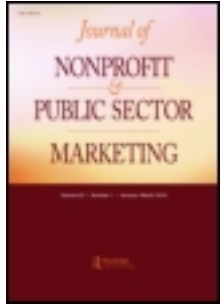


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### Appealing to the Unchurched: What Attracts New Members?

Barbara Carrick Coleman <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> College of Business Administration, Augusta State University, Augusta, GA, 30904 E-mail: [bcoleman@aug.edu](mailto:bcoleman@aug.edu)

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# Appealing to the Unchurched: What Attracts New Members?

Barbara Carrick Coleman

**ABSTRACT.** The exploratory study that is the subject of this paper examines the importance of ten church service and program variables in the decision by members of different age cohorts to join a church. Variables that were investigated included aspects of the worship service; adult, children and senior education programs; and recreational activities. Two additional variables, denominational loyalty and the desire to be part of a spiritual community, were also investigated. Chi-square tests were used to evaluate the significance of each program as well as elements of the worship service. In addition, sources of information that members used prior to the first visit were examined. The most important resource was word-of-mouth. There were 460 respondents who were members of Southern Baptist and Unitarian Universalist churches located throughout the South and Southwest. [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <getinfo@haworthpressinc.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2002 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]

**KEYWORDS.** Church marketing, assessment of church programs, exchange model, relationship marketing, sources of information, age segmentation, denominational loyalty

## INTRODUCTION

The application of marketing techniques by religious organizations to attract new followers is a relatively recent phenomenon. The justifi-

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Barbara Carrick Coleman, PhD, is Associate Professor of Marketing, College of Business Administration, Augusta State University, Augusta, GA 30904 (E-mail: [bcoleman@aug.edu](mailto:bcoleman@aug.edu)).

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cation for this interest is a concern over the decline in membership in many established Protestant denominations. Several denominations have lost as much as 34 percent of their members between 1970 and 1995. Moreover, singles and men are especially likely segments to disappear from church rosters (Webb et al. 1998). British churches have experienced a similar decline (Sherman and Devlin 2000). As a consequence, strategies and tactics that may have been deemed inappropriate at one time now are being considered and often applied by many churches.

Articles on church marketing are also beginning to appear in the marketing literature. The topics of this nascent literature tend to be either theoretical pieces that decry the lack of a business orientation on the part of church administration, or surveys of the marketing techniques, if any, that various churches currently employ. An early contribution authored by Moncrief, Lamb and Hart in 1986 examined which mass media churches in the United States used and concluded that the majority limited their advertising to the Yellow Pages. Current research suggests a modest increase in communications efforts. For example, in their recent study of British clergy, Sherman and Devlin (2000) observed that the interest of both U.S. and U.K. clergy in marketing activities is increasing, albeit at dissimilar rates. British clergy are more likely to disapprove of any activity, even telephoning church members, that could be perceived as a marketing effort.

#### Becoming Customer Focused

Research on services, either as supplements to products or as products themselves, emphasizes the importance of adopting a customer focus. Successful firms will have identified the essential elements of customer satisfaction and will have met them more successfully than the competition. This attention to customer satisfaction represents a shift in focus from generating one-time transactions to building long-term relationships. While this model has become the gospel of for-profit service firms, it has been adopted more slowly by religious organizations. Many assume either that attending to individual needs will come at the cost of church doctrine and religious beliefs, or that long-standing church traditions will be abandoned and replaced with pop culture diversions (Cimino and Lattin 1999).

In response to concerns that marketing applications will secularize church tenets, Horne and McAuley (1999) argue marketing activities are unavoidable especially given the diversity of church attendees and

the level of competition provided not only by other churches but also by a variety of leisure activities. The authors suggest that the exchange model as developed by Stevens and Loudon (1992) be applied to the relationship between the church and its members. The exchange model states that two or more parties will interact as long as each determines that it is receiving something of equal or greater value from the other. In the case of the church its relationship with its members is viewed as a process that begins with the identification of what members value and concludes with the delivery of programs in response to identified needs. Specifically, the exchange relationship is a process that consists of four steps: (1) understanding what members value, (2) creating programs in response, (3) providing information, and (4) delivering programs based on what members value.

A topic that has not been adequately addressed in the discussion of step one of the exchange process is the earliest interaction between visitors and individual churches, specifically, identifying which elements of the initial encounter are most responsible for converting visitors into members. For example, it is not known how potential members approach and evaluate churches and their programs, or whether certain attributes are more important than others in attracting new members. While an exploratory study conducted by Mehta and Mehta (1995) did identify aspects of church services that were most valued by a convenience sample of their college students, its purpose was not to examine the preferences of new members. Ultimately, churches that desire long-term relationships with members will recognize that the process begins with the first visit and that the needs and expectations of newcomers may be different from those of longer term members.

Evidence to support the importance of managing the early experience of visitors is found in the success of newer, nondenominational churches that use less conventional techniques for attracting new members. For example, Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Illinois, has built a following in excess of 14,000 by recognizing that members and nonmembers have different needs. The church recognizes that to appeal to nonmembers it must design services that are nonthreatening and entertaining. The services are designed specifically for the unchurched and include contemporary music and dance and drama. Services do not include appeals to join or give money. While the tactics of Willow Creek may not work for more traditional denominations, the important point is that Willow Creek recognizes that the process of creating long-term relationships with its members begins with

the conversion of nonmembers, and that the expectations and needs of nonmembers—specifically, the unchurched—are different (Mellado 1991).

### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Many of the articles that have investigated church marketing have examined it from the point of view of church administration. Few studies have approached the topic from the consumer's point of view. In response, this exploratory study addresses the need for a better understanding of what motivates individuals to visit and ultimately join a church. More specifically, as the first step in building a relationship between an individual and church is the first visit, this study investigates the sources new members use to identify churches to visit. It then examines which aspects of church programs or services new members value most.

#### The Potential Impact of Age

Accounts of churches that have been successful in increasing their membership suggest that growth is often a function of the wise use of demographic data. For example, age has been used as a variable for analyzing communities and developing programs for the largest cohort. While this often means targeting Baby Boomers, a number of churches have developed niche strategies that focus on seniors or teenagers ("New Church Uses" 1993; Miller 1998). In order to refine these strategies and to clarify differences, additional information on each age group is still required. For example, Horne and McAuley (1999) conclude that individuals are loyal to the denomination to which they are exposed as children. Wellner (2001) notes, however, that in the United States young adults in their twenties and early thirties treat religion as they would any other consumer product and comparison shop until they find an offering that meets or exceeds their personal requirements. The decision process includes comparison with leisure activities as varied as going to bars and the theater as well as more traditional religious activities. Moreover, Wellner has observed that the synagogues and churches that have been successful in attracting young adults are often those that provide unconventional settings, such as nightclubs, where individuals can explore issues of faith in the company of other young adults.

In light of the interest in age as a segmentation variable, the data used in this study will be analyzed from that perspective. Sources of informa-

tion that different age groups use in selecting churches to visit will be examined. In addition the importance of several aspects of church services and activities to each group will be analyzed.

Finally, two additional variables, denominational loyalty and the need to be part of a spiritual community, will be investigated. Denominational loyalty explores the impact of early religious experience on adult decisions to join a particular denomination. The second variable measures the importance of membership in a spiritual community. Because current literature is unclear about the role of each variable in shaping behavior, this study will examine their impact on the decision to join a church.

## METHODS

To accomplish the objectives of the study, a questionnaire was developed to measure the variables of interest. Specific items for the questionnaire were developed after interviews with area pastors of Southern Baptist and Unitarian Universalist churches. After the questionnaire was developed, members of the Metro Ministers Association, which is an organization of pastors of Southern Baptist Churches with memberships of fifteen hundred or more persons, were asked to participate in a survey of members who had joined their churches in the past year. Thirteen pastors from seven Southern states agreed. Eight hundred surveys were distributed and 229 usable surveys were returned. Six Unitarian Universalist fellowships from four Southern states also participated. Of 600 surveys that were distributed to individuals who had been members for one year or less, 231 usable surveys were returned. Total sample size was 460.

The first part of the questionnaire asked respondents about their initial decision to join a church and included a question on sources they had consulted in deciding to visit a church for the first time. The sources were (1) friend or relative, (2) newspaper, (3) television, (4) the Yellow Pages, (5) radio, (6) drove by and liked what I saw, (7) the Internet, and (8) other. Respondents were asked to pick only one source of information.

Respondents also evaluated elements of the Sunday service and other aspects of church life that were important in their decision to join a particular church. Ten service and program elements will be examined in this paper; they are (1) the worship service, (2) adult education programs, (3) children and youth programs, (4) senior adult programs,

(5) sports and activities, (6) music programs, (7) importance of the sermon, (8) the importance of service music, (9) denominational loyalty, and (10) desire to be part of a spiritual community. A second part of the questionnaire asked respondents for demographic information.

Chi-square tests are used to inspect the distribution of answers to all items except for the first question which asks respondents to indicate which source of information they first consulted in the decision to visit a particular church. As the subsequent array of responses across age cohorts does not provide the required minimum of five observations for more than 50 percent of the cells, chi-square analysis is not appropriate. Responses to the first question, therefore, are summarized but are not subjected to statistical analysis.

## RESULTS

### Sample Characteristics

Four hundred fifty-four respondents provided gender information; 271 (59 percent) were women and 183 (40 percent) were men. The number of respondents in each age cohort was distributed as follows: age 18-25: 30 (7 percent), age 26-35: 105 (23 percent), age 36-45: 91 (20 percent), age 46-55: 104 (23 percent), age 56-65: 54 (12 percent), age 66 and older: 67 (15 percent). Age data were missing for nine respondents.

### Sources of Information

Table 1 reports the extent to which the eight sources of information were used by the respondents in each age cohort when they chose a particular church to visit.

As 49 percent of first visits were initiated by friends and relatives, word-of-mouth was the most important initial resource for all age groups. Other (21 percent) was the second most frequently cited resource. The responses most often provided with this choice were a variety of church sponsored social events followed by contact with the minister. When combined, these two items suggest that 70 percent of the time the initial exchange with the church is a consequence of the respondents' contact with members or friends of the church. An additional 33 individuals (7 percent) made the decision to visit as a consequence of driving by the church and liking what they saw.

TABLE 1. Sources of Information Respondents Use When Choosing to Visit a Church

SOURCE	AGE COHORT						Totals
	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	Over 65	
Friend/Relative	14 (47%)	56 (53%)	46 (51%)	46 (44%)	25 (47%)	35 (53%)	222
Newspaper	1 (3%)	1 (1%)	2 (2%)	3 (3%)	3 (6%)	2 (3%)	12
Television	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	3 (3%)	2 (2%)	3 (6%)	2 (3%)	11
Yellow Pages	1 (3%)	15 (14%)	13 (14%)	9 (9%)	6 (11%)	4 (6%)	48
Radio	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3
Drove by	4 (13%)	10 (10%)	4 (4%)	10 (10%)	3 (6%)	2 (3%)	33
Internet	2 (7%)	4 (4%)	7 (8%)	11 (11%)	0 (0%)	4 (6%)	28
Other	8 (27%)	18 (17%)	16 (18%)	20 (19%)	13 (25%)	17 (26%)	92

In contrast with the 314 respondents who relied on personal sources of information, 102 respondents decided to visit a church after exposure to an impersonal mass media message. Of these sources, the Yellow Pages (N = 48, 11 percent) was the most frequently cited resource. Of the remaining media, 28 respondents (6 percent) consulted the Internet prior to their first church visit, and 25 visited after seeing either a television (3 percent), newspaper (3 percent), or radio advertisement (1 percent).

### Church Life

Contingency tables, that examine how each age cohort rated the importance of eight aspects of the church service and programs, were created and then evaluated by using chi-square tests (Table 2). In order to assure that there was a minimum of five observations in each cell, the five point rating scale (1 equals not at all important to 5 equals very important) was collapsed into three categories. Not at all important (1) and not important (2) were assigned a value of 1; the midpoint (3) became 2; and important (4) and very important (5) were given a value of 3. Six age cohorts were collapsed into three groups. The first roughly repre-



TABLE 2. How Different Age Cohorts Value Church Offerings

Variable	Number/Percentage of Age Cohort			Chi-square/p-value
The Worship Service	18-35	36-55	56+	
Not Important	1/1%	7/4%	5/4%	$\chi^2 = 4.764$
Indifferent	11/8%	10/5%	10/8%	$p = 0.312$
Important	122/91%	173/91%	104/87%	
Children/Youth Programs	18-35	36-55	56+	
Not Important	53/40%	70/37%	54/55%	$\chi^2 = 14.657$
Indifferent	19/14%	17/9%	13/13%	$p = 0.005$
Important	62/46%	103/54%	31/32%	
Adult Education Programs	18-35	36-55	56+	
Not Important	21/16%	45/23%	21/19%	$\chi^2 = 11.828$
Indifferent	24/18%	55/29%	25/22%	$p = 0.019$
Important	90/67%	92/48%	67/59%	
Senior Adult Programs	18-35	36-55	56+	
Not Important	105/80%	148/79%	35/33%	$\chi^2 = 100.785$
Indifferent	22/17%	25/13%	24/23%	$p = 0.000$
Important	5/4%	15/8%	46/44%	
Sports and Activities	18-35	36-55	56+	
Not Important	51/38%	108/57%	56/58%	$\chi^2 = 15.212$
Indifferent	40/30%	49/26%	20/21%	$p = 0.004$
Important	42/32%	33/17%	21/22%	
Music Programs	18-35	36-55	56+	
Not Important	37/27%	44/23%	17/16%	$\chi^2 = 27.194$
Indifferent	52/39%	43/23%	21/19%	$p = 0.000$
Important	46/34%	104/55%	72/66%	
Sermon	18-35	36-55	56+	
Not Important	10/7%	5/3%	4/3%	$\chi^2 = 7.414$
Indifferent	8/7%	8/4%	10/8%	$p = 0.116$
Important	117/87%	181/93%	106/89%	
Service Music	18-35	36-55	56+	
Not Important	20/22%	19/15%	11/13%	$\chi^2 = 5.364$
Indifferent	32/35%	35/28%	28/33%	$p = 0.252$
Important	39/43%	71/57%	45/54%	

sents Generations X and Y, ages 18 to 35; the second approximates Baby Boomers, ages 36 to 55; and the final group consists of mature adults aged 56 and older. Analysis of each variable and its chi-square value (with degrees of freedom and sample size in parentheses) follows.

**Worship Service.** With a minimum of 87 percent of each age cohort rating the worship service as important or very important, this variable prompted the most consistent response across cohorts. As a consequence, the chi-square value of 4.764 (4, N = 443) was not significant ( $p = 0.312$ ). Three percent of the sample considered it unimportant.

**Children's and Youth Programs.** One hundred three respondents (54 percent) aged 36 to 55 valued children's and youth programs significantly more important than younger or older cohorts. In contrast, 54 members (55 percent) of the oldest cohort and 53 (40 percent) of the youngest cohort rated these programs as not at all important or unimportant. The chi-square value was 14.657 (4, N = 422),  $p = 0.005$ .

**Adult Education Programs.** While 57 percent of the sample rated adult education as important, the youngest cohort ( $n = 90$ , 67 percent) had significantly more respondents who awarded it the highest rating, while respondents aged 36 to 55 ( $n = 45$ , 23 percent) were most likely to be indifferent or rate it as unimportant. The chi-square value was 11.828 (4, N = 440),  $p = 0.019$ .

**Senior Adult Programs.** Following a pattern that is the opposite of the previous variable, 68 percent of the sample assigned an unimportant rating to senior adult programs. Forty-six (44 percent) respondents who were older than 55 considered senior adult programs to be important, while a minimum of 79 percent of the other two cohorts rated them as not at all important or unimportant. The chi-square value was 100.785 (4, N = 425),  $p = 0.000$ .

**Sports and Activities.** The chi-square value of 15.212 (4, N = 420),  $p = 0.004$  indicates that the importance of this variable is significantly related to age. Overall, 51 percent of the sample rated sports and activities as unimportant. The 18 to 35 cohort ( $n = 42$ , 32 percent), however, was significantly more likely to consider them important. Of the other two cohorts 33 (17 percent) of the middle and 21 (22 percent) of the oldest age groups classified them as unimportant.

**Music Programs.** Fifty-one percent of the sample considered music programs to be important. The oldest respondents were most likely to rate music programs highly ( $n = 72$ , 66 percent), although 104 members (55 percent) of the middle cohort also gave this variable its highest rating. The youngest cohort exhibited a somewhat uniform spread across all three rating categories with percentages ranging from 27 percent as-

signing an unimportant rating to 34 percent assigning an important rating. The chi-square value was 27.194 (4, N = 436),  $p = 0.000$ .

**Importance of the Sermon.** Similar to the importance attached to the overall worship service, 89 percent of the sample considered the sermon to be important or very important in their decision to join a church. The percentage of each cohort that did not consider it to be important ranged from 3 to 7 percent. The chi-square value was 4.798 (4, N = 449),  $p = 0.309$ .

**Importance of Service Music.** While not quite as important as the sermon, service music was also universally perceived to be important with a range of 66 percent to 73 percent of each cohort valuing it highly. Approximately one-third of each cohort was indifferent. The chi-square value was 3.685 (4, N = 436),  $p = 0.450$ .

### Mediating Variables

Two variables that have been identified at times as significantly related to the decision to join a church are (1) denominational loyalty and (2) the desire to be part of a spiritual community. While neither variable plays a programmatic role in church life, each has a potentially mediating effect on respondent choice. Respondents were asked, therefore, to rate the importance of each variable in their decision to join a particular church (see Table 3).

**Denominational Loyalty.** With a chi-square value of 16.567 (4, N = 430),  $p = 0.002$ , loyalty to the denomination of one's childhood varies significantly with age. The oldest age cohort ( $n = 61$ , 56 percent) is most likely to evaluate this item as important or very important in choosing a new church. In contrast the group most likely to rate it as unimportant is the middle age cohort ( $n = 86$ , 46 percent). Finally, 45 (34 percent) of the youngest cohort also state that it is unimportant.

**Desire to Be Part of a Spiritual Community.** While the chi-square value of 28.751 (4, N = 425),  $p = 0.000$ , for this variable is also significant, the distribution of responses across age cohorts is somewhat opposite that which was observed with the previous variable. While a majority of each cohort indicate that community is important in their decision to join a church, the youngest age cohort is significantly more likely to place greater weight on its importance ( $n = 110$ , 82 percent). While 58 members (58 percent) of the oldest cohort consider community important, 25 percent consider it to be unimportant. This contrasts with the 5 percent of the youngest and 9 percent of the middle age that

TABLE 3. Age-Differentiated Mediating Variables

Denominational Loyalty	18-35	36-55	56+	
Not Important	45/34%	86/46%	35/32%	$\chi^2 = 16.567$
Indifferent	33/25%	25/13%	13/12%	$p = 0.002$
Important	55/41%	77/41%	61/56%	
Spiritual Community	18-35	36-55	56+	
Not Important	7/5%	17/9%	25/25%	$\chi^2 = 28.751$
Indifferent	18/13%	40/21%	17/17%	$p = 0.000$
Important	110/82%	133/70%	58/58%	

also rate it unimportant. Of the middle age cohort 133 (70 percent) indicate that community is important to very important.

## DISCUSSION

### Personal Sources of Information

The study provides a preliminary look at what newcomers value most in their decision to join a church. Clearly, personal contact and associations are the determinant factors in motivating individuals first to visit and then to join a church. The recommendations of friends and family as well as contact with church representatives and members via social functions are potent reference sources. Moreover, the dependence on personal sources of information is evident in every age cohort, as the percentage of each ranged from 44 to 53 percent. The insignificant chi-square value affirms the uniform importance of personal contact across age groups. Future research should examine the effect of other variables such as gender, education and denominational affiliation for on preferred sources of information.

The results of this study also suggest that landscaping and the exteriors of church structures often encourage (or conceivably discourage) visitation. In their review of research on the cognitive and emotional effect of environment on consumers, Zeithaml and Bitner (2000) confirm the role that physical settings play in influencing beliefs and eliciting emotional responses. The physical environment is capable of prompting both positive and negative cognitive, emotional and physio-

logical responses in individuals. Thus, visible playground equipment may signal a welcoming setting for families with young children, while traditional edifices may indicate formality and prompt pride in members. Moreover, the effect of physical settings may be less direct and may operate indirectly by mediating beliefs about the institution. Therefore, given the pervasive effect of environment on individuals, the seven percent of the sample that selected the option, "drove by and liked what I saw," as the primary motive in the decision to visit may not adequately represent the true impact of this variable. Had the study asked for secondary and tertiary reasons for selecting one church over another, the effect of physical environment may have assumed a more important role.

#### Impersonal Sources of Information

While communication through traditional media is not as effective as word-of-mouth in attracting visitors, the failure may reflect the absence of well-designed strategies. Consumers may not have learned to refer to media other than the Yellow Pages for information. The fact that consumers do use the Yellow Pages, presumably for directional information, suggests that they might be amenable to alternative media for other kinds of information. For example, as more households add Internet services, they may recognize its usefulness in providing reference and locational information. Eighty-four percent of the present sample is connected to the Internet; however, only six percent cite it as their initial source of information. Moreover, while age is not significantly related to Internet use, education does appear to be. Of the 28 respondents who name the Internet as their source of information, ten have completed college and 17 have advanced degrees. As Internet use approaches the mature phase in its life cycle and becomes a standard tool in academic settings, it is reasonable to expect more individuals to rely on it for informational purposes. Nevertheless, later adopters first may have to be shown how to use the Internet for search purposes and taught to appreciate its subsequent benefits.

More traditional media such as newspaper and television are less successful in influencing behavior. The failure may be the result of not successfully capturing or omitting altogether an emotional component in the message. Emotion may be an outcome more likely associated with person to person encounters or a reaction to physical settings. Again, as 70 percent of the sample relied on friends and family and other sources as referents, the authors of mass media communications

might consider focusing their messages on the human element and incorporating more personal themes, such as opportunities for individuals to meet other people in their target segment.

### Program Issues

Ninety percent of the sample believed that the worship service was important in their decision to join a church. Of the two service components, the sermon and the service music, the former was regarded as more important. The percentage of each age cohort that rated the sermon as important to very important ranged from 87 to 93 percent, whereas the percentages that assigned an important or very important rating for service music ranged from a low of 43 percent to a high of 57 percent. The contrast in weights indicates that newcomers pay closer attention to the sermon and suggests that music may play a supporting role. Therefore, if limited resources must be allocated between the two, the greatest payoff is realized from an investment in sermon materials and resources. Future studies might benefit from including more specific questions about both the sermon and service music, such as preferences for more or less formal services or for different musical genre.

The evaluation of programs is more straightforward. Not surprisingly, age specific programs appeal most strongly to age appropriate segments. Middle-aged respondents rate children's and youth programs most highly, while seniors are most likely to consider senior adult programs to be important. Three items that do discriminate between the three age cohorts are adult education, sports and other activities, and music programs. As young adults are most likely to appreciate adult education as well as sports and other recreational activities, churches that plan to target young adults should plan to include a variety of offerings. It is important to note that 59 percent of the oldest respondents also consider adult education to be important. In contrast the middle age cohort is most likely to assign an unimportant rating to these programs. One possible explanation for this discrepancy may lie with the middle cohort's interest in their children's programs.

Music programs appeal more to older respondents. One possible explanation for the indifference of younger members may lie with the choice in music programming. Assuming that most churches feature more traditional music, younger members may not be attracted to the conservative format.

### Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

There are several caveats associated with this study. First, this study used a nonprobability sample. Although each church distributed a questionnaire, which included a stamped, addressed return envelope, to all members who had joined their churches within the past year, the selection of respondents was not random. Moreover, individuals with strong opinions typically are more likely to respond, and new members of churches might be expected to have even more pronounced attitudes. As this is not a random sample, there are no checks in place and generalizations, if made at all, should be guarded.

Second, this study did not examine a number of other questions that probed the likes and dislikes of respondents. The study also did not examine preferences using other demographic variables such as gender, marital status or religious affiliation. These variables may provide greater insight than age did. Future studies should investigate the differences, if any, based on these variables. Finally, several elements of the study warrant continued tracking or probing. For example, the evolving role of the Internet should be followed, and the worship service, specifically the sermon and service music, should be examined in more detail.

### CONCLUSIONS

With an increase in competition churches cannot afford to try to be all things to all people. Successful churches will target specific age segments and tailor their programs to appeal to members of those segments. Moreover, the importance of word-of-mouth cannot be overstated. Personal contact is the most persuasive means of attracting new members. Social programs that welcome visitors are another means of attracting them to weekly services. In addition, the physical environment of the church also impacts individuals' first impressions and motivates them to act.

Of the mass media, listings in the Yellow Pages are essential. The Internet may also provide new opportunities to reach a younger and increasingly electronically-savvy audience. While this study suggests that traditional media are not used by respondents, this observation may reflect the absence of well-formulated marketing and communications strategies on the part of churches. Messages that are placed in mass media vehicles should focus on "people-issues," such as opportunities to meet and share common concerns and interests. Finally, future studies should examine the success of churches such as Willow Creek Community Church (Mellado 1991) that have formulated effective strategies.

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