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A Christian Mega Church Strives for Relevance: Examining Social Media and Religiosity

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A CHRISTIAN MEGA CHURCH STRIVES FOR RELEVANCE: EXAMINING
SOCIAL MEDIA AND RELIGIOSITY

by

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2009

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Master of Arts - Journalism and Media Studies

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**University of Nevada, Las Vegas
December 2013**

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the relationship between Facebook and Twitter uses and gratifications and religiosity. Non-denominational Christian mega churches focus their outreach programs on a “come-as-you-are” attitude with the hopes of making people feel comfortable. The interactive technology in our daily lives also infiltrates our experience at church. The congregation now has the ability to worship through technologies endorsed by leadership (Watson & Scalen, 2008; Bogomilova, 2004; Thomas, 2009). In order for churches to engage in effective communication, they must understand how people use social networking. Through survey methodology, the researcher takes an account of how people use media in their involvement as members, so that effective member programs can be implemented to attract and maintain parishioners. The appropriate theoretical approach for this study is uses and gratification because parishioners are able to express how their social media use interacts with their personal religiosity. This study found correlations between faith commitments and uses among Facebook and Twitter. These correlations help build the uses and gratifications theory within the constructs of religion.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

I grew up in a mega church in Las Vegas, Nevada, which presently has more than 18,000 members across a span of five local campuses, a campus in Alaska, Arizona, Australia, Florida and an online campus. Although Las Vegas mega churches are often successful at increasing membership and attendance, the transient nature of the city presents challenges in retaining parishioners. Using the uses and gratifications approach as a theoretical basis, this study explores social media trends of a similar local mega church with approximately 3,000 attendees. Currently there is little or no information regarding media usage preferences of these churchgoers. The focus of this study is the use of Facebook and Twitter of the churchgoers as well as their faith commitments to their Christian beliefs. It is agreed upon by the leaders of this church to remain anonymous for the duration of this study.

Uses and gratifications theory can best be defined as "... the program that asks the question, not 'What do the media do to people?' but, 'What do people do with media?'" (Katz, 1959, p. 2). Gratifications work stems back to the beginning of empirical mass communication research which includes studies with audiences listening to soap operas, radio, newspapers and more (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1973 p. 509). More than thirty years have passed and no longer are scholars highly interested in soap operas and radio. Rather there is a shift toward social media audiences in regards to uses and gratifications. "The uses and gratifications theory is concerned with how individuals use the media (in this case, friend-networking sites), and therefore it emphasizes the importance of the individual" (Bonds-Raacke & Raacke, 2010 p. 170). This demands that the researchers

look at each individual's preferences to find some kind of common ground within the sample. The results eventually point to some popular trends among the participants that can add to uses and gratifications research as a whole.

Members of the congregation in this study take the time to find out what the church has to offer through Facebook and Twitter. Information regarding events, campaigns, sermon topics, announcements, and updates are all distributed with the help of these two social media channels. Volunteer opportunities, summer camps for students, retreats for adults, photos, videos, links and more can be found on both Facebook and Twitter accounts. This church also has separate Facebook pages for their student ministry, elementary school ministry, men's ministry, women's ministry, singles ministry, and couples ministry. In an effort to get a broader sense of uses and gratification implications, this study focuses on the main church Facebook and Twitter pages and examines how the congregation uses them and which gratifications they get from them.

The uses and gratifications in this study include using Facebook and Twitter for information, spiritual guidance, entertainment, to feel close to God, for moral support, companionship, to pass the time, out of habit, as an escape, relax and for social interaction. Each participant has different usage tendencies regarding social media. These particular uses can give insight on some of the behaviors surrounding Facebook and Twitter in this context. It is important to take into account the history of uses and gratifications theory. Doing so explains the importance of this study and what it adds to the theoretical framework overall. The following paragraphs discuss examples of studies that summarize each decade from 1940 to the present. These snapshots that represent the

highlights and important findings help shape uses and gratifications theory for what it is today.

Initial studies in the 1940s (Laszarsfeld-Stanton, Herzog, Suchman, Wolfe & Fiske & Berelson) described in *Uses and Gratifications Research* (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1973) shared similar methodologies. While Lazarsfeld and Stanton (1942, 1944, 1949) focused on soap operas, Suchman (1942) looked at audience members of serious music on the radio, Wolfe and Fiske (1949) studied children's interest in music and Berelson examined newspaper reading. First, they surveyed respondents in an open-ended format to collect the statements about media functions. Next, they used qualitative measures to categorize the gratification statements while also ignoring the rate at which these gratifications were reported. They also avoided the connections between psychological and sociological trends connected to respondents needs. There was also a lack of exploration between media channels, which added more intrigue regarding media gratifications. "Consequently, these studies did not result in a cumulatively more detailed picture of media gratifications conducive to the eventual formulation of theoretical statements" (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1973, p. 509).

More analysis of uses and gratifications theory arrived in the 1950s and 1960s with controversy as some academics discredited the validity of use behaviors (Katz, 1959, p. 2). Bernard Berelson took the position that communication research was no longer valid in an issue of the *Public Opinion Quarterly* (1959). He, as well as other critics, found the "campaign" mentality did not work among audiences as they thought it would. People did not change their vote based on media messages and it began to look as if researchers would complicate matters in order to receive the results they were hoping

to achieve. In other words, persuasion within media was not an effective way to change the thoughts and opinions of the audience. Katz continues to explain, “The ‘uses approach’ begins with the assumption that the message of even the most potent of media cannot ordinarily influence an individual who has no use for it in the social and psychological context in which he lives” (1959, p.2).

The International Research Associates conducted a study in 1958 that included a World Poll for the *New York Herald Tribune*. This poll questioned readers about their gratification behavior in relation to this particular newspaper. Although there was an exciting atmosphere surrounding this research, there was also a downside to it as well. Wilson wrote, “And with gratification goes the feeling of responsibility. In the relatively short period of time we have been operating, we have been attacked by *Pravda*; we have been cited in *Congressional Record*; we have been referred to in the councils of the United Nations; and so on” (Wilson, 1958, p. 183). This study is important because it asks the audience about their reading behavior without considering their social backgrounds. It was thought that none of that mattered in the beginning, as if the masses could be divided up into a few groups. Collecting data from audiences in this manner is much different than it is today. Scholars continued to build on uses and gratification research during the next decade.

Katz’s research in the 1960s acknowledged issues with mass communication research to include a misconception of the audience. At that time, it regarded the audience as a disconnected group of people distinguished only by their age, sex, and ethnicity. This definition excluded the relationships people have with one another that tend to shape their ideologies and opinions. This crucial factor adds humanistic character

in survey participants. According to Katz, and many others to follow, the audience plays an active role with media; media, as was previously assumed, do not easily affect them. “The shared values in groups of family, friends, and co-workers and the networks of communication...’intervene’ between the campaign in mass media and the individual as the mass target” (Katz, 1960, p. 436). This was an important shift in mass communication and it directly impacted uses and gratifications research in the future. If the individual is the “mass target,” then academics must take the time to evaluate individual wants and how they want it; that is, uses and gratifications theory (Katz, 1960). As the study of media use evolved, many began to support Katz’s idea that the audience played an active role in media interaction (Abelman, 1987, p.293).

Abelman focused on television use in one of his prominent studies that helped bridge the gap between early and modern uses and gratification studies (Abelman, 1987; Rubin, 1984). Academics found two primary reasons that explained why people watched television. People used television out of ritual and as an instrument, (Rubin, 1981, 1983, 1984; Windahl, 1981). “Ritualized viewing consists of more habitual use of television for diversionary reasons (e.g., companionship, time consumption, relaxation)...Instrumental viewing, on the other hand, reflects a more goal-oriented use of television content to gratify informational needs or motives” (Abelman, 1987, p.293). This new shift gives the audience the power over how they use television. Abelman went even further to shed light on the lack of studies focused on religious programming (Hoover, in press; Horsfield, 1984). Dennis (1962) found that people viewed religious media for moral reasons, for information and entertainment, and to substitute secular programs (Abelman, 1987, p. 298).

The 1990s and 2000s studies further explored the details of primary media uses. Although there were constant themes within the reasons for watching television, there were discrepancies along the way. These lead to challenges in completing a full set of consistent results for uses and gratifications. Researchers across the board focus on different levels of study, materials, and cultures. Today there is more freedom for uses and gratifications researchers to explore audiences than ever before. “The earliest researchers for the most part did not attempt to explore the links between the gratifications detected and the psychological or sociological origins of the needs satisfied” (Ruggiero, 2000, p. 5). Early researchers were more concerned with how television used people instead of the other way around. The origins of the need to be satisfied were later developed as an important focal point later on.

One of the main characteristics of uses and gratification theory is based upon individual preferences. Audience members choose to engage in a particular social media activity for their own personal reasons that have the potential to add to academic research. This is in contrast to other theoretical approaches that depend on passive audiences. For example, a researcher documenting a group of people living day to day in their natural habitat as an observer, called ethnography, requires no action from the audience.

Communication is characterized by the active nature of its audiences, by social and psychological factors as mediators in communicative behavior, and with certain media competing with other forms of communication to meet the needs of human beings, given that these media can come to have more influence than certain interpersonal processes (Jimenez, Lopez, Pisionero, 2012, p. 232).

Ruggeiero (2000) defines uses and gratifications theory through Cantril's (1942) point of view. "Early in the history of communications research, an approach was developed to study the gratifications that attract and hold audiences to the kinds of media and the types of content that satisfy their social and psychological needs" (Ruggiero, 2000, p. 3).

Efforts to reach out to the local and global community can be improved by knowing what the audience prefers. This potential begs the questions: Why do people use Facebook and Twitter? Are social media trends (passing time, for information or entertainment) connected with religious beliefs? In *Being Immersed In Social Networking Environment: Facebook Groups, Uses and Gratifications, and Social Outcomes* Park, Kerk and Valenzuela (2009) polled 2,603 university students in Texas and the results showed an overlap in gratifications for why they use Facebook. According to Pisionero (2012) "the intensity of Facebook use was strongly related to other gratifications such as feelings of personal satisfaction, confidence and participation in civic life" (p. 234). The connections found between social media and gratifications are dominant enough to explore possible gratification trends in the church. A brief history of Facebook and Twitter helps create a stronger research foundation.

Brief Facebook & Twitter History

Facebook became available for public use in 2004 and currently has 1.11 billion users (Martelli, 2013; Phillips, 2007). "Because of this popularity, Facebook.com has become not only a technological phenomenon but also a realm of interest for scholars exploring the processes and effects of computer-mediated communication and social

networking” (Wise, Alhabash & Park 2010, p. 555). When Facebook began, users needed a Harvard.edu email address. This filtering process restricted the pool of users to a select group of people. It later opened to high school students in 2005, and in 2006 the general public was allowed to get a Facebook profile (Urista, Quinwen & Day, 2009, p. 217). According to Wise, Alhabash & Park (2010), Facebook is largely used to make a connection with others by social browsing and social searching profiles (p. 555).

Twitter officially launched in 2006 and currently has 200 million users (Johnson, 2013). It was originally created for coworkers to keep track of one another with short messages. “Twitter, the 140 character or less micro blogging application, has received popular attention in the mass media for its own entertainment value, but it remains a novelty for many” (Lin, Hoffman & Borengasser, 2013, p. 39). Users post their own messages under the 140 character limit (called tweets) and share pictures and videos for their followers to see. Twitter was also the first to implement hashtags to categorize posts, pictures and videos. A hashtag is a short phrase that describes the main focus of the post. By using a # (hashtag sign) before the phrase, it automatically takes you to a master list of every piece of content that also shares that hashtag. For example, if a woman tweets a message and picture of a dress she made, she can hashtag, or file, the photo under any category she can think of to increase the number of people who might see it. Some possibilities include #dress, #lookwhatImade, #proud, #loveit etc. Others who see her status can click on any one of those hashtags to see more photos that use those categories. Since the invention of Twitter, hashtags have been incorporated into Facebook as well.

Both forms of social media are still very young compared to radio and television, however, the impact of these forms of media has gained and maintained global attention. Although radio and television are not considered social media, and are very different in their own right, it is important to consider uses and gratification history in regards to media in general. Social browsing is when someone looks through Facebook for nothing in particular, a passive way to engage in social media. Social searching is when a participant is looking through their Facebook and Twitter newsfeeds for specific information. This is classified as an information seeking way of using Facebook (Wise, et al. 2010, p. 555).

Purpose and Key Terms

The purpose of this study is to explore specific uses and gratification trends of this congregation in regards to Facebook and Twitter. The uses evaluated in this study include using Facebook and Twitter for information, spiritual guidance, entertainment, to feel close to God, for moral support, companionship, to pass the time, out of habit, as an escape, relax and for social interaction. Each participant has different usage tendencies regarding social media.

This study examines how Facebook and Twitter use correlates with religious gratification. For example, Facebook and Twitter keep people connected to friends and family all over the world. They create personal profiles, share pictures, send invites to upcoming events, and communicate more conveniently. Communicating, sharing information, and relating to one another in this fashion has the potential to expose a deeper understanding of social media play within churches. Past research expands knowledge of uses and gratifications theory as it applies to a religious audience. If

religion involves behavior, community, belief, and deep feeling (Cornwall et al., 1986, p. 227), these key points speak to the mission, culture, and focal points of this church. The mission of this church, as posted on their website, is to “love God, love people, and serve others.” Their belief statement about the church is, “We believe that the church is the community of God and the body of Christ on earth and exists to reach those who are far from Christ and disciple believers (Matthew 28:19-20).” This desire to reach the masses requires a better understanding of how this audience uses social media. An overview of the methodology and outline of the remainder of this thesis will set up the literature review in chapter two.

Abelman’s *Why Do People Watch Religious TV?: A Uses and Gratifications Approach* (1987) provides the methodological approach. Abelman argues that audience members are “active” with measurable uses of media. While Abelman focuses on television viewing, his measurement questions for TV viewing levels, viewer affinity, and program preference were adapted to this study of social media use. Religiosity was also assessed in order to better understand the relationship between church commitments and social media use. Respondents self-reported uses of social media in a religious context. Like Abelman, a range of one meaning “strongly disagree” to five meaning “strongly agree” was used to assess the following uses of Facebook and Twitter within a mega-church community: information learning, spiritual guidance, entertainment, feeling close to God, religiosity, moral support, replacing church attendance and social interaction. With this example as a model, I began the process of collecting data for this survey. I used the Survey Monkey online service. Chapter 3 will focus on the methodology of this study to include details of the step by step process, the survey

instrument, distribution and data collection. Chapter 4 will describe the findings and Chapter 5 will discuss their significance.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Uses and Gratifications

The following review of literature provides an overview of uses and gratifications theory, how mega churches have evolved with communication and how both of them inform this current survey. The connections to this study becomes clear with the help of past research, facts from history and an overview of the research questions at the end of the literature review. This first section of the literature review recounts the early stages of uses and gratifications theory.

Uses and gratifications theory is helpful in analyzing the relationship between religiosity and media related behavior. “Uses and gratifications is an audience-centered perspective which assumes individuals take the initiative and are goal-directed in their mass communication behavior, and that alternative sources might be chosen to gratify needs or motives” (Rubin, 1986). According to Rubin, three relationships construct media use and gratification among audience members. The first relationship is between society and media. Political and economic systems are partially responsible for what people have access to and what socially acceptable use of media is. The second relationship is between the audience and the success of media. If the individual does not find value in a certain kind of media, then the media will not exist for very long. The third and final relationship is the influence between society and the audience. The needs of the audience form from societal norms. “By offering services that might be similar to those of the media, cultural and educational systems can serve as functional alternatives to the media” (Rubin, 1986).

Although these relationships provide a clear direction of uses and gratifications theory, specific reasons as to why people feel gratification remain mysterious. Rubin recognizes the differences in people have an effect on their needs. Therefore, the motivation behind media use is somewhat of an individual fingerprint of each person. This idea does not mean that similarities do not exist and cannot be measured, but rather the researcher must recognize the breadth of variations in human reasoning. “Media use is the selecting, consuming, processing, and interpreting of media and their content” (Rubin, 1986). The religious community has preferences, much like any other community consumer has tendencies when it comes to social media. Non-denominational Christian mega churches are composed of people from different cultural, religious, economic and relational origins. So with its concerns for social, cultural and individual differences, uses and gratifications is a respectable place to begin a study devoted to media and religion.

Five particular elements explain uses and gratifications theory even further. According to Katz the audience is active, media use comes from the audience, needs served by mass media do not encompass all human needs, people are fully capable of self-reporting, and cultural significance should be put aside to explore the audience. “The further step, which has hardly been ventured, is one of explanation” (Katz, 1973, p. 515). He also acknowledges that researchers focus on dissimilar levels of uses and gratifications. “If the Internet is a technology that many predict will be genuinely transformative, it will lead to profound changes in media users’ personal and social habits and roles” (Ruggeriero, 2000, p. 28). In this study, I examine the congregation’s views on why they use social media in connection to the church. The theory is applied in order to

measure some of the uses and gratification elements of the congregation at a mega church in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Gratifications are single occurrences that are unique for each person and situation. Although some instances file under common themes, most of the recorded behaviors are individual experiences (Song, Easton & Carolyn, 2004, p. 385). This concept highlights the qualitative aspects of the methodology of this study due to the personal role technology plays for most people. There is a need for immediate information on a daily basis and a learned culture of instant gratification. “People pay attention to media when they believe content will be useful in fulfilling their needs or providing desired gratifications; a research focus on audience motivations might provide insights into some of the consequences of media exposure for audiences (Swanson, 1992). This study has the potential to bring much needed attention to the audience’s awareness of their use of popular technology. This can also lead to the technology expectations these people have of the church they attend. Looking back at the history of uses and gratifications theory, beginning with the 1930s, gives a solid foundation of how the audience use media to gratify their needs.

Uses and gratifications in the 1930s - 1950s

Although the demand for home radios increased during the 1930s, most scholars did not catch on to the significance of uses and gratifications until later on. One well known example of from the 1930s brought major attention to common use of radio. In 1938 Orson Welles’s Mercury Theater group performed a radio play of *The World of the World’s* by H.G. Wells written 40 years earlier. Welles wrote the play to sound like an

actual broadcast of an alien take over and it caused mass hysteria and confusion. “In one block of Newark, New Jersey, 20 families rushed out of their houses with wet towels over their faces as protection from Martian poison gas, according to a front-page article in the *New York Times* the next day” (Lovgen, 2005). Soon after the War of the Worlds incident, scholars While some early studies would manipulate communication conditions to measure impact on the audience, others explored the motives of media (Ruggiero, 2000, p. 3).coined the term “Magic Bullet Theory” or “Hypodermic Needle” theory to explain the how the audience reacted. In this case the information directly affected the audience members who believed that the broadcast was real. Some scholars thought this audience had no skill in investigating the information. Rather, they were seen as passive figures in this model but that did not last very long. “Media scholars have increasingly rejected these top-down ‘hypodermic,’ or ‘magic bullet’ models of media effects and media power, and have turned their attention...”(Spitulnik, 1993, p. 298).

Ruggiero further explains what the academic atmosphere looked like during this time as well. The following is an overview of scholars and their specialties during the 1930s and 1940s. The main point in the early studies was to figure out what aspects of media could draw and hold the attention of audiences:

Examples include Cantril and Allport (1935) on the radio audience; Waples, Berelson, and Bradshaw (1940) on reading; Herzog (1940, 1944) on quiz programs and the gratifications from radio daytime serials; Suchman (1942) on the motives for listening to serious music; Wolfe and Fiske (1949) on children’s interest in comics; Berelson (1949) on the functions of newspaper reading; and Lazarsfeld and Stanton (1942, 1944, 1949) on different media genres. (p.4)

Lazarsfeld and Stanton discussed Berelson's findings on the functions of reading the newspaper in 1949. Berelson found that people read the newspaper for many reasons to include for information, as a tool for daily living, for respite (or to get relief from hard times), social prestige and even as a source of security (Lazarsfeld & Stanton, 1949, p. 179). Participants were able to self-report the reasons they read the newspaper, but scholars realized there was more to learn from this concept. Many academic accounts ended with a look toward future media with excitement and unanswered questions.

The early studies were criticized for a few reasons explained by Katz (1987), who explains that people did not trust uses and gratifications studies at that time because it relied heavily on self-reporting, it was not well known and needs of the audience was still unknown, and overall it was limited to the constraints of text and the diversity of the audiences. In addition, Maslow (1948) mentions the frustration that came with studying gratification, "What, after all is boredom but over-gratification? And yet here too we may find unsolved and unperceived problems" (p. 411). At the same time, he also acknowledged the emotional characteristics of this theory that possessed future studies. "So it is for the other basic emotional needs for belongingness, for love, for respect, and for self-esteem. Gratification of these needs permits the appearance of such characteristics as affectionateness, self-respect, self-confidence, security, etc." (p. 408). Uses and gratifications theory continued to develop as the use of television increased in the 1960s. As social norms, culture and technology began to shift, so did the relationship between the audience and media.

Uses and Gratifications in the 1960's

Katz (1960) continued to develop the idea that the audience played a more active role than most expected. He claimed that participants were more complex than just demographics such as sex, age, income etc. There was a richer, and perhaps more complex, relationship between the audience and media use. The idea that the participants' childhood background, family life, work situation, perceptions on the government, social climate and more could affect their media use was less supported. The 1960s saw an increase of uses and gratification studies that focused on preexisting psychological variables that had an effect on the participants' mode of media consumption. "Thus we have found data which indicate that television viewing time increases quite predictably as a function of the number of people who have TV sets...television may be reaching close to its maximum audience" (Robinson, 1969, p. 220).

Katz and Foulkes (1962) identified that historically mass media researchers asked the question, "What do the media do to the people." This question was then switched around to ask, "What do people do with media?" This last question shows a modern angle on uses and gratification theory in relation to popular culture and media. "If empirical mass media research now turns to this latter question, there is reason to believe that it can draw profitability on the reservoir of hypotheses proposed by the theorists of popular culture" (Katz & Foulkes, 1962, p. 378). This further declared the dominate role that audience members had when consuming media, as well as solidifying the already existing opinions of audience members featured in the uses and gratification theory.

McLeod, Ward and Tancill (1965) also evaluated this idea that audience members used media for personal gratification. They found that their "alienated" respondents in

their study were less likely to read the newspaper for informational reasons. “Alienation does, then, show promise as an explanatory factor in the use of newspaper” (p. 594). Media use in this case is audience based, as the audience delegated use for their own personal reasons. These findings relate to the idea that people seek out media behaviors that satisfy some kind of need or needs. Still some have a hard time giving uses and gratification theory validity because studies found that, “these gratifications are psychological, not physical, entities seems to disconcert some people” (Emmett, 1968, p. 658). Although Emmett’s focus on the emotional side of research led to criticism, it also continued to lay the groundwork for other scholars in the 1970s.

Uses and Gratifications in the 1970s

Uses and gratification scholars in the 1970s collectively depended on the audience gratifications to help develop a more complete list of motivations. In the world of television news in the 1970s Gantz (1978) recalls that participants rarely remembered the information shared in newscasts. He further describes the uses and gratifications model in two perspectives. The first one is the hypodermic model that assumes media to be “all powerful media and a vulnerable, sponge like, absorbent audience” (p. 664). In this instance, there is a one-step flow of communication with media having the influence on the audience. The audience has very little control of what media do to them in this case. This takes control away from the audience member and places it with media.

The second perspective, introduced by Klapper (1960), describes a situation in which the media have a limited effect on “active and proactive viewers” (Gantz, 1978, p. 665). Gantz continues to explain that with the uses and gratifications model “effects are

seen as a blend of what is on the media and what is brought to the media by the individual” (p. 664). “... people have become increasingly detached from overarching institutions such as public schools, political parties, and civic groups, which at one time provided a shared context for receiving and interpreting messages” (Bennett & Iyengar, 2008, p . 707). Klapper coined this trend as the minimal effects model because of the minimizing effects media seemed to have over the audience. The transition into the 1980s showed another shift with the audience even though there was little awareness about social climate, disconnection among people, heavy message saturation (Bennett & Iyengar, 2008, p . 708).

Uses and Gratifications in the 1980's

Rubin (1983) observed that fellow colleagues were working to accomplish one of four things during this time. They were modifying or replicating current studies, refining methodology, analyzing findings of other investigations and/or treating media as integrated communication and social phenomena (Ruggerio, 2000, p. 7). These four goals remain as focal points through today. The 1980s also showed a major focus in religious television also known as religious programming on television. Scholars such as Abelman (1987, 1989) and Pettersson (1986) evaluated this trend that married religious beliefs and television. Abelman explored the “PTL” (“Praise the Lord”) Club television program founded by Jim and Tammie Faye Bakker. This husband and wife televangelism team also became popular for negative press including accounting fraud and sex scandals. They were Evangelical Christians who preached and did outreach through television. Before allegations of scandals appeared through media outlets, an estimated 5.8 million

television households were tuned to the “PTL Club” each day (Ostling, 1986) and religious television had up to 40 million (Hadden & Swan, 1981). Studies similar to the following, builds on the Abelman’s (1989) findings in the “PTL” study.

The study conducted by the Annenberg School of Communication and the Gallup Organization (Gerbner et al., 1984) found that participants were using religious television programs to substitute secular television. In other words, these particular participants were choosing to watch religious programming in the place of secular or mainstream television. This study also found that this religious audience had distaste for the moral standards and practices shown on non-religious television programming (Abelman, 1988, p. 55). Participants of the “PTL Club” study were given 23 statements motives, or gratifications, to self-report their television use. They submitted statements complete the sentences: “I watch the PTL Club to...” “I watch the PTL Club for...” “I watch the PTL Club because...” Statements included, “feel close to God, social interaction, pass time, information, escape, habit, moral support etc.” Participants answered in a range with the number 1 for “strongly disagree” and 5 “strongly agree.” Abelman found in this particular study that the strongest of the viewing motivation correlations are between information and curiosity (p. 61). These findings help identify who the audience is, and they show that religious audiences and secular audiences can relate on some of the same motivations or gratifications.

The 1990s and 2000s saw a shift in interpersonal communication with popular technology such as the in home computers with Internet, cellular phones and later Facebook and Twitter. The trend of using these media for personal use further supported

the idea that the audience maintained the control and could choose any channel to satisfy their needs.

Uses and Gratifications in the 1990s and 2000s

“During the last several decades, U&G researchers have continued to conceptually refine their perspective” (Ruggerio, 2000, p. 11). This theory continues to develop along with the development of motivations for use and new communication channels such as Facebook and Twitter. Much of the current criticisms of uses and gratifications stems from Wimmer and Dominick (1994), who suggested media selection is initiated by the individual, expectations for media use produced from individual predispositions, social interaction and environmental factors, and the active audience with goal-directed media behavior (Ruggerio, 2000, p. 11).

Ruggerio (2000) continues his discussion by diving into the world of the Internet predicting it “will lead to profound changes in media users’ personal and social habits and roles” (p. 28). The uncertainty of what this means for uses and gratifications also adds to the excitement for future students looking to investigate media convergence and new technologies. The capabilities of the Internet continue to show limitless functions and potential for users to date. Older focuses of uses and gratification studies such as radio, newspapers and television are still relevant but Ruggerio and other scholars warn that researchers must accept the change brought about by the Internet and whatever comes after. New media channels and updates are constantly being added to the market for mass consumption. These trends are worthy of an academic study due to the possible

gratification correlations which remain to be mostly unexplored. The connection between religious communities and social media is just one out of the many possible ventures.

Overall uses and gratifications research has developed under the social climate and technology advances. The early years began with an interest of understanding the power that media have over the audience. The question that first started off as, “What does the media do to people?” switched to “What do people do with media?” later on as scholars began to see some common themes with gratification. More attention was given to the reasons people used media in general. By using media to satisfy needs such as passing the time, for moral support and entertainment, audiences brought uses and gratifications theory to the forefront. The crossover into religiosity brought a new aspect to this theory by placing the religious audience as the user. This allowed for potential comparisons that included popular media, such as social media, to further broaden this theory in the religious world. A basic understanding of the general Christian church community is a great start to understanding why it is relevant regarding uses and gratification.

How Mega Churches Evolved

The following definition of a the word “church” is from the online version of the Encyclopedia Britannica;

The word ‘church’ in Christian doctrine means the Christian religious community as a whole, or a body or organization of Christian believers. The Greek word *ekklēsia*, which came to mean church, was originally applied in the Classical period to an official assembly of citizens. In the Septuagint (Greek) translation of the Old Testament (3rd–2nd century BC), the term *ekklēsia* is used for the general

assembly of the Jewish people, especially when gathered for a religious purpose such as hearing the Law (*e.g.*, Deuteronomy 9:10, 18:16). In the New Testament it is used of the entire body of believing Christians throughout the world.

In other words the church is made up of believers, the people, it is not a building. Churches can gather in schools, banquet halls, homes, parks, in bars and nightclubs after hours, online, prisons, on the beach and more. The only thing you need to make a church is a group of believers. The purpose of the Christian church is to gather in community to study God's word, to be more like Jesus, support one another and reach out to others. "The Great Commission" given to Christians by Jesus Christ himself is found in the book of Matthew in the New Testament in the Bible. "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you," (Matthew 28:19-20 NIV).

"Mega churches are not an entirely new phenomenon...but the rapid proliferation of these churches since the 1970s, and especially in the past few decades, is a distinctive social phenomenon" (Thumma & Travis, 2007, p. 6). The Bible gives some insight to how many people came together on a regular basis as a church. The book of Acts in the New Testament was written by Luke, one of Jesus' followers. Luke's account of the increase of followers after the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, describes one of the first recorded mega churches. Christians, Christ followers, in Biblical times came together to accept Christ into their lives through baptism. The Apostle Peter, after the first recorded Christian sermon by someone other than Jesus, addressed a large crowd and "...those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added

to their number” (Acts 2:41 New International Version). This verse is significant in the history of mega churches since the original Christian church was, by definition, a mega church. Another highlight that contributes to mega church history is the Christian revivals that took place in the United States.

The Great Awakening refers to the series of religious revivals among Protestants in the American colonies, especially in New England, lasting from 1730s to 1740s. This was during the time, and in response to, the Enlightenment period in Europe which focused on logic, reason and individuals applying these ideas to religion. “Christian revivals that happened in response to ‘The Awakening’ has received surprisingly little systematic study and lacks even one comprehensive general history,” (Butler, 1982, p. 306). Religious awakenings came about due to the economic and social climate during those times in history. These significant events in religious history, within the United States, gained high levels of attention from those in need of direction (Sims, 1988). Many people traveled to hear the message of charismatic preachers which sometimes involved healing hands and speaking in tongues “ The largest most historically important meeting took place on August 6, 1801, when a crowd variously estimated at from twelve to twenty-five thousand gathered at Cane Ridge, near the present city of Lexington, Kentucky,” (Sims, 1988, p. xiv). Currently there are many religious beliefs for people to choose from. They can simply go online to join a church, pick and choose from many beliefs to create their own or choose not to believe at all. While the term, “mega church” only refers to the size of a church, it relates to revivals only because of the mass amounts of people who are drawn to both of them. The history of revivals shows that large church gatherings are not new to the religious community. Some criticize mega churches for

being too big to be able to communicate effectively. Discussing what mega churches look like today will further solidify the connection between social media and religiosity as well as mass communication options.

Mega Churches Today

Due to the broad nature of this particular topic, I focus on the definition of mega churches in relation to the number of attendees. Mega churches generally have more than 2,000 members (Thumma & Travis, 2007, p. 8). This speaks to the number of attendees and is not exclusive to Christian churches alone. “The religious message must have relevance to everyday life and contemporary reality. It is not necessary for worship styles and sermon forms to be contemporary idioms, but for them to touch on daily concerns, issues and social needs” (Thumma & Travis, 2007, p. 16). These social needs are similar to those needs met through social media.

Some scholars have identified three reasons why mega churches have increased development – mega churches have emerged, the shifting paradigm of Christian missions (focusing on congregationally-based short-term mission trips) and the rise of evangelical international development organizations (Gramby-Sobukwe & Hoiland, 2009, p. 105). These movements within the church continue to affect the more than 1,300 mega churches in the United States. Gramby-Sobukwe & Hoiland (2009) also look beyond their research of notable mega churches, such as Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Illinois, toward future research. “Considerable research remains to be done to ascertain more fully the nature and scope of mega church involvement in

development, to learn from the possible innovations they are coming up with as they engage in this process [development and missions],” (p.114).

Mega churches today must balance popular or secular ideas with religious ideas. For example while some churches are comfortable including a secular song during the sermon, others would find that to be crossing the line. In the same context it might be acceptable for a pastor to refer to social media as a ministry tool at one church but unacceptable at another. These push and pull tendencies between the church and the outside world are different for each church culture but the reality is that it exists. Because of these wide ranges of ideas, shifts and changes that occur within mega churches on a regular basis it is difficult to group them all together. Thumma and Travis (2007) explain that, “People have to be able to hear their lives in the message and glean understanding that translates into wise actions throughout the week with their family, coworkers or spouse” (p. 16). They continue to explain some of the musical worship to be “in part to entertain, to entice, to excite, and to inspire” (p. 16). The relevance of sermon and musical worship connects the outside world with the religious world in the mega church setting. People then attend these large churches in the hopes of finding spiritual guidance and a religious community they can relate to. The definition of religiosity shows the difference between a church community and every other community. This next section explores the important relationship between church attendees and religiosity.

Religiosity

Religiosity is the main gratification of interest for this study. Academic scholars have previously evaluated the definition of term “religiosity” and the context in which it

makes the most sense. It is somewhat of a vague topic and accepted definitions are known to be broad. One definition holds religiosity is “phenomena that include some relevance to traditional institutionalized searches to acknowledge and maintain some relationship with the transcendent” (Hill & Hood, 1999, p. 48). This further reflects the definition of religion. “. . .religion is a multifaceted object, incorporating cognitive, emotional, motivational, and behavioral aspects” (Hackney & Sanders, 2003, p. 45). These scholars continue to discuss the possibility that, “religiosity could represent its own unique, but interrelated, construct, with the overall concept of religiosity consisting of a cluster of somewhat independent factors. If that is the case, then it would be expected that some aspects of religiosity would correlate with other variables (such as mental health) more strongly than others. . .” (p. 45). Independent factors include coping and attribution (p. 46) and life satisfaction and self actualization (p.49). This current survey includes religious factors for the purpose that was previously stated. There is a possibility that some religious aspects, called faith commitments, could correlate with other variables.

Faith Commitments

After these uses and gratifications are measured they are then compared to “faith commitment” statements that were later combined to create the religiosity index; the main gratification for this study. These faith commitments were created by my former thesis chairman, an academic colleague of his named Judith Buddenbaum and myself. Both my former thesis chairman and Buddenbaum have extensive knowledge in media and religious communities. The faith commitments include the following:

- I pray regularly
- Believe Jesus is the Son of God
- Have a personal relationship with Jesus
- Reading the Bible is important part of my life

All measure personal religious beliefs of participants and are combined into an index (see Appendix A p. 59). This aspect is important in evaluating any possible connections between social media use and religious commitment. The theory behind uses and gratifications leads to relevance.

Faith commitments also relate to the participants' commitment to the church community they engage in. If someone does not pray regularly, believed that Jesus is the Son of God, have a personal relation with Jesus etc., they are less likely to be commitment members of the church and therefore not involved with the community. Community is a large component of being part of a mega church and is worth mentioning in this study.

Community

The concept for community is important to this study because it directly relates to religiosity. Church attendees come together to listen to the message and worship together on a weekly basis. They also participate in classes, social gatherings, and Bible study groups as a community. This study gathers insight on how this community uses social media, it is important to have a credible academic definition. Scholars have taken a deeper interest in the definition of community, to understand how people groups are developed and maintained. One academic definition for community includes the

following four elements; membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs and shared emotional connection (McMillan & George, 1986, p. 4). These are all aspects that help mold this church community and the communication behaviors.

Membership, as in the description of community, is the feeling of belonging to a group while influence is a two part action. Parishioners can have an influence on the community and the community can have an influence on the parishioner. Being part of a church community can satisfy the need to be integrated and connected to others.

Integration in the community comes from the participant choosing to be more involved at church through volunteering and being intentional about making friends at church. It takes time to get to know one another outside of church and only those who make the effort can be fully integrated in the community. Once the participant is integrated in the mega church community, they can better navigate how to fulfill their emotional needs. By that point there is trust within in the community and participants can share feelings in a more genuine manner. Identifying with the relevance of the sermons, as a whole on Sunday mornings, is the gateway to these deeper levels of community. “With the primacy of the consumer, each church or religious organization tries to fashion a product that consistently meets consumer preferences” (Watson & Scalen, 2008, p. 175). It is through active participation and the continuous choice to be involved that changes the anonymous experience into a community focused one (Thumma & Travis, 2007). Active participation in a religious environment guarantees regular encounters with religiosity factors such as prayer, reading the Bible, belief in Jesus and having a personal relationship with Jesus.

How Mega Churches Communicate

Traditionally churches communicated to the masses through radio and television broadcasts. Next came mass distribution of paper newsletters, through the mail or handed out in church, included updates and information. The newsletters evolved to an electrical format for email purposes and were easily sent out by a click or a button to a master list. The use of social media in churches allowed for a cost effective way to communicate on a more regular basis.

Social media are tools that allow people to add a personal touch to technology, and therefore self-report how they use them on a daily basis. “U&G fell out of favor with some mass communication scholars for several decades, but the advent of telecommunications technology may well have revived it from dormancy” (Ruggeriero, 2000, p. 13). Technology acts as an equalizer because the available knowledge bridges the gap between age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and belief systems. These components also act as a security blanket for some in times of emergency when getting the word out is important.

Before social media, churches relied on live announcements on Sunday mornings, newsletters and sometimes phone calls to relay messages to their congregation. Although some modern churches still use a combination of these options to communicate, the implementation of social media like Facebook and Twitter helped streamline content and interactive communication. Feedback and interactive communication was not a benefit of past modes of relaying a message to large amounts of people.

The Facebook page for the church in this study has 4,043 “likes” and 501 followers on Twitter. These numbers of participants show how the congregation prefers

to communicate on Facebook and Twitter and perhaps other forms of social media. Both ways of communication provide information about events and allow for interaction between the church and the congregation. The gratifications, such as to get information, to feel close to God and as an escape, highlight specific social media the church should continue to use and others they can eliminate. Church leaders take cues from these trends in planning service elements such as temporary Facebook pages for a current series, smart phone applications etc. Elements of social networking also come into play as many larger churches use social networking websites such as Facebook as a way to communicate (Bonds-Raacke & Raacke, 2010). Regular websites for mega churches serve as a place for communication, community, and church identity through branding (Kim, 2007; Baab, 2008). Because each church has a different culture, it is important to find a way to communicate that culture to those looking around for a place to call their “home church.” The way a church is branded is through the perception of others. Although a church cannot please everyone, leadership at mega churches work diligently in a creating brand that is largely accepted. “...with Christianity increasingly becoming a type of faith to sell i.e., a brand Christian churches and pastors seek new and innovative ways to mine popular culture” (Butterworth, 2011, p. 314). These new and innovative ways of communication can play out in many different channels to include social media such as Facebook and Twitter.

People visit social media outlets and websites to get more information, view the services offered, and to compare to other churches. During the trial period before they fully commit; and for the most part, church leadership is fully aware of this trend. The Internet opens a host of possibilities for churches to market their main ideologies as well

as incorporating the day-to-day aspects of the World Wide Web (Campbell, 2005; Lindlof, 1998). These types of media allow for open communication between the church and people who attend, not to mention movie clips, music clips, and other popular frames of reference that might be used to make a sermon relevant and gratifying.

People who attend non-denominational mega churches have a unique experience compared to traditional denominations. All churches are different but some use smoke machines, video, live bands, electrical instruments, DJs, intricate lighting, voting through text messages, hashtags with social media, popular secular songs, and more. These tools that are sometimes used to enhance the religious experience are also known to cause controversy because they are not traditionally accepted. Some academic studies have taken a further look at the relationship between religiosity and technology use.

Researchers in “Technology in Spiritual Formation: An Exploratory Study of Computer Mediated Religious Communicators” interviewed 13 pastors across the country in order to collect data on how they used technology to communicate with the congregation. The researchers found that many of the pastors depended on their church website or an electronic newsletter for mass communication purposes. Larger churches have to master the art of mass communication through technology because it is one of most efficient ways to spread information; whether it is a recorded sermon or the service times for an Easter weekend. The reason why large amounts of people allow this interaction to take place is that it falls into place with what they already do on a regular basis. “We learned that adoption of technology in spiritual practice mirrors previous experiences in both corporate and recreational uses of technology” (Wyche, Haye, Harvel & Grinter, 2006, p. 9). These 13 pastors also used emails to pray for or communicate with people in the

congregation that were going through hard times or in need of a connection. It is common for people to leave a church because they do not feel like they are a part of the community or close to the head pastor.

The mega church must constantly answer the question “How do we communicate with a large amount of people?” This daunting task requires church leaders to immerse themselves in how people relate and communicate on a daily basis. Social media, watching sermons online, and emailing prayer requests are just a few ways to reach out to others. “The mega church also shifts media easily because it self-consciously mimics the kind of excitement generated elsewhere” (Twitchell, 2004, p. 85). In other words, it is important for mega churches to take note of social media trends, hot topics on the news, major world events, and other current topics, in order to stay relevant in the eyes of the congregation. For example, when the economy went through a downturn and many people lost their jobs during the same time, pastors either decided to mention the state of the economy, use it as the focus of a sermon or even take a few weeks to commit a full series to the economy. A series is a collection of sermons that focus on the same topic for a few weeks in order to cover many biblical lessons over a longer period of time. Another example is the idea of using hashtags for campaign or big event weekend at a mega church. A pastor could say, “Share an Instagram picture of your favorite Bible verse and don’t forget to use the hash tag ‘#myverse!’” The shifts in media in the outside world also mirror the media changes in the church. Understanding the relationship between this church culture and the outside world provides a foundation for this study.

A Non-denominational Christian Church

No two churches are the same, even if they identify as the same religious sect. Regardless, there are some general similarities of non-denominational Christian churches in the Las Vegas area. The following details describe a brief overview of the culture of the church that is evaluated with the survey. These features are also common in other local mega churches.

Churchrelevance.com recently listed this church as one out of 493 churches in America growing fast enough to be listed on their “Churches to Watch” list. The come-as-you-are mentality allows participants to wear casual clothing if they choose. Children are encouraged to go to their own classrooms during service where they attend age-appropriate biblical teachings. Students in middle school and high school are encouraged to attend their own service produced by the student ministry. The worship band, greeting team, and video team are all comprised of student volunteers. Children and students have the opportunity to learn about God in a way that they find relevant, while parents attend the main service. The main lobby connects to the coffee shop where churchgoers stop and chat while grabbing a coffee to take into service with them.

Inside the auditorium, there is a tech booth, two professional video cameras, a stage, and seating for attendees. They are currently constructing a new auditorium that will seat 1,800 attendees per service because they outgrew their current space. In their current main auditorium, there are two side screens on either side of the stage and a center screen. Backstage there is a storage space, green room, baptistery, and a video control room. A regular service contains an announcement video, “The Pulse,” three to

four worship songs, a series video bumper, a 25 minute message from the senior pastor or the executive pastor, communion, tithing and announcements in person.

About 2,500 people attend every weekend with available service times of 8:30, 10 and 11:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. The service streams live during the first three services and one later posted on the website for anyone to reference. This church also has a considerable following on Facebook and Twitter in which people ask questions, give their opinions, and stay up to date on events. The goal here is to get a deeper, more thorough understanding of how these social media are used so that the church environment can be adapted to members' preferences. Pastors also use popular forms of social communication to teach such as Facebook and Twitter.

This study mirrors similar implications as another study of one of the largest mega churches in the country. Central Christian Church – Las Vegas, mentioned in the introduction, ranks as the top 15 largest churches in the United States. Churchrelevance.com named Central as number five in the top 30 churches in the U.S. to learn from in all areas of growth and number 15 in the top churches to learn from in all areas. Gilmore (2009) surveyed the online church members of Central Christian Church. Electronic surveys helped identify the feelings of the congregation that watched the main service online. The results showed 177 people completed the survey and 12 of those participants came to do a final interview. These participants explained how they viewed the culture at Central and how they felt about the community. One man felt like Central is a place for people to start their faith while others repeat the church slogan, "It's okay to not be okay." These opinions allowed leaders to reevaluate how they presented the media options on their Online Campus, which serves people all over the country who are unable

to visit in person. The Online Campus developed new ways to connect with the audience, evolved with media technology, and created a better community shortly after this Gilmore's study was completed.

In order to teach the basic principles of Christianity there must be a connection between the religious material and real life situation with the population at hand. The sermon material must keep biblical integrity but also maintain current validity that connects with the congregation. It is very common for churches to use popular videoclips, music sound bites and references to make a point toward a Christian principle. Keeping individuals involved with the church is very difficult to do because many feel like the sacred lifestyle has little to offer them (Petersen et al., 1997; Goreham et al., 2003). Teenagers and young adults alike begin to establish their own identity and spirituality is connected to that transformation. This study will contribute to previous research as it evaluates the valid connection between social media use and religiosity.

Uses and gratifications theory speaks to the use of available technology and therefore becomes a guideline in measuring relevance. The congregation also has the freedom to consider if the church is relevant or not, based on the technology they use on a daily basis outside of Sunday morning. "...the perception of media consumers as cognitively "active" and behaviorally "purposeful" selectors and recipients of mass communication has gathered much support in the scientific literature" (Abelman, 1989 p. 56). Leadership of modern churches looks to connect with the congregation in order to have validity behind their message and ministry.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Instrument

Social media provide tools that allow people to add a personal touch to technology, and therefore self-report how they use them on a daily basis. “U&G fell out of favor with some mass communication scholars for several decades, but the advent of telecommunications technology may well have revived it from dormancy” (Ruggeriero, 2000, p. 13). Technology acts as an equalizer because the available knowledge bridges the gap between age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and belief systems. The “likers” on this church’s Facebook give some insight that perhaps Facebook is one way they prefer to communicate.

Research Questions

The research questions are:

1. Is there a significant correlation between Facebook uses and religiosity?
2. Is there a significant correlation between Twitter uses and religiosity?
3. Is there a significant correlation between age, Facebook use, Twitter use, religiosity, how long the participant has been going to this church and the frequency of when they attend this church’s services?
4. Is there an overall positive experience with the church’s social media experience voiced in the open ended questions?

Faith commitments are measured on a scale Lickert scale similar to Abelman’s (1987). A range of one meaning “strongly disagree” to five meaning “strongly agree” was

used to assess the following faith commitments within a mega-church community: I pray regularly, I believe Jesus is the Son of God, I feel like I have a personal relationship with Jesus, and reading the Bible is an important part of my life.

A good example of religious gratifications of religious media, is the use of Bible applications for smart phones. These applications allow partisioners to have acces to the entire Bible in any translation avaiable on their phone. It is very common to see adults and students refer to their phone during the sermon instead of having an actual Bible. Founder of the blog ChurchTechToday and church technology consultant confesses, “I will add that although using digital devices for Bible study and reference during church is very useful, occasionally, I am self-conscious about this as I don’t want people to think that I am texting or checking email” (Hunter, 2011). This is the kind of usage that is not identified in the doctrine of any non-denominational Christian Mega-church, but it is a very popular practice. If leaders were aware of the uses and gratifications of their congregation, they could streamline their communication avenues and become more effective.

Social media, in this case Facebook and Twitter, is a great match for uses and gratifications theory. Particiapants seek these ways of communication for the same reasons people in the past claimed they listened to the radio or read the newspaper. This study builds on uses and gratifications studies of the past and also adds insight into religositty through the Faith commitment statements. These faith commitment statements are indicators of religiosity in that they measure aspects of the participants’ personal faith. In the following methodology section reveals details regarding the survey instrument, distribution, data collection and statistical analysis.

The methodology for this study includes an electronic survey with an open ended question section at the end. A survey lists statements or questions and gives the participant options to answer the questions. These are usually referred to as closed-ended questions because the answers are given to the participant to choose from. In this survey the participants were asked to choose one out of all the options that best describes their true feelings for each question. The open-ended question was optional, as were all of the questions, and later coded separately from the survey questions. Electronic surveys allow participants to take the survey conveniently without having to schedule an appointment or feeling the pressure of taking the survey in an unfamiliar environment. Due to some of the personal nature of the questions, the electronic survey method was the best way to get honest answers and answer the research questions.

After the consent form, the survey begins with questions regarding church membership and participation. This is followed by statements regarding Facebook friends and posts. The Facebook usage statements are next and respondents answer with the Lickert scale (this scale will be explained in the measurement section). Twitter questions regarding friends and posts follow and later transition into the Twitter statements using the Lickert scale. Subsequently, the Lickert scale is also employed as participants evaluate statements about their religiosity: “I pray regularly,” “I believe Jesus is the Son of God,” “I feel I have a personal relationship with Jesus” and “I think reading the Bible is an important aspect of my life,” (See Appendix A to see survey). These faith commitments were combined into an index to measure religiosity. The religiosity index achieved an alpha reliability of 0.854. This indicates a good reliability for this index. Appendix A (p. 59) shows the complete list of survey questions and answering scales

starting with church involvement, Facebook use, Twitter use, faith commitments, demographic questions and one open-ended question.

Measurements

This current study is modeled after Abelman's study on the uses and gratifications of the "PTL Club" (1989) and his study of religious television uses (1987). Both of his studies have a religious media focus and use the Lickert scale, ranging from, (1) "strongly agree," (2) "agree," (3) "not sure," (4) "disagree" and (5) "strongly disagree." This current study also uses some of the same motivations Abelman (1989) used in his PTL study, namely: information-learning, entertainment, social interaction, spiritual guidance, feeling close to God, moral support, companionship, pass time, habit, escape and relaxation (1989, p. 59).

Church involvement was measured by asking following three items: (1) how long the participant has attended this church, (2) how often they attend services, and (3) if they have taken the membership class (called Starting Point). General Facebook use and involvement was then measured by asking the participant the following six items: (1) how often do you use Facebook, (2) how many Facebook friends they have, (3) how many of these Facebook friends they knew through this church, (4) how often do they post statuses about this church, (5) how often do they post statuses about their faith, and (6) if they "liked" this church's Facebook page. The Facebook uses, mirroring Abelman further, are then listed and participants answer from the "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" scale for the following 11 items: (1) to get information, (2) for spiritual guidance, (3) for entertainment, (4) to feel close to God, (5) for moral support, (6) for

companionship, (7) to pass the time, (8) out of habit, (9) as an escape, (10) to relax, and (11) for social interaction. This section ends by measuring the importance of this church's Facebook page by asking participants the following five items: (1) if visiting this particular Facebook page was one of the most important things they did each day, (2) if they would miss this page if it was missing, (3) reading posts from this Facebook page was is very important in their life, (4) if they could easily do without this page for several days, and (5) if they would feel lost without this page.

General Twitter use questions then followed the Facebook questions in the same format. General Twitter use was then measured by asking the participant the following six items: (1) how many Twitter followers they have, (2) how many of these Twitter followers they knew through this church, (3) how often do they use Twitter, (4) how often do they tweet about this church, (5) how often do they tweet about their faith, and (6) do they follow this church on Twitter. The Twitter uses are then listed and participants answer from the "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" scale for the following 11 items: (1) to get information, (2) for spiritual guidance, (3) for entertainment, (4) to feel close to God, (5) for moral support, (6) for companionship, (7) to pass the time, (8) out of habit, (9) as an escape, (10) to relax, and (11) for social interaction. This section ends by measuring the importance of this church's Twitter page by asking participants the following five items: (1) if visiting this particular Twitter page was one of the most important things they did each day, (2) if they would miss this page if it was missing, (3) reading posts from this Twitter page was is very important in their life, (4) if they could easily do without this Twitter page for several days, and (5) if they would feel lost without this Twitter page.

In the next section of the survey, asked about faith commitments which measure religiosity of participants. With the same Lickert scale that Ableman uses, participants answer questions about their religiosity with the following four statements: (1) pray regularly, (2) I believe Jesus is the Son of God, (3) I feel I have a personal relationship with Jesus and (4) I think reading the Bible is an important aspect of my life. These faith commitment statements were compiled into a religiosity index and I later correlated the Facebook and Twitter uses questions with the faith commitment index. Religiosity is the main gratification of interest for this study.

Demographic questions measure a basic background of the participant and the model for these questions were taken from the U.S. Census. Sex is measured by the participant choosing one of the following three items (1) male, (2) female, or (3) transgendered. Age was measured by the year the participant was born (they entered their year of birth). Marital status options included one of the following five items: (1) single, (2) married, (3) separated, (4) divorced and (5) widowed. Participants also had the option of adding their ethnicity. Options included any of the following seven items: (1) White, (2) Black or African American, (3) Hispanic, (4) Native American or Alaska Native, (5) Asian, (6) Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander or (7) Other (please specify). Highest education completed ranged from the following eight items: (1) did not graduate high school, (2) graduated from high school, (3) one year of college, (4) two years of college, (5) three years of college, (6) graduated from college, (7) some graduate school and (8) completed graduate school. Approximate average household income ranged from the following nine items: (1) \$0 to \$24,999, (2) \$25,000 to \$49,999, (3) \$50,000 to

\$74,999, (4) \$75,000 to \$99,999, (5) \$100,000 to \$124,999, (6) \$125,000 to \$149,999, (7) \$150,000 to \$174,999, (8) \$175,000 to \$199,999, and (9) \$200,000 and up.

The last demographic question asked participants to describe their employment status. Participants could choose from one of the following six items: (1) retired, (2) not employed-not looking for work, (3) not employed-looking for work, (4) disabled-not able to work, (5) employed-working one to 39 hours per week and (6) employed-working 40 or more hours per week. The last question is the optional open-ended question that states, “The things you consider most important about this church’s social media may not have been covered in this survey. Please feel free to make any additional comments in the space provided below.” The anonymity of the survey allowed the participants to respond honestly and will give leaders an inside look at their congregation’s social media uses in relation to religiosity. This inside look does not include details about the participants, rather an overview of trending correlations between the uses of Facebook, Twitter and the faith commitments.

The overall purpose of the questionnaire was to assess the uses and gratifications of Facebook and Twitter and relate this information to levels of religiosity. There are two broad categories of questions: social media use and personal religiosity as the main gratification of this survey. The survey items allow the researcher to assess the relationship between these two areas. “The components of religiosity with which we began are familiar to social psychologists who generally recognize the importance of making a decision between knowing (cognition), feeling (affect), and doing (behavior)” (Cornwall & Albrecht, 1986). The social media questions shed light on how social media play a role in these dimensions of religiosity to expand uses and gratification research.

Survey Distribution

Before receiving IRB approval on July 31, 2012, by the Office of the Protection of Research Subjects at UNLV, church leaders were asked if they would be interested in being part of a study regarding Facebook and Twitter usage. They agreed and were later asked to get contact information of members who would be willing to take the survey as a pilot test. Five church members agreed to take the survey and the survey link was sent to their personal emails. All five participants took the survey and reported suggestions regarding clarity of some of the questions. Minor changes were made with the format and wording and was finalized before congregation heard about it.

During the announcement portion of the service, pastors informed parishioners of this third party social media survey. Parishioners were also informed that the information would potentially help leaders to use social media in a better way. The survey was posted electronically on the church website with a link and later shared through their Facebook page no more than three times. As a result, only 65 out of the projected 200 participants completed and submitted the survey initially.

Church leaders were asked if they would send out a message to their email database in the hopes of gathering more information. They agreed and sent out an email with approved text from both my former chairman and leadership from this church. On December 4, 2012, this survey was launched with an email to all 11,600 email addresses found in their main database. Although this main database included anyone who had ever provided their email address to this church, the consent form served as a filter to remove attendees who were inactive, underage or staff members. This email action warranted the responses of 262 people who completed this social media survey. As a way to eliminate

bias, staff members refrained from taking the survey as requested in the consent form; this is strictly a way for the congregation to report their social media uses with Facebook and Twitter. If they checked, “Yes, proceed to survey” on the electronic survey they were given access to answer the questions on the subsequent pages (with the option to quit at any time). If they checked, “No, Thank you,” they were excused from the survey with the message, “Thank you for your time.” The actual questions of the survey also helped to filter the respondents, such as “How often do you attend services at this church?” Data were generated from the electronic instrument Survey Monkey, designed to assess social media uses and levels of personal religiosity. The submitted surveys were sent directly to my Survey Monkey account that housed all of the data.

Data Collection

The initial sample size was 200 respondents so when it reached 262 respondents the data was saved in the Survey Monkey program. This program automatically calculated frequencies but further statistics were needed in order to fulfill the purpose of this study. The data, except for the responses to the open-ended question, was exported from Survey Monkey into a SAV file, a format the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences program (SPSS), can read, and code. The SAV file was then uploaded into SPSS where further statistical functions were performed.

A frequency function was performed to get the mean, standard deviation and N (amount of respondents) for each variable in the survey. The Pearson correlation function was used to find relationships between religiosity and the use of Facebook and Twitter as defined and operationalized in this study. A Pearson correlation function was also used to

find possible correlations between the following five combinations: (1) religiosity and age, (2) religiosity and frequency of using Facebook, (3) religiosity and frequency of using Twitter, (4) religiosity and length of time going to this church, and (5) religiosity and how often they attend services.

Each of the open-ended comments were reviewed and sorted into categories of dominant themes. A second individual found similar categories and made suggestions about additional ones. Both readers agreed on these categories and irrelevant comments were not included in the discussion.

Validity and Reliability

This survey has content validity because the questions encompass an exhaustive account of the social media used within this church. It refers to the extent to which all aspects of the topic are examined within in the survey. In other words it refers to the actual measures of the study. Doing so ensures that research questions are answered to the fullest extent and that the topic itself is fully explored in an effort to have a complete study. These questions are the key components in understanding who the parishioners are and what form of social media they continue to prefer.

Internal consistency reliability is a way to test the actual questions of the survey. This test looks at similar questions within in the survey and evaluates how participants answer them. It can determine if the questions receive a wide range of answers or if participants see the similarity and continue to answer them in the same way. For example, if a participant uses Facebook to be closer to God, they should also agree with the faith commitment questions; any other correlation has low reliability.

This study also has face validity because it appears as if it can measure uses and religiosity just by looking at it. This is an important aspect for this survey because the questions and format have to match up with the main goal; to take the religiosity as the main gratification and compare it to the uses of Facebook and Twitter. Face validity is also important for participants because it allows them to trust that the survey will use the information correctly and is coming from a credible source. Reviewing the findings in this next section shows that it maintains validity.

Limitations

Staff members were encouraged to opt out of taking this survey in an effort to keep the responses completely pure of bias as leaders are also employees. With that being said, all of the staff members attend this church with their families and have a community of friends at this church. Although some could have taken this survey as a member of the congregation and not as an employee, it was decided to leave out their responses.

Another limitation is that participants could skip any question throughout the survey and advance to the rest of the questions without restriction. The percentages discussed in the previous sections do not include the responses from participants who skipped questions. Restricting the participants, especially with the faith commitments, could have given the impression that in order to finish the survey they had to have their faith figured out. Restriction could have alienated someone who did not feel like answering a particular question due to sensitivity.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

Findings

A total of 262 parishioners participated in this survey. The response count for females was 56% and males were 44%. No transgendered participants were reported. The ethnicity with the highest number of participants was those who reported they were white at 201 respondents ($M = 1.00$, $SD = .071$). The average age of participants for this survey was in their early forties and 55% are married ($M = 2.17$, $SD = 1.062$). The average participant completed at least at some college ($M = 4.99$, $SD = 2.042$) and 22% graduated from college. The average yearly income is \$50,000 to \$74,999 ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 2.043$). More than 52% ($M = 4.75$, $SD = 1.745$) are employed and are working 40 hours or more per week.

The faith commitment statements help to measure the religiosity of the participants and were combined to form an index of religiosity. The alpha reliability, Cronbach's alpha, of the religiosity index is .854 (this represents a good level of reliability).

Those who use Facebook for information had a significant correlation with the religiosity index ($r = .176$, $p = < 0.01$). There were significant correlations among the following Faith Commitments and using Facebook for information: Those who pray regularly ($r = .174$, $p = < 0.01$), those who believe Jesus is the Son of God ($r = .221$, $p = < 0.01$) and those who have a personal relationship with Jesus ($r = .146$, $p = < 0.05$). Those who use Facebook for social interaction had a significant

correlation with believing Jesus is the Son of God ($r = .199$, $p = <0.01$) and having a personal relationship with Jesus ($r = .155$, $p = <.05$). Those who believe Jesus is the Son of God had a significant correlation with the following Facebook uses: for information ($r = .221$, $p = < 0.01$), entertainment ($r = .169$, $p = < 0.05$) and moral support ($r = .138$, $p = < 0.05$).

Those who use Twitter out of habit had a significant correlation with the religiosity index ($r = .224$, $p = < 0.05$) and those who use Twitter as an escape also had a significant correlation ($r = .265$, $p < 0.05$) with the religiosity index. There was also a significant correlation with the religiosity index and those who use Twitter in general ($r = .223$, $p < 0.05$). Overall, that was the only correlation found between age, Facebook use, Twitter use, religiosity, how long the participant has been going to this church and the frequency of when they attend this church's services. Those who have a personal relationship with Jesus had a significant correlation with the following uses for Twitter: spiritual guidance ($r = .220$, $p = < 0.05$), entertainment ($r = .227$, $p = < 0.05$) and to feel close to God ($r = .223$, $p = < 0.05$). Those who consider reading the Bible as an important part of their lives had a significant correlation with the following uses of Twitter: for spiritual guidance ($r = .276$, $p = < 0.05$), feel close to God ($r = .303$, $p = < 0.01$), moral support ($r = .309$, $p = < 0.01$), companionship ($r = .237$, $p = <0.05$), out of habit ($r = .261$, $p = < 0.05$) and as an escape ($r = .258$, $p = <0.05$). Those who pray regularly had a significant correlation with using Twitter as an escape ($r = .233$, $p = < 0.05$). The open-ended findings are later discussed after the Facebook and Twitter frequencies.

Participants agree they use Facebook for information ($N = 227$) ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 1.233$) and ($N = 228$) participants disagree that they use Facebook for spiritual guidance

($M = 2.33$, $SD = 1.100$). In addition, ($N = 228$) participants agree that they use Facebook for entertainment ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 1.102$) while ($N = 229$) participants agree they use it to pass the time ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 1.115$). A total of ($N = 227$) respondents reported that they use Facebook for social interaction ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 1.078$). Table 1 shows a relationship between Facebook uses, individual faith commitments, the religiosity index (FC) and Table 3 (p. 77) shows all frequencies.

The Twitter use questions showed signs of a deeper connection shown in Table 2 (p. 76). Participants ($N = 85$) agreed that they use Twitter for entertainment ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 1.383$). Participants ($N = 85$) also disagreed that they used Twitter to feel close to God ($M = 1.91$, $SD = .908$).

Open-Ended Question

The open-ended question gave participants the option to give their opinion regarding social media use at this church. It asks, “The things you consider most important about this church’s social media may not have been covered in this survey. Please feel free to make any additional comments in the space provided below.” A total of 63 were submitted. I, along with my former thesis chairman, evaluated each of the comments to look for any repeated phrases and key words. We agreed on classifying the survey responses based on these popular key words and phrases occurring five times or more.

After a full review, seven categories were created to accommodate the open-ended responses. Out of the 63 responses, 13 respondents submitted statements that showed signs of resisting social media, 11 respondents mentioned their constant search

for information, 11 respondents focused on finding out more about events, eight participants mentioned daily Bible verses as an addition to the church's social media, eight participants had positive opinions about the church's Facebook, six respondents did not know this church had social media and five participants mentioned the preference to use this church's website instead of their social media. The remaining 17 comments were irrelevant to the survey, such as "I love pie." The identity of this church has remained anonymous by replacing the name of it by using "this church." The following includes examples of each category. The responses are listed with the same numbers they have in Appendix A: The complete list of responses is in Appendix B (p. 65).

Resistant to Social Media

27. I'm not sure social media for my relationship with God is something I would enjoy.
 18. Please consider how best to communicate with the congregation that does not use Facebook or other social media, we want to remain informed as well.
- (Responses 1, 6, 7, 13, 18 20, 27, 29, 34, 37, 40, 56 and 57 fall under this category)

Information Seeking

8. The social media of this church is very important because it is difficult to get specific information at the church itself. People that are manning the booths need to be more informed.
 38. The information is easily shared on Facebook. I love that they post videos of some of the activities that the church participates in.
- (Responses 2, 4, 6, 8, 18, 25, 36, 38, 42, 49, 59 fall under this category)

Events

54. I like to see what events are coming up.

58. Upcoming events including concerts, night of praise, sermon message, etc.

(Responses 4, 7, 8, 16, 25, 28, 36, 49, 54, 58, 60 fall under this category)

Daily Verses (Encouragement)

60. I wish they posted more inspirational quotes/bible verses.

36. Also, maybe it would be nice to have some quotes/ food for thought from what our pastors and staff are reading currently. It would encourage people to use their minds for God more.

(Responses 7, 9, 14, 24, 36, 60, 61, and 63 fall under this category)

Social Media Supporters

31. This church is very good about keeping people updated using Facebook.

26. I really appreciate this church and the varying ministries posts on Facebook to keep me current on what studies we are in and what activities are up ahead.

(Responses 5, 12, 26, 31, 44, 46, 59 and 60 fall under this category)

Unaware of Church Social Media

22. I did not know about this church's Facebook page nor can I remember social media being prominently advocated.

51. I will definitely look for and follow this church on Twitter because I think it can be a valuable tool in many ways.

(Responses 5, 15, 17, 22, 27 and 33 fall under this category)

Prefers Website

40. I don't see the Twitter comments regularly updated. Facebook is pretty good but I use the website for information, not Facebook.

57. I don't use this church's Facebook page, but I visit the website regularly.

(Responses 4, 6, 22, 40 and 57 fall under this category)

Discussion

This study examined the use of Facebook and Twitter at a mega church in Las Vegas, Nevada. This use was compared to an index of religiosity and age. There were 29 total questions asked in the electronic survey for this study. Overall, the findings show the Facebook and Twitter uses of parishioners of this church have a relationship with their personal faith commitment to the Christian faith. With the help of Abelman's models of measurement, using the Lickert scale and the same gratification categories, this survey was able to highlight significant correlations. This academic foundation also allowed for the findings to be a relevant addition to the history and body of work that have been validated by previous researchers. These data also represent details that were previously unknown, such as social media uses and preferences of this congregation. This aspect is important because it allows for customization of mass communication in the future, not only for this church, but also any large organization looking for better ways to communicate to their target audience.

Although there are many social media tools, the focus for this study was Facebook and Twitter. At the beginning of this research, this church used Facebook and Twitter as their main sources of social media communication. It was important that the research mirrored the same social media uses in order to maintain relevance in the results.

This discussion section will review the findings and highlight other research methodologies that could also work for this study and recommendations for future researchers regarding this topic. Discussing the relationship between religiosity and social media use, as is shown in the findings, reveals why this topic is important to examine. Assuming that there is little significance of religiosity within the construct of uses and gratifications is no longer valid. A closer look at the meaning behind the religiosity index points to an area of study waiting to be explored.

The religiosity index gives a personal look into the beliefs of the participants. Uses and gratifications studies tend to focus on the use trends in comparison to demographics, instead of introducing separate factors to include religiosity (Abelman 1987, 1988, 1989; Bonds-Racke & Raacke 2010; Pisoniero 2012; Katz 1959, 1960; Katz & Gurevitch 1973). Even though it was optional to share their personal Christian beliefs, more than 246 people decided to participate in this section.

A significant correlation was found between the religiosity index and those who use Facebook for information. This does not exclude the other uses; rather it highlights the one use that is related to religiosity in a significant way. Using Facebook for information is a common use and is therefore a topic of interest in comparison to religiosity. The need to be informed, repeated in the open-ended section, might also indicate a desire to be in community. While using Facebook for information can pertain to any number of things, it is the need to be informed that continues to show up throughout the findings section. A participant could use Facebook to look up details of an event, double check a birthday of a friend, or to get a look at a friend's wedding pictures that were recently posted and so on.

There was also a significant correlation between using Facebook for information and every faith commitment variable except reading the Bible. This might be because the interface of Facebook allows for users to share more aspects of their lives. For example, Facebook is set up to keep track of everything you do on a timeline that shows up in your personal profile and in your newsfeed. If you enter your life events in your timeline, such as your birthday, college graduation day, wedding anniversary, birth of your child and so on, Facebook will keep track of it and let your friends know when you add them as well. All of this information, including photos and checking in to the location where you are updating from, is available for fellow users to view and participate in once provided. This information is then directly connected to the personal, everyday life of users, including faith commitments. In general, sharing personal information is easier with Facebook.

Those who believe Jesus is the Son of God showed significance with using Facebook for information, entertainment, moral support and social interaction. This finding also shows the power of the Facebook interface as it allows users to share information and materials they find entertaining (such as videos, photos, news articles and so on) in their newsfeeds that goes out to everyone on their friends list. Although you can share these materials in a private manner through Facebook messaging, the newsfeed is a constant source of information that shows the material in an open manner. As a consequence, the photos, videos and other links are not hidden, but rather automatically previewed by simply scrolling through the newsfeed.

No matter what kind of information is sought, the ultimate goal is to feel included and therefore part of a larger church community. Integration is one of four elements that help define community along with membership, influence and fulfillment (McMillan &

George, 1984). This sense of community is noted in this study as a minor, but important, aspect to this research.

A significant correlation was found between the religiosity index and those who use Twitter in general, out of habit and as an escape. The interface of Twitter might be a leading factor for a higher level of significance among religiosity. Twitter was designed for short messages (called tweets) that are no more than 140 characters. These constraints force users to choose their words wisely. Although you have the option to upload a photo or video to Twitter, it is mainly a medium for words. Users are known to shorten words to make their tweets fit and retweet messages from others. Unlike Facebook, users are able to share insights without getting too personal. A celebrity or well-known pastor will likely use their personal Facebook to upload family pictures and event invites. It's highly unlikely that a famous person or group will get "likers" on Facebook if they do not upload pictures, check-in at different locations, update their status or add other personal elements. Alternatively, Twitter users can gain a significant following with wit, information and inspiration alone.

There was a significant correlation between those who have a personal relationship with Jesus and using Twitter for spiritual guidance, entertainment and feeling close to God. There was also significant correlation between those who view reading the Bible as an important part of their daily lives and the following Twitter uses: for spiritual guidance, feel close to God, moral support, companionship, out of habit and to escape. All of these significant correlations lend themselves to the way Twitter was designed. Pastors and churches share words of wisdom and daily Bible verses on Twitter without the pressure of having to add a photo or video. Twitter followers are then exposed to

inspiration and provoking thoughts through the words instead of images. This community can find comfort in positive religious thoughts and even retweet them to share with their followers if they feel compelled to do so. Twitter can help cultivate some aspects of having a personal relationship with Jesus and reading the Bible daily, depending on how the participant is using it and who they are following.

In addition, the open-ended responses gave participants freedom to make suggestions and share their feelings regarding social media at this church. Although some shared opinions that were irrelevant to this topic, the majority of the responses were recognized and coded to benefit the findings of the survey. A total of 13 responses showed signs of resistance to social media in general, as well as in this church. There are signs of participants having positive experiences with the social media at this church. Out of the 46 relevant responses, only eight of them mentioned a positive social media experience. This is due to the resistance of social media and frustration with the lack of cohesive information about events in particular. The following recommendations could help this church use Facebook and Twitter more effectively among their congregation.

Recommendations

This church would benefit from posting inspirational words and quotes from the main pastors as well as Bible verses on Facebook and Twitter. These kinds of posts receive significantly more attention (measured by “likes,” comments and shares) than any other posts. For example, an inspirational quote from the main pastor received 113 likes and 28 people shared it. Conversely, a post reminding participants about the current series and service times received 12 likes and no shares. Participants relate to their

pastors because they hear from them every week from the stage. Pastors share personal stories about their lives and people get to know them over time as someone they can relate to. At this church, there is one lead pastor, but several other pastors also deliver weekend sermons on an irregular rotation. Whether it is the lead pastor or the other pastors at this church, there is a significant need for inspiration and hope through the church's social media. Participants get that inspiration when they can relate to a topic, quote or Bible verse through social media.

The findings show that there are more Facebook users than Twitter users in this sample but the Twitter users had more significant correlations with the faith commitments. Church leaders should consider a more personal touch on the Facebook page, such as pictures of churchgoers during the events. People like to see themselves and to be featured on the church's Facebook would be seen as an honor in some respects. Church leaders should also consider the inspirational quotes and Bible verses on a daily basis due to the interface of Twitter and the fact that their congregation was found to have more significant correlations with religiosity on Twitter.

Parishioners' uses of social media in relation to religiosity could help direct a more focused approach. For example, the religiosity index has more significant correlations with Twitter and it might help to use and promote it more. Conversely, the majority of their parishioners are on Facebook and a look at customizing that information could help as well. The findings lead to the idea that this study could have been done in other ways to warrant deeper examination on user preferences within religiosity.

Future Studies

An ethnography is a qualitative type of research that allows the researcher to observe and take note of the participants in their natural environment. Researchers can evaluate the participants without the participant having to self report through a list of questions. Rather, all data are recorded by the researcher. Future researchers could consider taking this approach to further build on religiosity and social media.

Another approach for future researchers is content analysis. This form of study is the examination of actual text. This would be beneficial in this study because researchers could analyze posts and comments on the church's Facebook and Twitter. Their website also has comments from participants that researchers could study to get a better understanding of religiosity in the social media world. This could have an impact on how churches communicate to their congregations within the construct of social media.

Future studies could benefit by examining visual media forms, such as live streaming video and YouTube. Some mega churches live stream their services online and upload videos of worship for parishioners to watch remotely.

This church has 280 followers on Instagram, a popular social media tool that allows users to share via photos and short video clips. A user can choose to follow other users or simply collect users along the way. The only way to communicate is through "likes" and comments for a photo or video clip. Some believe Instagram has less clutter than Facebook in the newsfeed because of this fact. A future researcher could examine the photos, video clips and activity of followers shared on this particular Instagram profile to further expand the academic findings under uses and gratifications as well.

As for most organizations, distributing information is an important and multifaceted undertaking. For this church, it requires attention to the latest trends while also maintaining religiosity and personal preferences of the parishioners. While some would log on to the Facebook page for up to date information, others would use the website or just ask a volunteer at the information booth for more information. The need to be informed was one of the top gratifications with Facebook, Twitter and in the open-ended question. Thumma & Travis (2007) explain that mega church attendees have to be able to relate to the culture and community of the church. Something as basic as being informed gives the parishioner a sense of solid community where they feel welcomed and part of the mega church.

Traditional churches who may not use social media to communicate can take the findings of this study to also examine their communication needs. While this study found significant correlations between religiosity and Facebook and Twitter use, traditional churches might find the similar correlations among their mass communication tools. Some traditional mass communication tools include emails, hardcopy newsletters, announcement/bulletin board inside church, phone calls and word of mouth. Having a preference for one or more of the previous communication channels could reveal levels of usage as well as religiosity. This can be applied to any church of any size or religion that has communication between the leaders and the congregation.

According to one scholar, "In recent years individuals increasingly have interpreted their religious commitments and beliefs in individualistic terms and less in terms of institutional loyalty and obligation," (Petersen, 1997, p. 1,073). These individualistic terms, among other things, relate to communication preferences. The

growth of mega churches is attributed to the acknowledgement of these preferences as well as others. The “McDonaldization” (Watson & Scalen, 2008, p. 171) of the church is one explanation for the huge growth among churches. A deeper look into the individual gratifications could lead a broader understanding of uses and gratification research in the future.

APPENDIX A

Survey

1. Consent Form shown in Appendix D
2. How long have been coming to this church?
 - Several months or less
 - About a year
 - 2 to 4 years
 - 5 to 7 years
 - 8 to 10 years
 - More than 10 years
3. How often do you attend services at this church?
 - Never
 - Several times a year
 - About once a month
 - Every week
 - More than once a week
4. Have you taken the membership class, Starting Point, at this church?
 - Yes, I have taken Starting Point
 - I have not taken Starting Point, but I attend services
 - I am not sure
 - I do not attend church services or other activities at this church

If you do not have a Facebook profile, please SKIP to question 13.

5. How often do you use Facebook?
 - Never
 - Less than once a week
 - About once a week
 - Several times a week
 - At least every day
 - Several times a day
6. How many Facebook friends do you have?
 - 0 to 299
 - 300 to 499
 - 500 to 699
 - 700 to 999
 - 1,000 or more

7. How many Facebook friends do you know through this church?
- None
 - Less than half
 - About half
 - More than half
 - Almost all
8. How often do you post statuses about this church?
- Never
 - Less than once a week
 - About once a week
 - Several times a week
 - At least every day
 - Several times a day
9. How often do you post statuses about your faith?
- Never
 - Less than once a week
 - About once a week
 - Several times a week
 - At least every day
10. Have you “liked” this church’s Facebook page?
- No
 - I didn’t know this church had a Facebook page
 - I’m not sure
 - Yes
11. Please rate yourself according to your Facebook usage by selecting one of the following for each of the uses: Strongly disagree, Disagree, Not sure, Agree or Strongly agree. “I use Facebook...”
- to get information
 - for spiritual guidance
 - for entertainment
 - to feel close to God
 - for moral support
 - for companionship
 - to pass the time
 - out of habit
 - as an escape
 - to relax
 - for social interaction
12. Please answer the following questions by rating yourself with a Strongly disagree, Disagree, Not sure, Agree or Strongly agree.

- Going to this church's Facebook page is one of the most important things I do each day
- If this church's Facebook page wasn't working, I would really miss it
- Reading Facebook posts from this church is very important in my life
- I could easily do without this church's Facebook page for several days
- I would feel lost without this church's Facebook page

13. How many Twitter followers do you have

- 0 to 299
- 300 to 499
- 500 to 699
- 700 to 999
- 1,000 or more

If you do not have a Twitter account SKIP to question 21.

14. How many Twitter followers do you know through this church?

- None
- Less than half
- About half
- More than half
- Almost all

15. How often do you use Twitter

- Never
- Less than once a week
- About once a week
- Several times a week
- At least every day
- Several times a day

16. How often do you tweet about this church?

- Never
- Less than once a week
- About once a week
- Several times a week
- At least every day
- Several times a day

17. How often do you tweet about your faith?

- Never
- Less than once a week
- About once a week
- Several times a week
- At least every day
- Several times a day

18. Do you follow this church on Twitter?

- No
- I didn't know this church was on Twitter
- I'm not sure
- Yes

19. Please rate yourself according to your Twitter usage by selecting one of the following for each of the uses: Strongly disagree, Disagree, Not sure, Agree or Strongly agree. "I use Twitter..."

- to get information
- for spiritual guidance
- for entertainment
- to feel close to God
- for moral support
- for companionship
- to pass the time
- out of habit
- as an escape
- to relax
- for social interaction

20. Please answer the following questions by rating yourself with a Strongly disagree, Disagree, Not sure, Agree or Strongly agree.

- Going to this church's Twitter page is one of the most important things I do each day
- If this church's Twitter page wasn't working, I would really miss it
- Reading Tweets from this church is very important in my life
- I could easily do without this church's Twitter page for several days
- I would feel lost without this church's Twitter page

21. Please select the answer that best describes your faith and commitments with either a Strongly disagree, Disagree, Not sure, Agree or Strongly agree.

- I pray regularly
- I believe Jesus is the Son of God
- I feel like I have a personal relationship with Jesus
- Reading the Bible is an important part of my life

22. Demographic Questions

- Sex
- Male
- Female
- Transgendered

23. Please enter the year were you born.

24. What is your current marital status?
- Single
 - Married
 - Separated
 - Divorced
 - Widowed
25. What is your ethnicity?
- White
 - Black or African American
 - Hispanic
 - Native American or Alaska Native
 - Asian
 - Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
 - Other (Please specify)
26. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
- Did not graduate high school
 - Graduated from high school
 - 1 year of college
 - 2 years of college
 - 3 years of college
 - Graduated from college
 - Some graduate school
 - Completed graduate school
27. What is your approximate average household income?
- \$0 to \$24,999
 - \$25,000 to \$49,999
 - \$50,000 to \$74,999
 - \$75,000 to \$99,999
 - \$100,000 to \$124,999
 - \$125, 000 to \$149,999
 - \$150,000 to \$174,999
 - \$175,000 to \$199,999
 - \$200,000 and up
28. Which of the following categories best describes your employment status?
- Retired
 - Not employed, NOT looking for work
 - Not employed, looking for work
 - Disabled, not able to work
 - Employed, working 1 to 39 hours per week
 - Employed, working 40 or more hours per week

29. The things you consider most important about this church's social media may not have been covered in this survey. Please feel free to make any additional comments in the space below.

Thank you for your time! None of your individual information will be shared with this church. This church will only be notified of group trends.

APPENDIX B

Survey Comments

1. I just like important updates and seeing what they are doing in the community. Other than that, I do not rely on social media for many things
2. Information! Love updates etc.! Would love to see social groups formed through FB based on interests... i.e.: snowboarding, hiking, parenting etc.!
3. My suggestion would be to give people a few options FACEBOOK LITE, GRANDE OR VENTE. Personally, I “unfriend” people who post every day because I want don’t have time to read all the “junk postings.” I have about 100 friends and I love the ones that post something meaningful about once a week. If you are really going to try to use social media to reach and bless people (which it sounds like you are), then you might consider tailoring it to 5 or 10 demographic groups a) single under 30 b) single over 30 c) married without children d) married with pre-teens at home e) married with teens at home f) single with kids at home g) grandparents h) certain special needs groups like single parents, people in recovery, grieving people, people suffering with a crisis of faith or great loss, etc.
4. I actively serve at this church. I log on to their website if I want to see a schedule of events; or to retrieve contact information. I use the online services to tithe.
5. I will definitely look for and follow this church on Twitter because I think it can be a valuable tool in many ways. And LOVE that their on Facebook.
6. Frustrated that the church website is not kept current; that I’m forced to go to Facebook to find most current info. Dislike Facebook
7. I do not go on Facebook that often or for very long. Weekly updates on events and upcoming series is important. Weekly or daily verses would be nice to read occasionally to help get through the day. Posts about how to get plugged in and links to other crossing Facebook groups.
8. The social media of at this church is VERY important because it is difficult to get specific information at the church itself. People that are manning the booths need to be more informed of the overall events because there are so many going on at one time - it’s easy to feel lost and just not worry about what you were trying to find out in the first place. Facebook is especially helpful to stay in tuned to what is going on and upcoming times and schedules. I love this church!!!

9. This church needs more updates on Facebook to make it more relevant. Needs a spiritual verse or something that draws in besides what happened and what will happen.
10. A safe place where people don't offer me drugs.
11. Do you have any groups that meet other than Thursday evening?
12. Just moved to Las Vegas in June. Found this church online and love it. I have a friend in California that is following this church online as well.
13. The problem with social media is that I am too busy to have time for it. I use the internet all the time however. It's a great tool.
14. A daily scripture message or another message related to the weekly sermon would be a great addition
15. I haven't added the page. Now that I know about it I will look for it. Reason I don't attend is because I am always in LA on the weekends for one reason or another but this weekend I was planning on going. Thank you for the survey!
16. Share events and how to better get involved.
17. I never knew this church had a Facebook page, but I will be sure to "like" it today!
18. Please consider how best to communicate with the congregation that does not use Facebook or other social media; we want to remain informed as well
19. We really enjoy the option to watch church online and see older sermons.
20. I use email where I am NOT limited by keyboard, display, or the size of communication. Your survey said nothing about email from which this survey originated.
21. I am not single. I have a promise ring to my boyfriend and we live together. we plan on getting married
22. I did not know about this church being on Facebook nor can I remember social media being prominently advocated. The website is promoted at church but I do not remember Facebook or Twitter being promoted
23. Don't think the staff understands the cost of keeping up with changing media for the average person who does not purchase every new piece of electronics that comes along. Seems as if some of the staff had to buy the equipment themselves they would not be so quick to keep us behind the power curve.

24. HOW ABOUT A SITE THAT ADDRESSES KEY QUESTIONS ABOUT FAITH AND VALUES, MAYBE A CHAT SITE/BLOG WHERE PEOPLE CAN GET ANSWERS TO LIFE'S QUESTIONS FROM PEERS OR CHURCH STAFF
25. Providing info on upcoming events or needs for this church
26. I really appreciate this church and the varying ministries posts on Facebook to keep me current on what studies we are in and what activities are up ahead
27. I really haven't followed this church on Social Media. My fiancée & I go church almost every week that we are in town because we really enjoy the sermons & how the pastors relate it to everyday life. I'm not sure social media for my relationship with God is something I would enjoy. I believe God is there to keep us balanced in our lives & to understand how he would want us to treat each other
28. Keeps me updated on events
29. We never needed this before; it is a thing of the world. "come out and be a separate people:"
30. This survey is poor. It does not allow any comments for any of the questions to clarify the answer. This will slant the survey to incorrect conclusions. For example; I travel a lot for business and attend this church every week when I am in town and then may not be here for 6 months. It has little to do with the crossing being a good place to worship or not. I think it is great; I am just not here in Las Vegas very often. Face book: My church friends on face book. The "less than half" answer of my face book contacts. There is no value to this. ALL OF the friends I have made at this church are connected with me on face book. Unfortunately, I have much of my family living in Europe, Canada, etc. and we use use face book to connect. So crossing friends of face book is 100%. I don't have the time to comment on other aspects of this survey, but I will comment to our pastoral team on my concerns as to the weaknesses of this survey. Thanks for listening
31. This church is very good about keeping people updated using Facebook.
32. I used to be part of an email for singles but haven't received anything from this church in probably years. I was surprised my email was even still on file to get this survey.
33. Was not aware of it but will surely check it out
34. Sorry I don't use social media

35. web-based opportunities for participation, e.g. videos, streamed services, e-mail notifications, are all essential to my staying connected & being an involved member (in spite of physical distances)
36. I would love to see more announcements of the times of our special events because sometimes I have a hard time tracking that information down :) Also, maybe it would be nice to have some quotes/ food for thought from what our pastors and staff are reading currently. It would encourage people to use their minds for God more. I think if they see what our leadership is being fed with.
37. Don't market to me, be personal. I am on social media to connect w people. Not to be marketed to. Post better content on social media & help us c
38. The information is easily shared on Facebook. I love that they post videos of some of the activities that the church participates in.
39. I believe it is important, but not as important to me.
40. I don't see the Twitter comments regularly updated. Facebook is pretty good but I use the website for info, not Facebook.
41. I like pie
42. It's a good way to send info to a lot of people and not end up as spam. But it's definitely not crucial to my life.
43. YouVersion Live Event weekly says Fri Jan 27, 2012 to Wed Jan 31, 2018. This is confusing. At first it appears the weekly is not up-to-date. I go to Live Event before coming to service and sometimes print out the sermon notes
44. The Facebook page is a great tool for people who attend and for people interested in attending. It is a good page and I am glad this church utilizes it
45. with so many things going on it makes it easy to stay in touch
46. I refer to Facebook for happenings at the church
47. The vimeo video availability and live broadcast online is genius especially to stay connected when ill or children are ill and or cannot attend service but want to hear the message or share with others! It makes it easy to share on Facebook with others. Love it! Thank you!!
48. Turn UP the music - make it really ROCK! Have the SAME worship leaders each week so we can get used to what they sing and how they sing it. The POST a video of their worship song each week that we may share on our pages too

49. Keeps me informed about events
50. I use the event postings for the men's breakfast as my sole reminder to attend
51. I believe that one of the investigators was or currently is an employee, which invalidates its confidentiality.
52. Under Education it would be nice to have a category for Vocational Education as it requires continued Education while you are in the Business so you can renew your License. Thank you.
53. dry boring youth oriented written off singles 40Plus, 50 plus of age
54. I like to see what events are coming up
55. kids, teens
56. I feel there are still many older people 65+ that do not have a computer. Many have commented that it is difficult to find out what is going on at the church. We assume all people today are tied to their Facebook, twitter or computer and it is just not so.
57. I don't use their Facebook page, but I visit the website regularly.
58. upcoming events including concerts, night of praise, sermon message, etc
59. I like to stay updated and informed, so I really like to see regular posts on Facebook
60. I love being able to see what's going on at the church and any special events that are coming up. I wish they posted more inspirational quotes/bible verses! I think they should post more because I can't get enough! LOVE THIS CHURCH!!!
61. I have a twitter account; I just don't utilize it like I do Facebook. I'm a small group leader and Facebook seems to work well for me re: sending out daily devotionals and prayer requests. My friends use Facebook more as well. I use Twitter to connect with my teen girls in the Student Ministry more.
62. I like being able to share this church with my friends back in Michigan
63. Love the YouVersion notes and the small group questions!

Table 1

Correlations Among Facebook Uses and Faith Commitment Variables

	Pray	Jesus	Personal	Bible	FC
Info	.174**	.221**	.146*	.103	.176**
Spirit. Guide.	.087	.121	.117	.071	.100
Entertain.	-.032	.169*	.108	-.118	.002
Feel God	.113	.106	.077	.101	.110
Moral Supp.	-.023	.138*	.060	-.066	.016
Companion.	-.038	.117	.081	-.088	.00
Pass Time	-.036	.087	-.035	-.156	-.071
Habit	-.017	.104	-.012	-.104	-.033
Escape	-.088	.048	-.051	-.171	-.102
Relax	-.050	.060	-.048	-.174	-.087
Social	.064	.199**	.155*	.069	.128

Notes. *N*'s range from 216 to 228 due to occasional missing data. **Pray** = I pray regularly. **Jesus** = I believe Jesus is the Son of God. **Personal** = I feel like I have a personal relationship with Jesus. **Bible** = Reading the Bible is an important part of my life.

FC = Faith Commitments

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$

Table 2

Correlations Among Twitter Uses and Faith Commitment Variables

	Pray	Jesus	Personal	Bible	FC
Info	.116	.195	.204	.206	.212
Spirit. Guide.	.006	.080	.220*	.276*	.108
Entertain.	.167	.154	.227*	.140	.202
Feel God	.076	.087	.223*	.303**	.215
Moral Supp.	.106	.058	.169	.309**	.206
Companion.	.089	.058	.153	.237*	.170
Pass Time	.129	.168	.133	.064	.139
Habit	.152	.136	.178	.261*	.224*
Escape	.233*	.168	.211	.258*	.265*
Relax	.193	.132	.181	.205	.217
Social	.159	.156	.170	.189	.202

Notes. *N*'s range from 216 to 228 due to occasional missing data. **Pray** = I pray regularly. **Jesus** = I believe Jesus is the Son of God. **Personal** = I feel like I have a personal relationship with Jesus. **Bible** = Reading the Bible is an important part of my life.

FC = Faith Commitments

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$

Table 3 (A through M)

Frequencies-A

	Consent Form	Coming to this church	Attend Services .	Member Class	Use FB in general
N	296	255	255	255	233
Mean	1.03	2.91	4.45	1.65	4.69
Std. Deviation	.258	1.453	1.041	.669	1.386

Frequencies-B (Participant's General Facebook Use)

	FB friends	From Church	Church Posts	Faith Posts	"liked" churchFB
N	232	231	231	231	233
Mean	1.75	1.73	1.75	2.24	4.69
Std. Deviation	1.115	.685	.882	.882	1.095

Frequencies-C (Facebook Uses)

	Info	Spirit Guide	Entertain	Close to God	Moral Support
N	227	228	228	226	228
Mean	3.56	2.33	3.85	2.00	2.75
Std. Deviation	1.233	1.100	1.102	.964	1.264

Frequencies-D (Facebook Uses)

	Compan.	Pass Time	Habit	Escape	Relax
N	229	229	227	229	229
Mean	2.86	3.85	3.50	2.89	3.13
Std. Deviation	1.252	1.115	1.242	1.313	1.276

Frequencies-E (Church Facebook)

	Social Interact.	Church FB daily	Miss Church FB	Read Church Posts	Easily do without FB
N	227	229	227	225	228
Mean	3.90	2.18	2.76	2.80	3.22
Std. Deviation	1.078	.987	1.185	1.164	1.145

Frequencies-F (Participants' General Twitter Use)

	Feel Lost Without FB	Twitter Follow.	From Church	Use Twitter	Church Tweets
N	228	199	91	90	92
Mean	2.16	1.11	1.53	2.76	1.47
Std. Deviation	.991	.558	.765	1.671	.777

Frequencies-G (Twitter Uses)

	Faith Tweets	Follow Church	Info	Spirit Guide	Entertain
N	91	91	84	85	85
Mean	1.93	2.20	2.99	2.15	3.27
Std. Deviation	1.237	1.276	1.418	1.129	1.383

Frequencies-H (Twitter Uses)

	Feel Close to God	Moral Support	Compan.	Pass Time	Habit
N	85	85	85	85	85
Mean	1.91	2.13	2.13	3.16	2.52
Std. Deviation	.908	1.089	.1089	1.396	1.368

Frequencies-I (Twitter Uses/ Church Twitter)

	Escape	Relax	Social Interactio n	Church Twitter Daily	Miss Church Twitter
N	85	85	85	85	85
Mean	2.46	2.45	3.14	1.66	1.92
Std. Deviation	1.323	1.249	1.441	.700	.777

Frequencies-J (Church Twitter/Faith Commitments)

	Read Church Tweets	Easily without Twitter	Feel Lost without Twitter	Pray	Believes Jesus is Son
N	84	85	85	247	248
Mean	1.94	3.39	1.74	4.40	4.78
Std. Deviation	.936	1.283	.819	.949	.728

Frequencies-K (Faith Commitments/ Demographics)

	Personal Relation.	Read Bible	Sex	Age	Marital Status
N	246	240	251	243	250
Mean	4.62	4.09	1.56	1941.11	2.17
Std. Deviation	.803	.1.023	.498	251.283	1.062

Frequencies-L (Demographics)

	White	Black	Hispanic	Native Ameri./ Alaska	Asian
N	201	8	19	2	13
Mean	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00
Std. Deviation	.071	.000	.000	.000	.000

Frequencies-M (Demographics)

	Native Hawaiian /Pacific Isl.	Other	Educat.	Income	Employ.
N	5	0	245	243	248
Mean	6.00		4.99	3.86	4.75
Std. Deviation	.000		2.042	2.043	1.745

APPENDIX C



**Social/Behavioral IRB – Expedited Review
Approval Notice**

NOTICE TO ALL RESEARCHERS:

Please be aware that a protocol violation (e.g., failure to submit a modification for any change) of an IRB approved protocol may result in mandatory remedial education, additional audits, re-consenting subjects, researcher probation, suspension of any research protocol at issue, suspension of additional existing research protocols, invalidation of all research conducted under the research protocol at issue, and further appropriate consequences as determined by the IRB and the Institutional Officer.

DATE: July 31, 2012

TO: **Dr. Daniel Stout**, Journalism & Media Studies

FROM: Office of Research Integrity - Human Subjects

RE: Notification of IRB Action

Protocol Title: **A Non-Denominational Christian Church Maintains
Relevance through Facebook and Twitter**

Protocol #: 1204-4106M

Expiration Date: July 30, 2013

This memorandum is notification that the project referenced above has been reviewed and approved by the UNLV Social/Behavioral Institutional Review Board (IRB) as indicated in Federal regulatory statutes 45 CFR 46 and UNLV Human Research Policies and Procedures.

The protocol is approved for a period of and expires July 30, 2013. If the above-referenced project has not been completed by this date you must request renewal by submitting a Continuing Review Request form 30 days before the expiration date.

PLEASE NOTE:

Upon approval, the research team is responsible for conducting the research as stated in the protocol most recently reviewed and approved by the IRB, which shall include using the most recently submitted Informed Consent/Assent forms and recruitment materials. The official versions of these forms are indicated by footer which contains approval and expiration dates.

Should there be *any* change to the protocol, it will be necessary to submit a **Modification Form** through ORI - Human Subjects. No changes may be made to the existing protocol until modifications have been approved by the IRB. Modified versions of protocol materials must be used upon review and approval. Unanticipated problems, deviations to protocols, and adverse events must be reported to the ORI – HS within 10 days of occurrence.

If you have questions or require any assistance, please contact the Office of Research Integrity - Human Subjects at IRB@unlv.edu or call 895-2794.

APPENDIX D



INFORMED CONSENT

Department of Journalism and Media Studies

TITLE OF STUDY: A non-denominational Christian Church Maintains Relevance through Facebook and Twitter

INVESTIGATOR(S): Kenthea Fogenay and Daniel A. Stout

CONTACT PHONE NUMBER: 702-895-5957 for Daniel A. Stout

Purpose of the Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to get an overall idea of how you use Facebook and/or Twitter and if The Crossing Church is using social media in the best way possible for you as a member of the congregation.

Participants

You are being asked to participate in the study because you fit this criteria: You are 18 years old or older, you currently attend The Crossing Church and you are not currently a staff member at The Crossing Church.

Procedures

You will be asked to take an online survey with 51 general questions about your views on religion, your use of social media, and your views of social media used by The Crossing Christian Church.

Benefits of Participation

There will not be direct benefits to you as a participant in this study. However, we hope to learn how you are using Facebook and or/Twitter to better serve you at The Crossing Christian Church.

Risks of Participation

There are risks involved in all research studies. This study may include only minimal risks. You may become uncomfortable when answering some questions but be aware that the researcher is of a third party and not permitted to discuss individual information about any of the participants. The information shared will be averages and any other trend that presents itself.

Cost /Compensation

There is no financial cost to you to participate in this study. The study will take 20 minutes of your time. You will not be compensated for your time.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Daniel A. Stout at **Daniel.Stout@unlv.edu**. For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted you may contact **the UNLV Office of Research Integrity – Human Subjects at 702-895-2794 or toll free at 877-895-2794 or via email at IRB@unlv.edu**.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose to answer all, some, or none of the survey questions. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relations with the university. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study.

Confidentiality

All information gathered in this study will be kept completely confidential. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to this study. All records will be stored in a locked facility at UNLV for 3 years after completion of the study. After the storage time the information gathered will be discarded.

Participant Consent:

I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I am at least 18 years of age. A copy of this form has been given to me.

Yes, Proceed to Survey

No Thank You

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