry priorities for the future was similar across both urban and regional locations when compared with the overall research findings (see Table 1). *Encouraging use of gifts* was again the most important future ministry, whereas planting new ventures was again ranked the lowest for both urban and regional churches. Interestingly, *spiritual growth*, although still significantly significant for both urban and regional attendees, was rated slightly lower for regional nonleaders (20.7%) in comparison to urban nonleaders (25.4%). *Nurturing worship*, although also significantly different for urban churches, was insignificant in a regional context, as it was more important for leaders in regional contexts (24.3% as opposed to 21.5%). Despite being evaluated as the least important ministry focus for the future, *planting new ventures* was rated slightly more important for urban (7.6%) as opposed to regional (5.6%) leaders. This future ministry mirrored the urban church attendee rating; consequently, it was statistically insignificant for this group ($p = .569$).

6 | CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR RELIGIOUS NONPROFIT ORGANISATIONS

This study has contributed to the nonprofit marketing literature by identifying the perceived value of church ministries of leaders and nonleaders within both urban and regional contexts. Through employing market segmentation (Dibb et al., 2002; Dolnicar & Lazarevski, 2009) within a nonprofit setting (church), religious marketers can profile and target attendees (e.g., leaders and/or nonleaders) of relevance to them. Ultimately, positioning strategies focusing on core Christian ministries associated with the particular denomination could be beneficial for these religious nonprofit marketers to attract and interest their relevant church segments.

6.1 | Church segment is middle-aged, educated, female, and married

This research defined a typical Australian church attendee as middle-aged, educated, female, and married. This mirrors previous research conducted in America (e.g., Aaron et al., 2003; Brown, 2009). This study also determined that Australian church attendees have a sense of belonging in their current church and attend frequently that mirrors previous Australian research findings (Granger et al., 2014). As expected, these findings do not correlate with Australian census data that showcase that gender is relatively equal and people are elderly (e.g., ABS, 2011, 2012). Consequently, church marketers when designing and marketing new and current ministries need to realise that church attendees are very different from the public. To maximise potential return on investment (financial and human resource input), religious marketers must first focus on church ministries of relevance to their targeted church segment and second employ promotional strategies that are of relevance to the demographics and behavioural characteristics to continually attract and retain church attendees. For market segmentation to be purposeful, segments need to be targeted that are substantial, accessible, and actionable (Kotler, 1980). Although ministries such as sermons and youth are for all attendees, further

providing support groups such as bible studies, ladies groups, and childminding for the largely female, middle-aged cohort may continually attract this segment to attend and participate in church ministries over time (e.g., Lawson, 2006).

6.2 | Half the church attendees are leaders

A major contribution that relates to segmentation (e.g., Dolnicar & Lazarevski, 2009; Harvey, 1990) is that almost half of church attendees are defined as leaders in this study. With the identification, development, and nurturing of church leaders being one of the most pressing issues that the church faces today (Forman, Jones, & Miller, 2007; Weems, 2010), religious marketers need to understand that when considering the design of specific ministries, a high percentage of attendees will likely be required to participate in them in a paid or volunteer capacity. Consequently, churches or missionary groups can focus on the benefits of co-producing these church ministries (e.g., Lusch & Vargo, 2011; Vargo & Lusch, 2004) when planning for the future. Testimonials such as the perceived value that participating in a specific ministry such as serving in a missionary team provided to an individual and the importance of human resources in this ministry for its survival can be promoted in church notices or on the church website. This increases the level of exposure of a ministry to a church attendee, in following the Attention, Interest, Desire, Action model, and may also entice interest, desire, and eventual participation in the promoted ministry in the future (e.g., Stevens, Loudon, Wrenn, & Cole, 2012).

Due to the potential leadership (e.g., burnout and disinterest) or church (e.g., financial and human resource) constraints, churches need to carefully consider what ministries to focus upon in their planning. Sermons are the core component of church for most denominations (Cameron, 1999), and this ministry is usually performed by a paid minister. However, other ministries such as youth group, young adults, and music, which were identified as relevant in this study to leaders, are highly labour and time intensive and are usually performed by volunteers, particularly those that are young (Tkaczynski et al., 2017). Church planting ventures and social aid also require extensive human resources due to their outward, external focus away from the current daily operations of the usual church (Sanders, 1967). This may suggest why these ministries are, although important, listed towards the bottom of the ministry focuses for leaders. Therefore, to motivate leaders to participate in ministry, church leaders and associated nonprofit organisations should continually focus on the sermon, worship music, and younger-orientated ministries when designing internal church marketing strategies.

6.3 | Leaders and nonleaders perceive the value of church ministries differently

A major research contribution is that major differences existed between leaders and nonleaders in their evaluation of the perceived values of church ministries (e.g., Zeithaml, 1988). Sermons and communion rate as the highest ministries of current focus for both groups of people, regardless of their urban or regional context. Essentially, the sermon can be identified as the key component of church that replicates the focus in church-based leadership modules (e.g., Maxwell, 1998; Sanders, 1967). However, the discovery that the sermon in

combination with both communion and prayer is incredibly important for nonleaders not involved in ministries. This is a noteworthy and positive finding. Although Australian church leaders may feel discouraged that church attendance is declining, the fact that Australians are attending church for these three ministries suggests that church attendees are motivated to learn, express their faith, and help each other that represent the essence of Christianity. Although atheism and agnosticism is on the rise in Australia (e.g., McCrindle Research, 2013; McCrindle Research, 2014) and religious marketers should not exclude these nonbelievers when considering segmentation strategies, it is imperative that nonprofit organisations such as churches do not lose sight of their Christian mission. Rather, these nonprofit organisations should continually focus on Christianity and its relevant activities when designing promotional messages.

A ministry concern identified from this research is that leaders and nonleaders rate the perceived value of small groups differently. Small groups such as bible studies managed by leaders can further both a leader and a nonleader's spiritual growth. They also provide an opportunity for the church attendee to offer hospitality and to socialise and meet like-minded people (Lawson, 2006; Rysenburger & Lamport, 2008). Consequently, due to the perceived value of this ministry, ministers will push for their congregation to participate in this ministry (Gorman, 1993). As nonleaders rate this ministry significantly lower than their leader counterparts, churches need to promote to the nonleaders (e.g., Christians and non-Christians) the noted benefits outlined above of attending a small group. Through promoting the need to be involved and frequently attend a small group may also limit church decline and disinterest in Christianity (e.g., Mueller, 2016) through feeling part of the congregation instead of a passive onlooker. Participating in small groups may also further church attendees health benefits such as decreased stress, purpose in life, and emotional support (Abbotts et al., 2004; Koenig et al., 1993).

Contemporary worship music has grown in prominence in certain denominations such as Protestant Pentecostals and Baptists in Westernised countries over the past few decades (e.g., Connell, 2005; Koziol, 2015). Although identified as a relatively important ministry within this study, it was concluded that leaders place a higher value on contemporary music whereas the congregation value more traditional forms of worship. As the majority of respondents were middle-aged, it could be tentatively assumed that church attendees not involved in ministry are comfortable with the traditional music that is currently performed as it might be nostalgic and represents their generation (e.g., Barnett, Bass, & Brown, 1996; Routledge et al., 2011). Conversely, church attendees within ministry roles such as worship and youth are predominantly younger (Tkaczynski et al., 2017) and may value more contemporary music as this is that they currently listen to and is what is relevant to them.

As music is one of the most visible elements of a church and is what has enabled megachurches to be successful (Connell, 2005; Koziol, 2015), leaders may place greater focus on this ministry as an outward sign to the church and the wider community that the church is resourceful. However, the focus on music needs to be carefully considered. Although contemporary worship has many benefits such as providing entertainment and emotional church support for all church attendees, sermons and small groups traditionally represent the groundings of Christianity. Furthermore, focusing exclusively on contemporary music might isolate the middle-aged to older generation or those not interested in music. This would represent a major limitation of church-based segmentation with middle-aged people representing the largest church attendee segment. These people will also be more likely to financially contribute to a church and have the necessary managerial skills to offer their church. At the same time, to remain increasingly relevant to society, churches need to not "rest on their laurels" and ensure that their music ministry does not stagnate and is still relevant. Consequently, nonprofit organisations such as churches need to consider music as an important element of their church ministry to complement a sermon and communion. To ensure that the contemporary music ministry remains up-to-date and relevant, leaders in music ministry roles must introduce new music whilst also maintaining older songs to satisfy all within their congregation.

Leaders rated the majority of future ministries (91.6%) as more important than nonleaders. As ministers (e.g., head pastors) are keen to identify, train, and equip church attendees with the necessary leadership skills to perform ministries in church (Forman et al., 2007; Weems, 2010), the high focus on the encouraging use of gifts can be validated. Building a sense of community was very important for both groups that suggest that an external focus on discipleship and encouraging each other is important for churches represents the essence of Christianity. An implication for future segmentation research is for religious marketers to segment their church leaders into different segments on the basis of their current ministry role (e.g., worship music or youth group). Although these leaders may be committed to Christianity, the church, and their ministry, providing insights into how a church may consider positioning itself in the future on specific ministries may be important for gaining internal support. Additionally, considering asking leaders for input into church direction may improve their perceived value as part of the church congregation.

6.4 | Urban and regional contexts are irrelevant in determining the perceived value of church ministries

This research determined that church attendees rated the perceived value of church ministries similarly regardless of their urban or regional location. Therefore, although it can be anecdotally argued that that churches in regional towns may struggle with human resource constraints due to their smaller size and less potential for growth, the ministry focuses of the church is the same for all churches, regardless of context. It was noted, however, that that regional leaders rated communion considerably higher than the urban counterparts. It could be argued that the focus on communion is particularly relevant in Australia where traditional churches that uphold this tradition (e.g., Anglican and Catholic) are located everywhere, whereas Pentecostals (e.g., Australian Christian Churches) that have a large presence in urban locations are not quite as large or dominant in regional locations. In addition, other ministries such as strong preaching and openness to cultural diversity could be more important in urban contexts due to the competition and large variety of cultures that have traditionally migrated to urban contexts (e.g., Melbourne [Victoria] and Sydney [New South Wales]). Consequently, geographic segmentation that is employed to profile people into different segments on the basis of

their usual place of residence (Moscardo, Pearce, & Morrison, 2001; Tkaczynski & Rundle-Thiele, 2013) is irrelevant within this study. Rather psychographics (e.g., perceived value) and demographics (e.g., age and gender) should be the focus of research for future Australian church-based segmentation studies.

7 | LIMITATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Overall, this study has produced some initial findings that will benefit nonprofit marketing academics and practitioners. However, it is not without its limitations. Although this study has successfully compared and contrasted church leaders with nonleaders, it has not aimed to identify the different ministry roles of respondents nor whether these leaders are in a paid or volunteer capacity. Therefore, senior ministers in a paid position might have very differing views of ministries of perceived value than a junior member of the church worship team or youth group that is performing their ministry in a voluntary role. Future nonprofit segmentation research could aim to identify the different perception of ministry importance amongst leaders in various dominations across various age and gender cohorts.

Due to the anonymity of the data collection process, this research was unable to compare the sizes of the churches or the specific locations where the respondents' usually attend. Although specific numbers cannot be accurately measured through census data, researchers have the opportunity to segment churches into different categories on the basis of size such as small, medium, or large. This process could determine if the ministries of importance and the number of people within ministry (paid or volunteer) vary on the basis of the size of the church.

Third, although this research has employed valid secondary data for this research, the measurement of perceived value in this study has limitations. The perceived value of current and future ministries was identified but was unable to determine the ministries' importance rankings. Although perceived value is multidimensional (Lusch & Vargo, 2011; Vargo & Lusch, 2004), determining the level of importance of specific ministry items is also relevant for nonprofit organisations when designing segmentation and positioning strategies. For example, although prayer was deemed very relevant within this study, it could be a hygiene factor (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959) that needs to be in place in church. It might add perceived value to a church experience, but research could determine whether it is a major driver of attendance and need to be included in promotional strategies. As only three options of perceived value could be provided by respondents, prayer's importance can be undervalued in this research whereas communion's importance could be overestimated in certain denominations. Consequently, future questionnaires could be designed where respondents are asked to rank the order of importance of ministries from highest to lowest.

An opportunity is for qualitative research to be conducted on the perceived value of church ministries as perceived by leaders, nonleaders, and nonattending church people. Although the research includes a structured questionnaire with predetermined closed questions, some of these ministries (e.g., wider communities, social activities, spiritual growth, and nurturing worship) may be misunderstood or unknown by people not strongly affiliated with Christianity and/or not within a ministry role when answering the questionnaire. Through providing in-depth research with a variety of groups, greater understanding of these ministries and what these ministries mean to specific segments could be valuable for nonprofit organisations such as churches. Further, a study could be designed to test whether a decision to focus ministries on a specific segment could improve return on investment (e.g., human resources). An experimental design would permit testing a current ministry focus against what has previously been employed. Through using a longitudinal research design where leaders and/or nonleaders are interviewed at two different time periods (e.g., 6 months apart) would provide insight into church value segmentation strategies. This process would also determine whether the perceived value of ministries change with time (e.g., belongingness and spiritual growth), regardless of a person's potential ministry role or location.

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