Branding Faith: Do Christian Ministries Reach Millennials With Branding?

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By

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to Jesus Christ. Thank you for rescuing me out of my pain, giving me strength and reassuring me that I am a strong, smart, beautiful child of God. Thank you for being a father to me and showing me how much I am loved.

I dedicate this to all who have a calling to reach the next generation for Christ. Thank you for those who are veterans of the fight. You are building an everlasting legacy. To the new guys on the scene, I say don't give up; keep trying. It is hard but worthwhile. Many people will be in heaven because you answered God's call.

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I also thank all of my family and friends. Your cheers of encouragement and prayers got me through the hard times. I cannot list all your names but you know who you are. Thank you for supporting me, being confidants, even pushing me when I wanted to give up. Having you in my life is a huge blessing and an extension of God's love.

From the bottom of my heart, God bless you all. I love you.

Thesis Committee

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Table of Contents

Abstract

The purpose of this research study is to discover what branding techniques used by Christian organizations are effective in connecting with Millennials and why, and to determine what are effective branding practices in a religious context. A convergent parallel mixed–method research design was used to gather the data. It included a content analysis of the branding components of four Christian organizations that target Millennials—The Passion Conference, The VOUS Conference, Acquire the Fire and Winterfest. A survey of 150 Millennials of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds within the age range of 18-34 was conducted to collect quantitative data on Millennials' predispositions about brands, Christian organizations, and Millennial marketing trends. A focus group of five Millennials was held to gather qualitative data on Millennials' responses to promotional material. Results showed that though these organizations followed in varying degrees what research prescribes as effective branding techniques that connecting with Millennials, they are not guaranteed to resonate with the Millennial target due to diverse factors and individual preference. Ultimately what is effective for religious organizations is to present a clear organizational identity that is unique to them but in ways that are authentic and transparent, about intentions, focus, and values.

Keywords: Branding, Millennials, Religious Marketing, Christian Ministries, Brand Identity

Chapter 1 Introduction

There is a devotional quality to the way some people follow brands. Whether it is demonstrated by waiting days in line to be the first to get a new Apple gadget, spending hundreds of dollars to cosplay a favorite superhero at ComicCon, or covering oneself in body paint representing the colors of one's favorite football team, brands elicit an emotional and visceral response from their followers more so now in this media-driven culture than ever before. In fact, it is not too far-fetched to say that brands are the language of the 21st-century person, and everyone speaks the language whether they realize it or not. But when branding is associated with Christianity some cringe or take offense. They see branding as a pejorative term. In their minds, the sacrilege is the implication that we are reducing God to a mere brand. However, what those of the dissenting school of thought fail to see is the connection between brands and religion. In an interview on Youtube, branding specialist Martin Lindstrom discovered that the same part of the brain that lights up when talking or thinking about a beloved brand is the same part of the brain that corresponds to religion (Bloomberg Business). So if an inherent connection between the two exists, it seems reasonable that branding would be used for Christian purposes.

Branding is essentially a communication mechanism that helps us differentiate things. According to television producer Phil Cooke, "competition and the need to distinguish a product led to branding" (*Unique* 46). Competition exists for the church. Christianity competes not only with the other faiths but also within itself. James B. Twitchell, advertising professor at the University of Florida, believes that in the American business of religion, "it is a marketing free-for-all… the First Amendment, ironically has encouraged a proliferation of sects all of which have been forced to compete [and]… for many churches the never-ending competition added to

the perpetual pressure to stay solvent… [so] marketing became a necessity" (65). This over-abundance of denominations is why churches need branding to set themselves apart (Twitchell 68). Just as McDonald's makes concerted efforts to distinguish its identity from Burger King, so must two churches that may appear on the same street. Other driving factors in the increase of religious branding besides the freedom of the First Amendment are: decrease in attendance, increase in more attractive leisure activities, and a reduction in the stigmatization of those who do not attend church, which was not the case in earlier generations (Einstein, *Brands of Faith* 7).

What makes brands unique is their ability to relay different concepts and emotions, inspire identity, and spark action in people. Pastor Tyler Wigg-Stevenson states, "brands communicate different things, to be sure: Mercedes says luxury where Honda says reliability. But both brands do what they are supposed to, and the superiority of one over the other is entirely in the mind—and preference—of the consumer" (Wigg-Stevenson 25). Two of the ways brands accomplish this is through StoryBranding and Integrated Marketing Communications. IMC is about the collective marketing experience. It involves several things converging together at the right time that communicates the desired message as well as totally engrossing the target in a structured event. But the technique that packs more punch and is harder to achieve is StoryBranding.

StoryBranding is all the rage in the advertising and marketing world. It involves establishing and sustaining a story that expresses the essence and values of a brand. Brands that get it right, weave such a relational, compelling story around themselves that it penetrates straight into the heart of their target. Authors Douglas Sosnik, Matthew J. Dowd, and Ron Fournier assert that the "choices people make about politics, consumer goods, and religion are driven by emotions rather than by intellect" (2). Through storytelling the audience is emotionally

connected to and buys into the brand. The narrative is the most recognized and used communication technique of mankind. Everyone speaks and comprehends in story form. People respond to it because it is relevant to and resonates with who they are. For today's youth—the Millennials—stories and brands are their preferred communication and consumption mode.

So who are the Millennials? Sources vary as to the exact years, but a Millennial can be considered as anyone born between the years 1980-2000 or anyone between the ages of 16-34. Their cohort group is known by other names, such as Generation Y/iY, Screenagers, Nexters, Digital natives, and Mosaics, but they are commonly referred to as the Millennials (Elmore 18). They are a generation of trendsetters that are tech-savvy, energetic, optimistic and social. They are accused of also being narcissistic, impatient, over-confident, and entitled. If they are not engaged by something relevant to them it will be snubbed or deemed uncool. Despite the apparent contradictions in their generational tendencies, they are influencing the culture at a rapid rate. An example such as Facebook demonstrates that Millennials actively seek to assimilate older generations to their culture as well (Fromm and Garton 23). But the older generations often admit a frustration with Millennials. They do not understand the generation, nor how to connect with them or keep up with their constantly changing likes and dislikes. But not connecting with the Millennials could have serious future drawbacks.

The Millennials have been the hot topic of discussion in both the business world and in the Church for the last several years. Research points to the size of the generation, their increased influence, and their consumer power as a force not to be ignored. Jeff Fromm and Christie Garton authors of *Marketing to Millennials* report that they make up about 25% of the U.S. population numbering over 80 million (2). They are projected to be "the largest generation on earth… and the most eclectic and diverse in our nation's history" (Elmore 19). They have an

estimated collective buying power of $200 billion annually (Fromm and Garton 2). That figure rises to $500 billion for annual indirect spending power due to this generation's influence on parents and friends (Fromm and Garton 2). Their generational characteristics are shaping and transforming the way people communicate.

Not connecting to young people of this age is a problem the church knows all too well. In a Youtube video interview, Thom and Jess Rainer co-authors of the book *The Millennials*, say that only 15% of Millennials report being Christians (B&H Publishing Group). The Barna Research Group reports that 59% of young Christians "disconnect either permanently or for an extended period of time from church life after age 15" ("Six Reasons"). Reasons why young people are leaving the church stem, in part, from problems in how Christianity is communicated to them. Millennials feel that it is irrelevant, narrow-minded and divisive; which are qualities that do not appeal to this trendy, open-minded and harmonious generation. Yet, several ministries are rising up as influential movements for Christian young people today.

The most prolific of these organizations is the Passion Conference. The Passion Conference is a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization founded by Louie Giglio in 1985 ("Passion Conferences"). It began as a student-based campus ministry at Baylor College in Waco, Texas. The Passion Conference started in 1997 when Giglio and his wife Shelley moved to Atlanta, Georgia. It was birthed out of the Giglios' "desire to see spiritual awakening come to the college campuses of the nation and the world" ("Passion Conferences"). The first physical conference event was held in 1997 in Austin, Texas, and has grown into the popular global movement that it is today. The organization reports that "since the first gathering in 1997, Passion has had the privilege of encountering millions of students and 18-25 year olds…whose lives have been transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit ("Passion Conferences").

One of the newest of these organizations is the Rendezvous, or as it is commonly referred to as the VOUS Conference. It is a young adult ministry headed by Rich Wilkerson Jr. and his wife Dawncheré. It began in 2009 and takes place in Miami, Florida ("VOUS Conference"). The VOUS grew out of the young adult ministry of Trinity Church pastored by Rich Wilkerson Sr. The goal of the VOUS Conference is simply to "create a weekend where people could be radically changed by the power of God" ("VOUS Conference"). Since the conference's inception, it has grown and gained popularity as a hip conference that serves its mission and appeals to the Millennial audience. The VOUS Conference believes "music, teaching, discipleship, and the arts are the catalysts used to encourage and inspire this generation to live for Christ ("VOUS Conference").

One of the oldest of these organizations is Acquire the Fire. The ATF conference is specifically for teens, and is one of the many initiatives of Teen Mania International. Teen Mania International is also a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization founded in 1986 by Ron and Katie Luce ("About Teen Mania Ministries"). Their mission is to "provoke a young generation to passionately pursue Jesus Christ and to take his life-giving message to the ends of the earth" ("About Teen Mania Ministries") The headquarters is in Dallas, Texas but "Acquire the Fire is a 27-hour, full-weekend, themed, Christian event that is engineered to deliver the Gospel to young people in an immersive, entertaining, unique, powerful way" ("Acquire the Fire"). The ATF Conference has held 515 events across America, with event attendance totaling over 3,000,000 people in its 30 years of operation ("Acquire the Fire").

Winterfest has been around for over 30 years. It was started by Tom Madden and four other youth pastors in Cleveland, Tennessee in 1982 as a retreat for five local Church of God youth groups. Winterfest's goal is similar to the others in that it aims to reach each generation for

Christ (Madden 16). Over time the event expanded to a youth ministry that holds several conference events annually in eight regions across the U.S. and a few internationally. Winterfest has impacted thousands of students from all over the world (Madden).

Based on the general profile of Millennials, a Christian-focused event would not seem to appeal to this generation. Yet, these organizations are credited for getting it right in relaying their message and purposes that reach Millennials in significant ways. In an interview Pastor Rich Wilkerson Jr. states:

> We know that God is the god of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He's the God of generations. And I always believe that God is doing something new on the Earth. I think it's the same message but I think the methods are constantly changing… I think we miss out on the new thing that God wants to do for that time period. I think there's a place for every generation (Wilkerson Jr.).

This statement, and the results achieved by the ministries mentioned above, indicate that there is a way to reach this generation though, certain methods must be employed or altered.

How do they do it? How are these ministries succeeding in an area where so many local churches and parents are struggling? The answer may hinge on the communication style of these ministries—or in other words branding. Would the association of brands and religion be better received by Christians if Jesus were seen as a communications specialist? The gospels are filled with situations where Jesus knew the right things to say at the right times that profoundly impacted some or vexed others. For example, the religious leaders of Jesus' time, called the Pharisees, often tried to test Jesus with questions in hopes of discrediting him. But to one of their questions about the law Jesus replies:

"Listen and understand. What goes into someone's mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them." Then the disciples came to him and asked, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?" He replied, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. Leave them; they are blind guides. If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit (*New International Version*, Matt. 15.10-15).

Digital strategist Meredith Gould states, "He used conversations, storytelling, inquiry, debate, dialogue, and truth-telling to challenge then-prevailing notions about God, faith, ethics, relationships, and religious business-as-usual" (10). He uttered things that were controversial and revelatory in the same breath. Thousands of people flocked to listen to His sermons. He communicated with authority, knowledge, and passion that gave him credibility with the lay people and among the learned whom considered Jesus a threat. Cooke proposes the notion that Jesus may have been a brand manager. He points out that Jesus's messages contained unexpected yet strategic actions, words, and decisions (Cooke, *Unique* 58). Jesus had a consistent message, knew his audience, and greatest of all, he had a firm grasp of his identity. When brands do this they thrive in the marketplace. If Jesus did it, should not Christian organizations utilize the same communication tools also?

The purpose of this paper is to examine the branding techniques that are effective in connecting with the Millennial generation, and what makes these techniques effective, in addition to illustrating what the most effective uses of branding within a religious context are.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

Religion and Branding

It is widely accepted that the proliferation of sects in American Christianity produced competition and pushed churches to use marketing. Twitchell argues that because of this the church first influenced marketing, and to further compete, the church was influenced by the marketplace in how tactics are employed by brands (65). He states that "the more different brands you have, the more the consumption increases and the more the brands deepen. Religious pluralism is precisely why the American market is so vibrant while in most of the rest of the world dominant religions constrict the flow of competing narratives and enervate the brands" (Twitchell 75). Twitchell believes the connection between Christianity and branding is that they are both "merchandising systems" (Twitchell 68). Researcher Mara Einstein agrees with Twitchell in stating, "this market--oriented mentality is fueled by a consumer culture that has trained Americans to expect products and services to be convenient, entertaining and customized to fit their needs" ("The Evolution of Religious Branding" 332).

Some believers may find it hard to accept this notion, but Twitchell's views describe religious economy theory which accurately depicts what has happened and continues to happen in the American religious climate today. A simple definition for a religious economy offered by sociologists Roger Finke and Rodney Stark is that "religious economies are like commercial economies. They consist of a market and a set of firms seeking to serve that market" (42). They believe that religious pluralism gives way to the religious economy that seeks to "cater to the special interests of specific market segments" (Finke and Stark 42). This theory supports Twitchell's view of modern-day Christianity being a "merchandising system" (68). Both parties engage in a cognizant exchange where the brands (churches) are aware of the expectations of the

consumers (church-goers). These expectations give way to the role the churches adopt in meeting them. Religious economy harkens to a connected principle of rational choice theory. Scholar Riza Casidy, says that "rational choice is one of the overarching approaches in the study of church participation… which assumes that people approach religion in the same way that they approach other objects of choice—that is, by evaluating costs and benefits, and then acting to maximize the potential benefits" (232). This suggests that it is the human nature of reasoning, judging, and categorizing that has led to the commoditization of religion. However it ignores spiritual, cultural and emotional reasons that can account for why people choose a church. In summation, the practical purposes of branding—differentiating things—and the current culture's approach to organized Christianity have similar, if not connected, roots.

Regardless of any similarities, some argue that religious branding goes against the grain of traditional branding. Einstein's assessment of why people leave church is in part due to proliferation of sects. She writes, "Churchgoers lack 'brand loyalty' because denominations no longer act as brands, something they once did. Instead, churches have increasingly become nondenominational ("The Evolution of Religious Branding" 334). The takeaway from this is that more defined denominational structures gives the churches greater distinction, which is a practice of branding. Being nondenominational does the opposite. In Einstein's opinion, simultaneously promoting Christianity—which she calls a category within the context of branding—and a specific church—which she calls a brand—creates further problems for brand distinction because it "creates a tug-of-war between evangelizing and branding which acts to obscure the message" ("The Evolution of Religious Branding" 336-337). According to this perspective, these dual functions of a Christian organization are a potential reason as to why effective branding and member retention are difficult.

While Einstein sees the merging of religion and branding as impediments to each other, Professors Jeaney Yip and Susan Ainsworth conclude that the acceptance of religious marketing alters traditional religious practices. Like Twitchell, they acknowledge the merchandising aspects in modern Christianity. In quoting author P. Kitiarsa who argues that "when religion adopts the logic and language of the market, the result is religious commodification, which 'turns a religious faith or tradition into consumable and marketable goods,'" (506), the Yip and Ainsworth attribute this change to the adoption of the constructs of marketing in society. They assert that the conceptualization of religion as a product in conjunction with the use of "marketing discourse" changes the focus to the target and production processes (513). But in their observations, this is not deemed as a negative. Marketing language and techniques spill over to non-business sectors due to the promise of measurable growth—an aim of both business and the church. Where Yip and Ainsworth see the positive of religious marketing is in their study of City Harvest and New Creation, two mega churches in Singapore. They do not deny that such practices have fundamental implications on the religion itself. The researchers do not affirm nor attempt to promote any particular branding practice, yet what is noteworthy to them is how the techniques of marketing discourse juxtaposed with religious context are used to create substantial growth in the megachurches studied. Einstein echoes Yip and Ainsworth's credit to the megachurch in her book *Brands of Faith* stating that megachurches were "the first institutions to discover the use of marketing on a broad scale" (Einstein, *Brands of Faith* 14). She elaborates that the megachurch brands are identifiable to the "religious shoppers" that enables them to make decisions about which churches to join (Einstein, *Brands of Faith* 14).

Despite the apparent success of religious marketing in growing ministries, not all people believe that it should be done. Professor Bruce Wrenn finds that "the general belief by many

theologians and marketing theorists is that religion should not be marketed" (47). Some of the reasoning behind this conclusion stems from the inherent differences between the central focus of Christianity—a transcendent God—and the central focus of marketing—appealing to man's needs and desires. Wrenn says that "because marketing's focus on exchange is an appeal to self-perceived value, its use in trying to consummate religious 'exchanges' limits God's ability to reveal himself to us in his own way" (47). Furthermore, Wren opines that "it is inappropriate for an anthropocentric method to tell a theocentric story" (46-47), and that "focus on the church's ability to satisfy needs is the antithesis of the call for the church to surrender self-centeredness as a decisional rule" (50). Wren's main point is that religious marketing tampers with communication between God and man and perverts the focus of the church. The incorporation of the self-perceived value in marketing implies the process is fueled by man's tendency toward narcissism. Thus the argument is marketing works for communicating to humans but not for communicating with God.

But some marketers argue that the point of marketing is to connect with man, and that it has been working for decades. Yip and Ainsworth claim that religious marketing in the nondenominational megachurch brands have seen success. Wrenn reasons that "marketing makes peoples' needs, including latent needs, more salient to them, motivates them to seek satisfaction of those needs, helps identify the means by which satiation can occur, and provides satisfaction of needs via exchange processes" (50). Therefore, marketing connects people's needs with the product or service that fits those needs. Following this logic, one can argue religious marketing can make people aware of their spiritual needs. Even with this the "self" is the major focus. Although he does not appear to be in favor of marketing in a religious context, Wrenn discerns

that the transformational nature of religious marketing makes it different from transactional secular marketing. Wrenn states:

> Secular marketers win loyalty through appeal to customers' self-interest, while religious marketers win loyalty by modeling a spirit of self-sacrificial service. One of the "contagious" aspects of Christianity practiced in accordance with biblical principles is that someone wants to stop thinking only of their needs and begin to put the needs of others ahead of their own. By maximizing the effectiveness and efficiency by which we serve others, we increase the power of the contagion. People want to be involved and contribute to organizations that are able to achieve good works. Good marketing contributes to achieving good works (52-53).

Again we see that combining religious principles into marketing practices enhances marketing and makes it relevant to Christian audiences because it reflects religious values. This not only backs the argument that religious marketing can work but suggests that it should be used if reaching people is the point of the faith.

Branding Strategies

Multiple definitions exist for what branding is, and they are often laden with jargon and have heavy emphasis on the business aspect. But for the purposes here, branding will be defined in relation to the communication technique of storytelling. Cooke defines branding as "the art of surrounding a product, organization or person with a powerful and compelling story" (*Unique* 46). Another definition—albeit iterative—states that "a brand is a story that travels with a product or service or…a concept" (Twitchell 47). Storytelling predates the written word in communication. Research has shown that information presented in a story is more likely to be

remembered more accurately and retained for a longer period of time (Haven 69). Stories work because they remind us of ourselves. They depict our lives' triumphs, journeys, emotions, and struggles. These truths are wrapped in fiction and delivered through storytelling. As the story unfolds shared values and beliefs are revealed. This delivery system leaves a profound impression because, "each person interprets the story in light of his or her own personal situation and experience. As a result the impact is far greater than a simple object lesson or teaching session" (Cooke, *Unique* 50-51). Twitchell asserts that "an enduring story always has to deliver an 'affect'. The story has to move the listener, to exchange feeling for attention" (49). Based on these assessments, a great story can so pull a person in, that people project the world or character that is presented into their own day-to-day reality, causing identification and emotional connection.

Identity is a term mutually associated with branding and stories. It is Phil Cooke's philosophy that "if you can link a product to a consumer's personal identity, the connection becomes far stronger and the relationship sticks for a much longer period of time" (*Unique* 36). Many people define their identity in the brands they choose because the brand has a perceived identity attached to which they aspire. In the reverse, others seek to reinforce their own identity by choosing brands that reflect who they believe themselves to be. According to branding specialist Lynne Lotenberg, just as the individual has an identity, brands have an identity that is different from their identifiers (167). Identifiers are the exterior things associated with a brand like: color, logos, font style or even familiar jingles. Lotenberg asserts that a brand identity is defined as "a set of perceptions in the minds of people who have interacted with [the brand]" (168). Essentially Lotenberg is saying brand identity is derived from experiences with a brand and the emotional and cognitive outcomes associated with that experiences. Cooke concurs

stating that a "strong brand is essential because a product or organization needs the equity of a memorable identity to cut through the disorder and muddle of the maze of advertising the audience is confronted with on a daily basis" (*Branding Faith* 221).

Some brands craft their identity based on their target audience. Sosnik, Dowd, and Fournier are adherents of the audience-first approach when it comes to marketing communications. They believe that great communicators make "gut value connections" by adapting to the audience and using a marketing strategy known as "Lifetargeting" (Sosnik, Dowd, and Fournier 3). Lifetargeting involves using demographics, ethnographic, or psychographics, to understand a potential target's life choices. For example, a company that sells surfboards will consider all the cultural, economic, social, or geographical, aspects of those who identify with the surfing lifestyle in building a brand strategy. In their analysis of American megachurches, Sosnik, Dowd, and Fournier conclude that "successful megachurch leaders adapt to demographic and social change; they target potential worshipers based on their lifestyles and they use multiple communication channels to deliver messages that are relevant to people's lives" (93).

Casidy agrees with Lotenberg and Cooke about the import of strong brand identity and that identity coming from the audience. Casidy refers to identity as orientation, and notes how a strong brand orientation can fortify positive perceptions of a church in the minds of churchgoers. Casidy claims:

It can be argued that churches with strong brand orientation are more likely to be perceived as having superior quality as compared with other religious organizations. 'Poor performance' within the church context can be regarded as the church's inability to satisfy its members needs through relevant services and activities. A strong church brand

does not only provide an insurance against poor performance but also a guarantee of quality. That is, an assurance of the church's ability to deliver benefits relevant to its members' needs and expectations (233).

However advertising specialist Jim Signorelli stresses that focusing on story, rather than audience benefits and brand perception, is a better way to reach the audience. During an interview Signorelli says:

> Solely concentrating on benefits is like telling a story that has no lasting significance. Brands need to resonate with their audiences by sharing relevant beliefs and values with which their targets can readily identify ("StoryBranding").

On this point is where Cooke and Signorelli disagree. Signorelli proposes starting with the story in crafting brand identity and messages. Cooke advises to start with the audience first. Cooke says "don't begin with your message; begin with your audience think of how they could perceive your comments and all the myriad ways they might relate to its content. Then start preparing your message (*Branding Faith* 58). Despite differing starting points, they both agree that story is a significant part of good branding.

It is the "persuasive power of stories" ("StoryBranding") that prompted Signorelli to write the book *StoryBranding 2.0*. His "intent behind StoryBranding is to show how any brand or anyone with the need to persuade can improve their chances of success by drawing on the logic of stories" ("StoryBranding"). StoryBranding is not the same as storytelling. Signorelli makes this distinction clear to the reader in asserting that "StoryBranding is a strategic process based on the belief that story structure or how stories are formed, will enhance a brand's appeal" (24). It is an amalgam of story construction and the "brand communication process" (Signorelli 25). The

StoryBranding Model has two character cells the -Brand and the Prospect- and both have an inner and outer layer. The ultimate goal of the StoryBranding process is that the brand builds a relationship with the prospect. In story terms this means, the guy gets the girl. Like in stories, the hero endures a series of obstacles before getting the girl. He must overcome them for the story to be resolved. A brand has obstacles to overcome in connecting with the prospect. Those obstacles are awareness comprehension, association and affiliation. As each obstacle is resolved, the brand is closer to the goal. An outcome of this model is that as the brand progresses through the obstacles the bond between the brand and the prospect strengthens. With branding this approach gives a strategic advantage to branders looking for more salient methods of connecting with targets in a way that is understood and meaningful.

As shown in the figure above, the brand has two layers and the prospect has two layers. The outer layer represents the "physical and behavioral properties" and the inner layer represents the "deeper [and] often hidden beliefs and values that are linked to and responsible for character behaviors" (Signorelli 43). Physical and behavioral properties for a brand are things like the brand product and its function; for the prospect it is the demographics, like race or choice of car. The deeper beliefs and values for a brand are like the theme of a story. It is the value a brand chiefly upholds at its core, if not the reason, for the product or service. Examples of a brand's core values are: independence, serving others, or hospitality. Every prospect has values they regard more than others. What the model suggests is a method of linking brands and prospects that share the same core values.

For the purposes of this paper, the brand is the Christian ministry and its inner layer is the values of the organization that stems from the Christian faith; the prospect is the Millennials and their inner layer is their generational characteristics and values. Signorelli believes that this

process is effective because it is designed to reveal the inner workings of brands the way stories reveal the inner workings of man; it also helps branders "know the prospect in ways that will foster lasting relationships, immune from any competit[ion]" (5-6). Lotenberg shares Signorelli's views that combining elements of storytelling, human characteristics, and brand communication produces the alchemical interaction that is focused and effective. She gives this analogy:

> Just as a chef uses a thorough understanding of food chemistry, carefully selected ingredients, and creativity to construct a memorable meal, great brands are built using a thorough understanding of how brands and people work, the ability to carefully select ingredients, and creativity (Lotenberg 167).

If applied to the church, the StoryBranding process essentially provides a strategic communication style that can bring out the faith values and connect it to the needs and values of people.

Integrated Marketing Communication is defined by Charles Larson as "the new and unique way to promote brands, persons, and ideas using more than the traditional consumer advertising and promotional forms of persuasion... used in the past" (410). IMC involves several "coordinated activities of marketing" like: public relations, advertising, event planning, event staging, branding, websites, social media, packaging, and sales promotion (Larson 309). The fundamental component of the effectiveness of IMC is the multiple pieces working together to create a stronger holistic persuasive endeavor than with the individual strategies alone. He believes that the main goal of IMC is to build a one-on-one discourse and customized relationship between the brand and the consumer; this customization leads to a greater whole where all the different tactics strengthen the others (410). Yip and Ainsworth found this to be true in their study of megachurches in Singapore. These churches developed their own style or

brand of service that differs from traditional Christian churches while still aligning with the most popular form of Christianity in the region (Yip and Ainsworth 510). They attribute the convergence of several techniques working as a compelling strategy that builds brand identity and creates growth. These techniques are technological effects, modern architecture, interior design that lacks Christian iconography, contemporary music, and a mingling of culturally relevant language within sermon topics.

Professors Bebe and Mira Rakić of Megatrend University in Belgrade, Serbia expound upon the IMC principles of customization and integration with the Five Pillars of Integrated Marketing Paradigm. The Five Pillars illustrate the differences between traditional media and digital media, but express that they are both necessary for integrated marketing due to the diverse preferences of consumers. Pillar One is integrated media. Rakić and Rakić state that with traditional marketing consumers become "innocent or unwilling bystanders" but digital marketing "transforms bystanders into active participants" (188). It is essential for organizations to use all forms of media in the IMC process (Rakić and Rakić 195) Pillar Two is integrated ways of communication that addresses methods of integrated communication. This pillar stresses integration of traditional promotion (ads, calls, product packaging), digital interactive promotion (social media), and Word of Mouth promotion in IMC (Rakić and Rakić 196).

Integrated approach to the opportunities of communication is Pillar Three. It emphasizes "integration in terms of time of communications…possibilities for interactions," and style which in IMC is a mixture of traditional-static or instant and dynamic discourse (Rakić and Rakić 199). The dynamic interaction formed in new media has been labeled "edutainment" because it produces an amalgam of education and entertainment customized to the consumer (Rakić and Rakić 189). Pillar Four is integrated actors. With new media the consumer has a chance to be

initiator and participant. This pillar in IMC thrives on a combination of the organization and the prosumer's (producer/consumer) active participation in communication. Pillar Five is integrated content. It focuses on an integration of the organization producing content marketing as well as paying attention to user-generated content in IMC (Rakić and Rakić 197).

Branding is one of the main goals of IMC. According to Timothy Borchers branding is how "objects obtain value" among consumers (366). Inherent in branding is building brand image or the ideas associated with a brand (Borchers 366). When building brand image three integral parts must be at work: "understanding the brand's equity, developing a brand position that is both appealing and unique, and developing advertising which persuasively communicates or at least reinforces the brand positioning" (Miller and Berry 78). Brand positioning involves making choices about which parts of the brand identity should be emphasized (Riezebos and Van der Grinten 10). Establishing a strong and consistent image with consumers is a powerful means of persuasion because images resonate with people. This is how many brands gain popularity and salience. Equibrand Consulting defines brand positioning as the "conceptual place you want to own in the target's mind" ("What Is Brand Strategy"). It is not only the physical symbols of a brand that give meaning but also the interpretation and impressions formed in the minds of the consumer that bring value, and are launching pads for positioning. A cohesive brand image is ensured by positioning and reinforcing it in an integrated campaign (Navarro-Bailón 198). Examples of this occurring in IMC is when a brand uses different social media platforms, different advertisements, certain slogans, or different stories that simultaneously evoke the same theme of the brand identity. Varying the way in which a person receives messages from or about a brand has positive effects on processing and learning. As is the case in IMC, where multiple chances of exposure to brand image in a novel way or with different media forms, cements the

image in the minds of the target with more positive associations. This means the target will look more favorably on a brand, remember messages better, and think more in depth about the brand.

Displaying consistency and a unified voice throughout IMC is recommended. Gould affirms that "everything you create to communicate church and faith must look and sound like it's being launched from the same organization or at least the same faith (85). The presence of strategic consistency-based messages integrated into campaigns has effects on consumer persuasion. Maria Navarro-Bailón states that "exposure to different executions of the same message may enhance motivations to process the message" (192). The more a person processes the message the more likely it is to stick in their minds. The chances of being swayed by a message increases because more attention is being paid to the message. In summary, the research above argues that integrated marketing communication that uses multiple types of marketing techniques, various forms of media, with consistent brand messaging and interactive elements packaged and working together, has more efficacy and a greater impact than any other single marketing effort.

Millennial Characteristics and Marketing Trends

Now that the components and advantages of integrated marketing communication are established, it is important to note the unique characteristics of Millennials and what sort of marketing methods work in trying to reach them. Tim Elmore, author of *Generation iY: Our Last Chance to Save Their Future,* expresses both a fascination and a concern with Millennials. He refers to the Millennials born after 1990 as generation iY because of the pervasiveness of technology and the Internet in their lives at an earlier age than those born in the 1980's. What his research has shown is that Millennials have a dualistic lifestyle and contradictory qualities. They thrive in a state of paradox. He outlines eight paradoxes of this generation they are: sheltered yet

pressured; self-absorbed yet generous, social yet isolated by technology; ambitious yet anxious; adventuresome yet protected; diverse yet harmonious; visionary yet vacillating; and high achiev[ing] yet high maintenance (Elmore 36-47). These characteristics are attributed to the Millennial audience as a whole. The paradoxes present reasons as to why it is difficult to reach Millennials. However, Elmore acknowledges that there are ways to break through to them, and outlines seven key insights as a path to understanding. He says that Millennials want to belong before they believe; they want an experience before an explanation; they want a cause before they want a course; they want a guide on the side before they want a sage on the stage; they want to play before they pay; they want to use but not be used by others; and they want transformation not merely a touch (Elmore 49-51).

Belonging before believing means Millennials make decisions based on relationships rather than logic (Elmore 49). Making them first feel like part of a group is more effective in getting them to adopt or buy into an idea. An experience before an explanation speaks to the shift in how this generation learns and expects to receive information. They value an interactive experience over lengthy lecturing. Elmore would advise marketers crafting messages to reach Millennials to ask themselves "how can I say it creatively and experientially?" instead of asking "what do I say?" (49). Cause before a course corresponds to the Millennial trait to be cause-driven. They want to change the world but must be able to see the reason and identify with the person facing the issue before taking action. A guide on the side before a sage on the stage echoes the relational nature of Millennials. Elmore says, "young people today aren't looking for experts, especially if they are plastic and untouchable" (50). Millennials crave authenticity, accessibility, and mentorship. They are more likely to listen to someone who approaches them like a friend.

Play before pay refers to the Millennial characteristic of instant gratification. One of Elmore's concerns is the detriment this mentality can cause to Millennials who do not fully appreciate the slower cultivation processes of life. In order to influence Millennials, their attention must be grabbed quickly and the relevance must be established even quicker. Use but not be used refers to the millennial mindset of being in control but not wanting to be controlled. Elmore points out the ease with which Millennials adopt new media and technology. But overt targeting that makes them feel as though they are being manipulated or denied chances to insert their opinions are red flags. Marketers may need to "create environments where [Millennials] can come up with their own ideas" (Elmore 51) and see them play out. Lastly, transformation not merely a touch is derived from Millennial's orientation toward change and new trends. Millennials' desire for the next level cannot stop at just challenging or entertaining them, it is imperative they feel transformed by an experience (Elmore 51).

Although Elmore finds that many Millennials have not matured enough to be contributors, he observes that they are natural-born consumers (37). It is because of their consuming power that companies and organizations are tailoring marketing strategies to engage them. Fromm and Garton state that "brands are no longer in control of their own image and message with this generation… Millennials derive value from being engaged in product development, advertising, social interactions and other facets of the marketing process" (5). In other words, if an organization or company wanted to know how to stay relevant, they must look to what is relevant with Millennials. To be successful one must understand this audience in particular, because different marketing strategies will be required for them than with any other generation (Fromm and Garton 51). Professor Alexander Muk concludes from his study that Millennials join brand pages based on their personal attitudes and social influences (136). This

includes having knowledge of what interests the Millennial and knowing their peers' interests as well. It is vital for brands to engage Millennials on multiple levels with well-defined strategies, intriguing content and on platforms most used by them (Fromm and Garton 105).

Michele Paulin and her associates agree with incorporating new media in integrated marketing strategies and see this integration as an imperative. The researchers say that non-profit marketers must develop strategies that will effectively use the power of social media to elicit the desired supportive behavior (Paulin et al 335). Examples of desired supportive behavior are donating, voting, or participating. Their research focuses on how to motivate Millennials to support charitable causes via social media. The researchers advocate working with Millennials to gain the human and financial support so desperately needed by non-profit ministries. Distinguishing factors of this generation are early exposure to the Internet and social media as a primary mode of communication (Paulin et al 335). Paulin and her associates assert that future success for non-profit organizations lie in identifying and working with the most promising constituencies of potential supporters (335). Due to their high level of influence and connectedness, Millennials are the most promising group. Research supports the view that religious marketing can turn "self-interest into selfless interest" by appealing to Christian values of serving others and the human desire to help (Wrenn 57). Values and utilities are other factors that influence Millennials' choice to like brands on social media (Muk 135). Although Millennials do not show loyalty to just one organization as those in previous generations did, they quickly and freely mobilize support for causes of their own choosing through social media that emphasize the benefit to others over a benefit to self (Paulin et al 336). This indicates a connection between the Millennials' desire for values to be represented by the brands they support and why they would choose to associate with a religious brand.

Einstein's case study of the United Methodist Church (UMC) rebranding campaign supports Paulin et al's conclusions about cause branding or social justice initiatives being an effective branding technique to reach Millennials. In 2009 the UMC launched a campaign designed to reach 18-34 year olds and cause them to change their perspective of church. The UMC employed commercials, print ads, multimedia, a revamped website, and invested $20 million over four years on their repositioning that encouraged youth to "Rethink Church" (Einstein, "The Evolution of Religious Branding" 335). But Einstein cites that UMC's uses of "positive landmines" ("The Evolution of Religious Branding" 335) promoting service, and calls to action on issues such as Darfur, ecology, and homelessness as good engagement strategies relevant to the target group. Here positive landmines means substantive topics of great social prominence, concern and value. Although Einstein does not give direct results of the campaign, "Rethink Church" is still maintained today by UMC. To date, they report their efforts have yielded over 8 million annual social media engagements, 600,000 mobilized volunteers, and 13,000 churches engaged in community service ("Rethink Church").

Sarah Guldalian, a producer of evangelism training for Lutheran Hour Ministries, and a Millennial, spends a lot of time ministering to her peers. She believes the way to reach Millennials is "through real relationships and the avenues that they love: tech media and pop culture" (Guldalian 44). Because technology, media, and pop culture resonate with Millennials, Guldalian recommends using entertainment events that combine all of these into an experience Millennials will enjoy. Guldalian prescribes:

Using media and edgy marketing pieces distributed in high-visibility locations around [the] destination city, especially around college campuses, we invite high school and college-age students to high-energy events that combine original music from numerous

bands, fun, engaging media, and raw drama from professional actors. Together, these cast members share the Gospel relevantly (44).

Guldalian's method involves elements of IMC and harkens to Sosnik, Dowd, and Fournier's theories on lifestyle targeting.

Research shows that Millennials spend a lot of time with their peers and are heavily influenced by them. As the leading drivers of social media, advocacy and media consumption this causes them to be more homogenized and very in sync with each other (Fromm and Garton 4-5). But Fromm and Garton also propose that there are six distinct millennial personas. These segmentations are the Hip-ennial (cautious, global, and information hungry); Old-school Millennial (cautious, charitable and disconnected); Gadget Guru (successful, wired, and free-spirited); Clean and Green Millennial (impressionable, cause driven and healthy; Millennial "Mom" (wealthy, family-oriented and digital savvy); Anti-Millennial (locally minded and conservative) (Fromm and Garton 39-46). These marketing segmentations not only suggest what kinds of brands a Millennial would choose to follow but also reiterates that this choice is based on the individual's affective disposition. Fromm and Garton's research is congruent with Elmore's in that Millennials are similar in certain aspects and differ significantly in others. They are essentially a generation of paradoxes.

Millennials and the Church

Millennials are considered to be "the most highly unchurched generation in recent history" (Guldalian 42). One study conducted by the UMC reported:

66 percent of young adults surveyed were searching for meaning and purpose in their lives and 62 percent considered themselves 'spiritual'[but] church was not where they

were looking to fill this void, as "78 percent said they never attend church, or only attend

once in a while (Einstein, "The Evolution Of Religious Branding" 335).

Researchers David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons find that many non-Christian young adults "have

little trust in the Christian faith, and esteem for the lifestyle of Christ followers is quickly fading

among outsiders (11). They also report that Non-Christians attribute feeling rejected by

Christians as reason they reject Christ (Kinnaman and Lyons 11). This is becoming a reality for

even Christian young adults. One of the reason Louie Giglio gives for continuing to focus on the

college age students is from the countless testimonies he receives of older people that have come

to Christ who may have grown up in a Christian home but left the faith. He says the majority of

them disclose that they fell away during college or at the college age bracket (Giglio). When

Giglio was asked about what he thought of all the stats on the Millennials leaving the church, he

said "they are just leaving the building. They were never in the church" (Willard 71).

A possible explanation for this is that in this modern media-cluttered society it is hard for

Millennials to focus in on God when there are thousands of messages and distractions being

thrown at them. For younger Millennials, they have never known life without the Internet or a

smartphone. Quiet, disconnected moments are few and far between. Ron Luce's motivations for

pursuing teens with the Acquire the Fire Conference are similar to Giglio's. They agree that the

fall away from Christianity at the young adult stage of life is the main driver for targeting

Millennials. But Luce acknowledges how societal, technological, moral, and relational changes

have impacted young people and takes that into consideration in planning conference events.

Luce explains that "what happens at Acquire the Fire: [is] 27 hours pulling away from all the

noise crammed between their ears so finally they can hear the whisper of God" (Acquire the Fire

"Drown Out The Noise").

Leonard Sweet is considered a futurist by some, including Tim Elmore, due to his prophetic observations of the future of the church and culture in a post-modern world. In his book *Post-modern Pilgrim*, published in 2000, Sweet foresaw the cultural shifts caused by advancing technology that permeate the present day and especially affect Millennials. He also foresaw that the church will have increasing problems if they do not change their communication methods. Using the acronym EPIC, Sweet outlines the communication mode of the post-modern culture and for young people. EPIC stands for experiential, participatory, image-driven, and connected—qualities that have been noted by researchers as characteristics of today's Millennials. Sweet warns that "unless churches can transition their culture into more EPIC… directions they stand the real risk of becoming museum churches, nostalgic testimonies to a culture that is no more" (30).

However the Barna Group maintains optimism when it comes to connecting to Millennials. Barna Research Group is dedicated to providing organizations, parents, and churches with the tools that will help them gain an understanding of the Millennials and how to engage them spiritually. Barna Group asserts that "the relationship between Millennials and the church is shifting" ("5 Ways to Connect"). A lot of their research is centered on the opinions, trends, and habits Millennials have concerning faith and the church. In a study conducting on connecting with Millennials the Barna Group discovered five major themes. The five themes are: meaningful relationships, teaching cultural discernment, creating reverse mentoring opportunities, teaching connection between vocation & discipleship, and facilitating connection with Jesus (Barna Group, "5 Ways to Connect"). These results imply that this generation is craving a way to understand how to connect to Christ in an authentic way that relates to the world they live in and the lifestyle they lead. Guldalian observes that Millennials respond well to

real testimonies of how Christ transforms lives due to their desire for authenticity and their openness to change. She says:

> Although turned off by institutions, they may not, however, be opposed to hearing about Jesus. And so, as Christians, we should focus on introducing them to Jesus Christ first and the church second. Most appealing to them would be hearing your personal experience with Jesus Christ (Guldalian 43).

For those Millennials who are Christians they may be the link to winning other Millennials back toward Christianity. In a Youtube video, Thom Rainer says "if [Millennials], are Christians, there are few of them, but those few might make a bigger difference than the larger population of predecessor generations" (B&H Publishing Group).

The research suggest that religious marketing has changed because society and people have changed, giving way to religious branding that ultimately affects both entities in ways still to be determined. Another impression from the research is that Christian organizations have to learn, adapt, and discover new creative ways to get their messages across. Research also reveals the common thread of a communication problem between the church and Millennials. It also reveals what kind of branding techniques are being used by Christian organizations and which work on capturing Millennials' attention.

Chapter 3 Methodology

      This study will be conducted using a convergent parallel mixed–method research design. John C. Creswell defines mixed methods as "an approach to inquiry involving collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, integrating the two forms of data and using distinct designs that may involve philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks" (4). The advantage of this method lies in the integration of both types of data working in a customized design that "provides a more complete understanding" of the research question (Creswell 4). Both types of data complement each other with one helping explain the other. In the convergent parallel mixed–methods approach, both quantitative and qualitative data are collected and analyzed separately, then compared to see if one supports the findings of the other (Creswell 219).

      Branding involves multiple and diverse concepts working together. Branding incorporates philosophy, stories, marketing, emotions, opinions, characters, and identities that elicit different individual interpretations about value and meaning. The quantitative data provides the empirical figures needed to make generalizations about Millennials' preferences and attitudes on branding. The qualitative data provides the immediate detailed responses Millennials have to the selected Christian organizations branding initiatives. Both together will yield more well-rounded findings. An inductive study with the goal of assessing whether the branding techniques implemented by the selected Christian organizations are effective, requires gathering Millennial's emotional responses and opinions as well as applying a scientific approach to this form of communication. The components of this specific mixed–methods study involving a content analysis, survey, and focus group. Using these three in the method will allow for a more robust analysis and a check on whether the literature presented in this paper is accurate.

The purpose of the content analysis is to review four Christian organization's branding initiatives and discover if they match what the literature in chapter two outlines as effective tactics for their target audience of Millennials. This includes Signorelli's StoryBranding Model and the power of story, the benefits of Integrated Marketing Communication outlined in Rakić and Rakić's Five Pillar Model, Paulin et al's assertions of social media integration for attracting Millennial support for non-profits, Sosnik, Dowd, and Fournier stance on lifestyle targeting in religious marketing, Muk's findings on Millennials liking brands that share their values, Sweet's EPIC Model, Guldalian's prescriptions for what works best on Millennials, Cooke's philosophy of linking products to consumer identity, and Navarro-Bailón's theory of producing positive brand associations in IMC campaigns.

The four organizations are the Passion Conference, The VOUS Conference, Acquire the Fire, and Winterfest. The Passion Conference, Winterfest, and Acquire the Fire, were chosen for their longevity, popularity, target audience, and national and international recognition. The VOUS Conference was chosen for its popularity among its target audience. For each organization the brand imaging, promotional material and conference event features will be analyzed. Brand imaging can be defined as content that an organization uses to convey their identity and distinguish itself from other organizations. Brand imaging includes brand story (rhetoric, themes, characteristics, leaders), assigned meanings which are created by the brand and signifies how they distinguish their organization (logos, fonts, colors, graphics), and brand perceptions–associated meanings which are ascribed to brand from followers or critics. Promotional material encompasses all traditional and non-traditional methods used by each organization to market their event. Conference event features refer to the staging and production of event as well as program activities. The components of the content analysis will be derived

from an assessment of each selected Christian organization's website, social media platforms, campaigns, videos, fliers, event details, articles, testimonials, and or interviews. These will be studied in part meaning only the components listed that are available to study, or what is sufficient to define brand image, promotional material, and conference event for the four Christian organizations.

The purpose of the survey is to collect quantitative data to discern the predisposition of Millennials on the topic of branding, Millennial trends, and Christian organizations. An anonymous survey will be administered electronically through Qualtrics to a sample size of 150 Millennials of various races and ethnicities, nationalities, and religious affiliations who voluntarily agree to take survey. A cross section of graduate and undergraduate students from southern American private university will be used because they are within the primary age range of this study, which is 18-34 years. There will also be non-students, non-American and non-Christians represented in the sample. Millennials are marked by their generational characteristics and age, not their nationality, ethnicity or religion. Having a sample that is representative of the diverse group will allow for more comprehensive results. Participants will be recruited via social media, email and university classes. They will be given one week to complete a 26–question survey.

The purpose of the focus group is to collect qualitative data that yields an expanded well-rounded view of Millennial's responses to branded material. The focus group will have five members, be completed in one day, and will take place after survey results are gathered. The focus group will be shown one promotional video from each selected Christian organization, after which they will be asked a series of questions. Questions are geared toward finding out if

they identify with material shown to them, if the material appeals to them and if they would attend the event based on the promotional video shown.

The content analysis will be completed first because it needs to be established that the selected Christian organizations use branding techniques prescribed by the research, which ones they are using and how they use them to connect with Millennials. All the components of the content analysis will be evaluated based on this criteria above. The survey will be conducted after the content analysis. The focus group will be conducted after the survey to confirm results of content analysis and survey. This kind of multi-level method is chosen to answer the research questions: what branding techniques are effective in connecting with the Millennial generation and why?; and what are the most effective uses of branding in a religious context? Results of this method will be used to recommend tactics for brand managers of Christian organizations and church leaders looking for ways to reach Millennials.

Chapter 4 Results

Content Analysis

Passion Conference

Brand Imaging

The Passion Conference gets its story and main values from a bible verse that states "Yes, Lord, walking in the way of your laws, we wait for you; your name and renown are the desire of our hearts" (*New International Version*, Isa. 26.8). Passion emphasizes the latter part of that verse as their founding principle such that it is their website name—268generation.com. This slogan appears on their website, promotional material, and social media accounts. The organization crafted five statements that further explain their purpose called the 268 Declaration. The following is listed as their company statement on Passion's Facebook page:

> The 268 Generation is a radical generation of Christ followers rooted in the confession of
> Isaiah 26:8. Fueled by a passionate pursuit of God and a desire to spread His glory
> throughout the earth, many have been a part of the Passion gatherings that have spawned
> the 268 movement. Still others have joined our wave from places across the nation and
> around the globe. All are convinced that life is about God and all of life is for God.
> Saying 'Your name and Your renown are the desire of our souls' ("Passion
> 268Generation").

From this we conclude that as Signorelli's StoryBranding Model suggests, Passion has a unique brand story and theme with a discernible inner and outer layer. The verse from the book of Isaiah from which the Passion Conference was founded, gives them a clear rallying mantra. The rhetoric of their purpose being for the glory of God and his renown gives an active missional stance to the organization and invigorates Millennials because they like to belong to something

they feel will make a difference. Millennials recognize Passion's desire as their desire and then identify with it. The 268 Declaration on the organization's website not only expresses the organization's core values to the consumer, but includes a call to action. They included a feature that allows the individual to digitally sign the declaration, so the consumer can actually choose to adopt the organization's mission as their own.

Passion Conference has a clear distinct style in their logo, font types, graphics, and even the choice of name. This logo appears on all things associated with the organization. Each year of the conference the theme, color and design scheme is changed but are still in alignment with the organization's standard imaging. Updated images with the year's themes are reflected on all social media accounts, promotional material, and on the website. The resulting brand imaging is one that is fresh, dynamic, passionate, exciting and colorful. They continue to use live pictures, and video from the events that depict 18-25 year olds in the concert setting with their hands raised. Founder Louie Giglio's apparel matches that of the Millennials. Passion's imaging evokes an organization that is hip, current and in the mode with the target audience. This imaging causes Millennials to identify with Passion, because Passion first identifies with them. This communicates "we understand you and speak your language."

After reviewing Passion Conference Tweets and Facebook responses, they have over 100,000 followers on Twitter and over 200,000 followers on Facebook. Overwhelmingly, the feedback contains positive brand perceptions of those expressing the same values of the organizations, anticipating the next conference, or applauding the last one. It is evident that many support Passion's social media pages due to affinity for the organization and identification with their values. This is in alignment with Muk's findings that Millennials follow brands on social

media that share their values (135). This supports Navarro-Bailón's conclusions about cohesive branding imaging in IMC campaigns for positive brand associations (191-192).

Promotional Material/Methods

The brand imaging is reinforced by the promotional materials and methods. Like Rakić and Rakić's Five Pillars of Integrated Marketing Paradigm promotes using integrated marketing methods, Passion employs both traditional and digital forms of marketing and media that allows the consumers to be producers and co-create content. Passion Conference is accessible through several social media platforms. Giglio and some of his speakers also go out and speak at different events, conferences and universities about Passion. They utilize their website, promotional, videos, posters to promote the event. They also encourage other Millennials to do Word of Mouth promotion as well as social media sharing. This is in alignment with Paulin et al's assertions about integrating social media for non-profits to garner Millennial support since social media is their primary means of communication (335). Promotional videos contain images of Millennials in their natural environment doing activities they enjoy or among their peers in concert event. This aligns with Sosnik, Dowd, and Fournier's claim that lifestyle targeting is effective in religious marketing.

Conference Event Features

The staging of the Passion Conference depicts Leonard Sweet's EPIC (Experiential, Participatory, Image-driven, and Connected) Model (30). The multiple gatherings are filled with loud music, lights, unique stage design, speakers, big screens, moments of prayer, and worship. Contemporary Christian artists and popular Millennial speakers are featured at Passion Conference events– like Chris Tomlin, David Crowder, Judah Smith, Matt Redman, Lecrae,

Frances Chan, Carl Lentz, Hillsong United and Christine Caine. During the event students are encouraged to tweet, Instagram and Facebook friends in real-time dialogue. Louie Giglio will even give social media reports back to the group. The programs are live-streamed so that participants of the conference and those who did not attend, have the option of watching from their room. They also have break-out participatory stations that feature unique eye-catching props with information about passion, faith, or the cause supported that year. In these stations student who donate can take pictures, interact with display pieces, converse and pray. There is also a store station where they can purchase books, CD's, digital content, and other items. Candlelight vigils and community group sessions are held. Community groups are designed to have Millennials meet other Millennials, build relationships and discuss their faith. Attendees are also asked to give other items like towels or socks to support local homeless shelters. Passion has added more dates and tours to different nations as well as auxiliary events featured in the summer like Passion Camp.

VOUS Conference

Brand Imaging

Unlike the other Christian organizations in this study, the VOUS Conference is relatively new, and has the added advantage of a popular Millennial pastor contributing to the appeal and brand imaging of the organization. Greggory Babcock wrote about Rich Wilkerson Jr., that he was "appealing to a younger demographic by talking, and yes, dressing, like their flock" (Babcock). Wilkerson Jr. has associations with famous celebrities like Kanye West, and his own reality TV show. He uses pop culture references in speaking and uses his wardrobe and language to appeal to the urban young adult. This aligns with what Guldalian prescribes as the best way to reach Millennials. Babcock writes that "with a natural and genuine interest in popular style and

culture, along with a more contemporary perspective, they're changing how the current youth generation relates to Christianity" (Babcock). These elements add to the organizations' positive brand associations and perceptions.

The VOUS conference has a logo, set font type and graphics that distinguishes the conference from the VOUS Church. However, the theme and design style for the VOUS is more stylized toward the edgy urban persona. The VOUS uses simplistic geometric shapes, limited color palate. Currently their scheme uses hues of gray. The simple sedated design choice is to denote a rugged, urban, cool persona for the organization, which is indicative of the VOUS location and target audience of the downtown Miami urban Millennial.

The brand does not have an established brand story, but it has a story theme for the current conference of a City on Hill and Shining a Light taken from the Bible. Both provide a narrative for consumers to associate with the organization during the event. The values of the VOUS are more apparent in their mission statement, which states: "Vous conference is an annual gathering of people from diverse backgrounds and distant places with one purpose: to connect with God and one another. We believe that when we gather under one name, with one purpose, for one cause, anything is possible" ("VOUS Conference"). Spiritual connection as well as relationships are the prime values of the organization.

<div align="center">Promotional Material/Methods</div>

The VOUS also uses a mixture of traditional and digital marketing methods. The VOUS not only uses Wilkerson Jr.'s television show as a promotional tool but he uses speaking engagements to talk about the VOUS conference. The VOUS uses social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Periscope, and Eventbrite that contain promotional pictures and videos. The video in particular has fast-paced images of conference footage with iconographic Christian

images interjected. It has stark black, white, and gray colors in conjunction with the imaging. The video starts off with the song *"This Little Light of Mine"* followed by a sound clip of Wilkerson Jr. preaching with a hip-hop beat underlayed. The elements together convey a sense of urgency and seriousness to the viewer. Part of their 2015 conference was televised on the Trinity Broadcast Network thus expanding the exposure for the organization.

Conference Event Features

The VOUS Conference is conducted over several days with many sessions throughout the duration of the conference. They have break-out sessions of prayer for participants. The VOUS features dancers, artists and musicians that play music in the style that is popular among Millennials—rap, rock, and hip hop. Like Passion, the VOUS features speakers well known to the Millennial audience or speakers that are Millennials like Wilkerson Jr. The conference is held in a theater not a stadium which conveys the event as more of a show to experience. There are lights, loud music, sound, and images—just like Sweet's EPIC Model, and what Guldalian (44) prescribe as effect for reaching Millennials.

Acquire the Fire

Brand Imaging

Acquire the Fire derives its brand story from tenets of Christianity. Their mission statement is "our heartbeat is to provoke a young generation to passionately pursue Jesus Christ and take His life-giving message to the ends of the earth" ("Acquire the Fire"). They add the target audience of young people to show a brand focus on the next generation. Their website also features a statement of faith that further explains the purpose and values of the organization, which demonstrates cohesive imaging. The logo is simple, official, and plain colored implying stability, credibility and tradition as core values. This organization has opted to use words rather than a design to convey their image. The logo is comprised of the initials of the organization in

the middle along with the words "27 Life Changing Hours" circled around it. This suggests the organization's desired brand image of being transformational. This design theme is cohesive on their website and social media platforms. The website features in bold letters on positive brand perceptions from prominent Christian figures to give further credibility to the organization.

Promotional Material/Methods

Acquire the Fire uses traditional and digital marketing methods. They use connections with youth pastors to promote the organization's goals of pouring into the youth and inviting them to come to the conference. They use their videos to show more of the transformational exciting, fun, experience they promise their attendees. The organization uses testimonial videos on their website of past conference attendees talking about their experience, which aligns with what Guldalian (43) says about Millennials respond well to personal testimonies. Some of their promotional videos feature a thematic narrative instead of images of the conference event.

Conference Event Features

Acquire the Fire has conference events nationally and internationally. But each event is one weekend in duration. It features Christian artists, speakers, and performers. Where Acquire the Fire differs from the other organizations is in the type of performances at the event. Acquire the Fire, states they use "relevant, interactive communication style [that] includes drama, new media, comedy and object lessons that have become a specialty…over the years" ("Acquire the Fire"). These skits and plays provide Millennials with educational entertainment at the events. In addition, the organization encourages attendees to go on summer missions trips.

Winterfest

Brand Imaging

Winterfest is sponsored by Church of God International Youth and Discipleship, and gets its brand story from this parent organization. The organization is dedicated to mentoring youth and Christian leaders. As the StoryBranding Model prescribes, the inner layer value of mentorship is used throughout the organization's imaging. Winterfest has regional conference events that usually have different design themes. Recently, the organization decided to change the conference brand image to a more unified theme for all the events. This change included a new logo that is vibrant, and has a bold lime green color scheme, and a revamped website. The reimaging is cohesive on all their social media platforms. The website showcases bright, exciting pictures of teens and musicians at the event. The name Winterfest is used by many different organizations. This rebranding helps consumers to better identify with the Church of God Winterfest. After reviewing the Facebook and Twitter feedback Winterfest has positive brand perceptions.

Promotional Material/Methods

Winterfest uses a mixture of traditional and digital promotional methods with more emphasis on the digital methods. This is in alignment with the Five Pillars of IMC Model. They have promotional videos on their website and social media platforms. A consumer can connect with them on Facebook, Twitter, Livestream, and Youtube. Winterfest uses Youtube to showcase behind the scenes interviews with musicians and speakers affiliated with the conference. Winterfest has made available to consumers various free files of their promotional material including: poster jpegs, brochure, logo jpegs, and wallpaper for smartphones. This makes it easier for Millennials to share and co-promote with the organization.

Conference Event Features

The conference event is staged differently in each of the locations, but is full of lights, sound, loud music from artists. Winterfest varies the type of performers and speakers they use based on the region. For each region they bring awareness to different humanitarian causes. It includes several sessions over a three day period. Some of these session are for everyone and others are for church youth group leaders, which aligns with their value of mentorship. The Livestream and social wall allow attendees to watch from any device and live share their experiences on various social media platforms. All of these elements work together to promise a Millennial a unique exciting experience.

Assessment

The content analysis revealed that each of the four organizations studied employ one or more of the effective tactics prescribed by the research. The trend was geared more towards digital marketing with an emphasis on social media co-creation and consumer sharing as the Five Pillars Model suggests. This also aligned with Fromm and Garton's (105) stance on having multiple avenues to engage with Millennials with content they like and on platforms most used by them is All of the organization used the effective tactics to varying degrees. The Passion Conference's strongest pull was the quality of their promotional material, the use of a social justice cause, and how well they brand around their core value of passion. They had the strongest and most readily discerned identity of all the organizations. The VOUS Conference's strength was in its branding around an identifiable millennial figure, and the strong edgy persona that relates to its target group. Acquire the Fire's strongest asset was the use of story and narrative in their promotional material and in their conference events. Winterfest's strength was in the clarity of their brand image and transparency in the promotional material. Passion and Acquire the Fire

adhered more to Signorelli's StoryBranding Model in that they had a more established discernible brand story and identity. The VOUS used story in the themes they present for the year but does not have a strong brand story. Based on this content analysis, these organization are mostly doing the right things prescribed by research to reach their target audience of Millennials.

Survey

The sample for this survey consisted of individuals invited via social media and in person to take part in a survey administered through Qualtrics. The sample size was 150 people between the ages of 18-34. The survey pool was majority female at 69% and 31% male. As was desired the survey pool was racially diverse having 39% White, 29% African American, 20% Asian 5% Hispanic, and 6% Mixed race. The religious affiliation was not as diverse as 83% were Christians, 6% Agnostic/Atheistic, 2% Hindu 2% Muslim, 3% Buddhist, and 4% responded they were Messianic Jews, Sikh or Non-religious. A complete list of survey questions and responses can be found in Appendix 1 and 2 respectively.

The survey results supported what research said about Millennials being a group who prefer to be around other Millennials, as 66% agreed and 6% strongly agreed they preferred the company of those in their age grouping. Nearly two of three Millennials said that they followed their generational trends. The survey showed that 58% followed these trends, 8% strongly agreed to this. A related question addressed the issue of whether or not Millennials follow brands that reflected their lifestyle. Nearly all respondents said they do with 63% agreeing to this and 24% strongly agreeing. In regards to the issue of identification and brands, 44% of Millennials surveyed said that they considered brands extensions of their identity and 8% strongly agreed.

From this it can be said that more Millennials identify with brands than do not, which supports research that there is a correlation between brands perceived identity and consumer identity.

The survey results supported the research about the use of story in branding. When asked if they would follow a brand that had a story they identified with nearly three of four responded positively 65% agreeing and 7% strongly agreeing to this. Values were another aspect of branding that Millennials responded to, as the survey showed that 57% agreed and 35% strongly agreed they are likely to follow a brand that shared their values. This supported two of the main components of Signorelli's StoryBranding Model—the emphasis on a discernible story and discernible core values of a brand.

The survey showed that Millennials respond strongly to the look and feel of brand. Almost 9 in 10, 88% of Millennials, reported being drawn to the logos, colors, graphics, and image of a brand. Paulin et al's research emphasized the use of social media for non-profits as a way to get Millennials to support charitable causes (335). Elmore's research says that Millennials are drawn to causes of social justice and charitable events (49-50). Both of these are supported by the survey results. An impressive 93% of Millennials said they are likely to attend an event that supported a charity they believed in, and 63% agreed it was important for brands to use multiple social media outlets.

The survey results showed that Millennial preferences regarding events adhered to Sweet's EPIC Model (30). For example, 53% of Millennials agreed that when going to an event they are looking for an experience and 45% strongly agreed with this. An overwhelming majority 95% of Millennials like to have multiple activities to participate in when they go to an event and 94% of Millennials said that music they like is an influential factor in determining whether they would attend an event. The survey also showed that the way an event is promoted

is important to Millennials, because 86% of them find promotion to be an influential factor in deciding to attend an event.

When it comes to Christian organizations, the survey results indicated that Millennials are divided about whether or not these organizations reach their target audience. When asked if Christian organizations know how to reach the younger generation 51% of Millennials thought they do, but 36% disagreed and 13% strongly disagreed. A quarter of Millennials surveyed do not think Christian organizations generally share their values or style. However, 72% of Millennials report they would attend a Christian event if they thought it was hip or exciting and 81% of Millennials surveyed said they would respond to a Christian organization that they felt has a discernible identity.

<center>**Assessment**</center>

The survey confirmed what research says about Millennials attitudes and predispositions on marketing, Christianity, and events. It showed that lifestyle targeting, the use of social media, social justice inclusion, the use of story, values, and exciting experiential events persuade Millennials to identify with brands or attend certain events. Surprisingly, both sides of the issue about what Millennials think about Christian organizations are true. Nearly half of Millennials thought Christian organizations do not know how to reach the younger generation. While a majority of them would be open to attending a Christian event based on how the ministry or the promotional material is perceived by them.

Focus Group

The focus group included five participants between the ages of 22 and 26. There were two males and three females. The group included two White Americans, one Black American,

one Colombian and one Mongolian. They voluntarily participated in the focus group and were not incentivized. The participants were shown one promotional video from each of the four Christian ministries and asked to respond to 12 question per video. The focus group lasted one hour and 26 minutes. The complete transcript of the focus group can be found in Appendix 3.

Passion Conference

The participants reported that several aspects of Passion's video indicate a brand or being branded. Participant 1 said that Passion's video is branded specifically for generation Y, which are Millennials, and bases this on the narration in the video. The video said:

> There's always something competing for our attention. Thousands of voices hoping to persuade us. Trying to make us believe that we are insignificant. That we are incapable, that our lives will be forgotten. We were given a future of unspeakable opportunity, but now we strain to here its sound. At some point we became comfortable with the noise (Passionconferences).

Participant 1 found that what was said in the video to be true of his own life. Participant 1 said:

> "There's always something that is constantly pulling for our attention. This noise everywhere, static that gets in the way of what we're really hearing. And that's very applicable to how I think my life has been for a few years now. It's difficult to find any type of peace and quiet not only in college, but with all of these opportunities presented to us where we're in a place where we have advantages that we can take."

Participant 2 thought the music and the upbeat fun appeal to the video was an indicator that the organization was trying to connect to Millennials. Participant 2 stated:

"You get the impression that it's something fun. Something the youth will enjoy…Like Jesus is amazing you know come join with us, have fun. And that is like the main goal. If it seems fun and upbeat people will be drawn to us."

Participant 3 said that the video, "showed a bunch of people praising and congregating together with other people and full of color and life. Which I guess wants to draw you in." Participant 5's views were that:

"It was very intentional from the beginning. And that it wasn't like preaching, like, this is who we are but more of, this is what you can get from us. This is the experience that you need. This is the experience that we can provide for you kind of thing. It did come across as a brand. It was very relatable as well."

In regards to a discernible story in Passion's video, Participant 4 responded that there was no brand story they could find, but there was a narrative in the video. Participant 5 said, "I think that the narration with what each character at the beginning was going through—that's definitely a story. And there were many stories within itself. Each character had their own story which they showed briefly." However, Participant 1 and 5 commented that other elements of the video cause confusion such as the tone shift from somber to upbeat, the gray cinematography shifted to multiple colors, the subtle graphics became bold and busy animation, and the subdued music shifted to rave-like dance music. The group thought these things did not correlate to the narrative established in the beginning.

The participants found a variety of things that stuck out in Passion's video. They used words like edgy, hip, and trendy to describe the video. Participant 4 remarked that the video had "good production and filming in the beginning. Then it got tacky towards the end. It was really

cool, classy, and interesting in the beginning then got a little '90's almost." More criticisms came from the others. Participant 2 said:

> "It's almost like they are trying to give the impression that Christianity is not a boring thing. Trying to get out of that zone, [to] where Christianity is not boring. So every video they make is upbeat, fun, or colorful. But it's not about that. Christianity is not boring at all."

This comment suggested that the fun and upbeat nature of the video is a shallow representation of what real Christianity is. Participant 3 said:

> "It was disjointed. The beginning made you think it was going to be some deep emotional story and then just turned into a rave that they wanted you to join in with them. And that kind of put me off a little bit. You want a level of consistency."

Certain words stood out to the focus group like: Jesus, Yes Lord, Movement, and the phrase—This is us. From this the group was able to infer what values the organization were putting forth. The focus group found Passion to value: togetherness, belonging, community, openness, being inviting, spirituality, authenticity and attractiveness.

One of the group responded that they did not identify with the Passion's video because they felt the people did not look real. Participant 4 said, "The whole model thing. I never had anyone in my youth group that looked like that. It's fake, it's a Hollywood kind of thing. They are not normal people. I don't really see myself represented in that." Participant 5 was the only one to identify with the video and admitted that she would attend the event based on the video. She also admitted that her younger Millennial brothers would want to attend as well. Participant 2 responded that "The branding of the word passion makes me want to check it out not because

of the video." Participant 1 was familiar with the Passion Conference and said, "I still want to go to the conference before I am too old, however based solely on the video I would not go if I had no prior knowledge of it."

Overall the participants thought that Passion's video would appeal to younger Millennials in particular due to the colors, music, graphics, and the fun and entertaining atmosphere created in the video. The focus group thought that the high production value, and the narrative story elements were the best parts of the video. However, they had recommendations for improvement. Participant 3 said, "Put a boundary on the trend level." This meant that Participant 3 thought that trendy and hip elements were excessive and suggests Passion reign it in or reduce these elements. Participant 4 suggested:

> "Focus on making it good and less on making it trendy. They made it really flashy with high production values, but there was no substance to it. They never actually showed what it was about, and I think that's a problem if you really want people to show up. This was just like a movie teaser that gives no real information or context."

Other comments included that harmony was needed in all elements for clarity of overall message and that inclusion of depictions of everyday life struggles in walk with Jesus not the extremes would be more relatable.

VOUS Conference

Immediately after the first question was asked, the first response is that the VOUS video seemed to brand around the pastor Rich Wilkerson Jr. Other than that the group was unable to identify any discernible branded indicators except for the use of the well-known song "This Little Light of Mine" which played in the beginning of the video. Generally the group had

negative impressions of the video. They used words like creepy, dark, edgy, forceful, uncomfortable, eerie and threatening. A clear story was not discernible from the video to all members of the group. For these reasons the group as a whole found the VOUS's video ineffective. Participant 1 said, "If you can't determine the values or the motive of the video then it's not effective." None of them identified with the video or expressed interest in attending the event based on the video.

Yet, values about the VOUS were discerned by some of the participants. Participant 4 said:

> "The iconography suggests doctrine and taking it seriously. It kind of failed at that. It was trying to convey one thing but it sort of failed at the attempt. The last one was all trendy and everything. And this one was trying to do that. That pastor that's his whole thing. Trendy. It tried to do too many things."

Participant 5 said the overall message as she understood it to be was "authentic Christianity instead of spiritual correctness." Although the focus group did not identify with VOUS, they acknowledged that there were certain kinds of Millennials to whom the video would appeal. They concluded that Millennials who are "edgier" or "like darker toned material" would like the VOUS's video, because the "weird and unique" aesthetics would spark their interest. The focus group recommended that if the VOUS desired to reach a more general audience that they should lighten up their tone, have clearer messaging and avoid yelling.

Acquire the Fire

The participants responded that Acquire the Fire's use of the natural disaster narrative was an indicator of being branded. Certain elements in particular were the footage of storms,

sonar, and weatherboards present in the video. It was unclear whether the group thought the concept of storms was being branded or if it was the organization being branded. The participants compared the video to a Hollywood disaster movie. Because of these elements, the focus group thought the video had a discernible story with the theme being environmental disaster. Participant 4 said, "It was really intense and horrifying… not what I expected." Other associations with the video were destruction, survival, and resilience with the latter appearing boldly in the video. Participant 2 remarked about the use of fear in the video. Participant 2 said, "They are trying to freak everyone out so they would come."

The focus group responded that they did not identify with the video, nor did they discern any values. The consensus was they would not attend the event based on the video. Although the focus group responded positively to the presence of narrative and storytelling in the videos, they felt the Acquire the Fire's focus on the narrative detracted from the organization's identity and clarity of the message. Participant 3 said, "You were left with a lot of questions at the end. What about Acquire the Fire can help fix the situation?" The participants found no connection with the disaster movie story and the purpose of Acquire the Fire's conference event. However, participant 2 thought the overall message is, "You need to survive. Acquire the Fire was the ultimate answer. At the end it was come to this event, and we will tell you how to survive."

Some members of the focus group believed that there were certain Millennials who would attend the event based on the video. Participant 3 did not agree due to insufficient information about the conference event in the video. Yet Participant 3 appreciated the use of real people in the video as opposed to the modelesque ones in Passion's video. Collectively the group thought that better graphics, a clearer story, and less gloom and doom in the story theme would connect better with Millennials in general.

Winterfest

The participants thought that Winterfest's video was lacking in identifiable branded items such as distinct logo and font. But they also felt this organization presented the most consistency and transparency of all the videos. The participants liked that it was obvious that the video was about a worship event. They also liked the realistic depiction of the event noting the people in the video singing, dancing and speaking. Another factor that contributed to the transparency seen by the focus group was the specific event details in the video, such as duration of conference, pricing, names of speakers and names of musicians. Participant 2 said, "The story of the information was fully conveyed." This meant she felt all these details unfolded not a brand story but a story of the event. Participant 3 said, "I feel like that's a story saying we are not just something to make money we want to connect with you. We want to bring you here to benefit you and not just ourselves and our pockets."

The words the participants used to describe the video were clear, transparent, consistent, positive, passion, honesty, variety, celebration, engagement, and community. These words were also the values the focus group attributed to Winterfest. Participant 2 thought the encouragement to "tell you pastor" overtly displayed in the video, evoked responsibility and submission to authority. Participant 4 said, "I thought it was good they had so much information there. It didn't leave you in any way confused about what it was and who was going to be there." Due to these factors, the focus group identified with this video and agreed that they would attend the event based on the video.

However, the participants noted the lower production value in the video, but the positive impressions the group formed about the content of Winterfest's video made it a minor issue. Participant 3 said, "It celebrated everything they were despite the fact that they weren't high

profile and they weren't on another level like that. I don't know. I felt really drawn in and wanted to like join in with them." The focus group collectively agreed that Millennials would be drawn to the video as they were. One participant admitted they would share the video with someone else. The group found this video most effective because it was not too commercialized. Participant 4 said:

> "It's authentic and transparent and upbeat. It's not trying to demonstrate that it's upbeat it just is. Because it's them being passionate about what they do and showing it. They're not artificially creating it on the screen they're showing past events and all the people just doing their thing and that's way more interesting and authentic than pretending with people on screen and on camera. It's positive. And people are passionate and it makes you want to go because you feel that you know what it is all about."

They all agreed more Christian organizations should use the techniques in Winterfest's video.

Assessment

The focus group yielded unexpected results when it comes to Millennial's response to the ministries' promotional material. The group as a whole recognized the branding efforts as hip and trendy and agreed it would appeal to Millennials, but most of the videos were not deemed effective by the entire group. They seemed to be wary of the overuse of hip and trendy branding techniques. The participants commented that they were often confused by some of the videos or repelled by the overused hip and trendy elements. The Winterfest video was the only one the Millennial focus group responded to most positively citing that it was more authentic, transparent, and less trendy than the other videos shown because, it portrayed the event and the organization with clarity, sincerity, and simplicity. There were not a lot of busy graphics nor

distracting story themes, and the people looked normal not like models. The participants were able to give responses about brand identity and values when they recognized them. But the group could not always readily discern these from the promotional video alone.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

The results of my research has some significant takeaways. One major one is that although research prescribes specific guidelines and branding tactics that are supposed to connect better with Millennials as a homogenized group, Millennials are so diverse that it cannot be guaranteed that all of these integrated tactics will resonate with them. Millennials pay attention to brands and the way they communicate whether it be through their brand imaging, promotional material or through their conference events. In addition, they generally respond in ways indicative of their generational characteristics, but some of the branding attempts can repel them as well. Some of this is attributed to culture, age, and religious differences.

For example, The Passion Conference promotional video hit the mark based on research, but four out of the five Millennials of the focus group did not identify with the video and criticized it for being too trendy, too colorful, and too busy. The fifth focus group participant who was from Colombia thought the video was great. She enjoyed the colors and the life and wanted to go to the event. Looking at Columbian culture, vibrant colors, exciting music, liveliness are considered positive cultural norms. So this could be a reason this video resonated with her as opposed to the reserved New Englander of the group who disliked these qualities. Cultural differences need to be taken into consideration when making generalizations about the Millennial group as a whole.

Age is another factor in determining what will be effective with Millennials. Going along with the same example. The survey showed that a majority of Millennials report being drawn to events that are experiential, hip, exciting, and have music they like. Most of the videos shown in the focus group exhibited these qualities. But the focus group still did not respond positively to these elements in every video. However, they admitted that younger Millennials might enjoy

them instead or would attend the event based on the video. The oldest Millennial of the focus group who was 26 years-old, considered himself too old for the demographic of the Passion video. It could be inferred that age could affect whether or not a Millennial will respond to a branding tactic.

The research says Christian organizations should be using the same tactics as non-religious organization use in reaching Millennials. The four Christian ministries in this study adhered to these various effective tactics to an extent. Yet, the findings showed that motivation for a Millennial to attend a Christian event or identify with a Christian organization is based on circumstance. The findings also revealed that Christian Millennials can be jaded by advertising geared towards them or even repelled due to strong religious convictions. No generalizations can be assumed about whether or not a Millennial will be drawn toward an organization based on their religious affiliation.

The most significant thing drawn from this study is that there seems to be no sure–fire formula for what connects most with a Millennial. Though a Christian organization could be doing all the right things, there still may be a chance that they are not reaching the target for some of the reasons listed above. Being persuaded is contingent upon the individual Millennial as opposed to what is claimed that Millennials like as a whole. Each individual has personal preferences and opinions that can differ from the generation. However, what can be said is that Millennials prefer to have a Christian organization present what they have to offer in a way that is sincere, transparent and unique, rather than trying to persuade them with generic tactics that appeal to their generational characteristics. What is very clear from this study is that Millennials value story in brands, honesty, and want more transparency, clarity, authenticity in event depictions in the promotional videos from Christian organizations. Millennials also want the

lights, the music, the experience, the technological integration, and the high production value, but they do not want those things to be so pronounced that they cannot discern what the organization is about.

In retrospect, what is effective for Christian organizations as far as branding and connecting to Millennials requires a delicate mixture of all the tactics discussed but tailored to what most helps the ministry's unique identity to be communicated in a meaningful way. It is better for the organization to have a clear grasp of who they are and what they stand for, and then create a balanced strategic branding effort. A suggestion for Christian organizations in particular, is to continue to stick with the heartbeat of the generation. This involves staying close to the things Millennials like and care about and incorporating them in branding strategies, but offer them that organizational uniqueness. This could be expressed in showcasing core faith values, philosophy, services, or highlighting a need that is met by the ministry. Christian organizations in particular must communicate in branding their own identity while being honest about their intentions and focus. Because Millennials can easily recognize overt contrived marketing and are skeptical of religious organizations, the qualities of transparency, honesty, and identity need to be more clear and pronounced. Millennials respond well when a brand's identity is effortlessly recognizable as opposed to overtly contrived for the sake of needing people to show up for an event. Ultimately, bandwagoning on popular youth marketing trends or appearing to be trying too hard may not be the best strategy. Millennials want to see the care and concern but want to be offered something new or different. It is important for Christian organizations to exhibit both of these at the same time. It is very possible that some organizations' efforts will not connect at all with a Millennial and others will resonate deeply with them.

As for the limitations, this study is not meant for non-ministries due to the emphasis on faith components. The study was meant to discover what religious branding connects with Millennials and why. The results are not meant to be prescriptive but rather suggestive. The method of arriving at the answer to the research questions provided a better understanding of the communication systems at work in this context and a better understanding of both parties. With more well-rounded results, conclusions were easily drawn. The limitations in the content analysis were in the lack of availability of information from the Christian organizations. Not all of the specific event details could be gathered for review. Though attempts to contact the organizations directly were made, they were not responded to. During the process of research Acquire the Fire decided to end their 30 year run in December 2015. This resulted in some of the information online being taken down. Yet, there was still sufficient information on all the organizations for the purposes of this study. Further research should be done in regards to Millennial age segments, culture, and religious affiliation to more specifically understand what connects with Millennials based on these factors.

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Appendix 1: Questions

Survey Questions

1. What is your age?

18-24; 25-34; 35+

2. Please select your race:

White; Black; Hispanic; Asian; Hawaiian/Pacific Islander; American Indian; Other (please describe)

3. Please select the continent where you were born:

North America; South America; Asia; Africa; Australia; Europe; Antarctica

4. What is your gender?

Male; Female

5. What is your religion?

Christian; Hindu; Buddhist; Muslim; Agnostic/Atheist; Other (please describe)

6. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Pre-high school; High school; Undergraduate college; Graduate college

7. Are you a student at this time?

No; Yes (part-time); Yes (full-time)

8. I consider the brands I follow to be extensions of my identity.

Strongly Agree; Agree; Neither Agree or Disagree; Disagree; Strongly Disagree

9. I follow a brand because it has a story I identify with.

Strongly Agree; Agree; Disagree; Strongly Disagree

10. I would follow a brand that reflected my lifestyle.

Strongly Agree; Agree; Disagree; Strongly Disagree

11. I would follow a brand that shared my values.

Strongly Agree; Agree; Disagree; Strongly Disagree

12. I am drawn to the colors, logos, graphics, and image of a brand.

Strongly Agree; Agree; Disagree; Strongly Disagree

13. It is important to me that a brand uses multiple social media outlets.

Strongly Agree; Agree; Disagree; Strongly Disagree

14. I tend to follow trends of the Millennial generation.

Strongly Agree; Agree; Disagree; Strongly Disagree

15. When I go to an event I am looking for an experience.

Strongly Agree; Agree; Disagree; Strongly Disagree

16. I will go to an event that features the style of music I like.

Strongly Agree; Agree; Disagree; Strongly Disagree

17. I will go to an event that supports a charity I believe in.

Strongly Agree; Agree; Disagree; Strongly Disagree

18. I like events that have a variety of activities for me to participate in.

Strongly Agree; Agree; Disagree; Strongly Disagree

19. I like to see speakers that look like me.

Strongly Agree; Agree; Disagree; Strongly Disagree

20. The way an event is promoted influences my decision to go.

Strongly Agree; Agree; Disagree; Strongly Disagree

21. I feel more at ease with people who are close to my age.

Strongly Agree; Agree; Disagree; Strongly Disagree

22. I would respond to Christian organizations if they had a clear discernable identity.

Strongly Agree; Agree; Disagree; Strongly Disagree

23. Christian events don't interest me because they don't reflect my style or values.

Strongly Agree; Agree; Disagree; Strongly Disagree

24. I would attend a Christian event if I considered it hip and exciting.

Strongly Agree; Agree; Disagree; Strongly Disagree

25. Christian organizations don't know how to reach the younger generation.

Strongly Agree; Agree; Disagree; Strongly Disagree

26. I would attend a Christian event based on their promotional video.

Strongly Agree; Agree; Disagree; Strongly Disagree

Focus Group Questions

1. Does this video appear branded, if so, what signals being branded?

2. In this promo does this organization present a discernible story to you?

3. What stood out the most in the video(s) what are some associations you found?

4. What words stood out to you?

5. What values do you perceive about the organization from this video?

6. Does this video cause you to identify with it?

7. Based on the video would you attend the event?

8. From a persuasive standpoint, is this video(s) effective?

9. In your opinion what is the overall message?

10. Would this video appeal to Millennials, if so, why?

11. If you found the video effective should more Christian organizations use the branding techniques in their events and promotional material?

12. What would you recommend these organizations change or add to the videos that would better connect with Millennials?

Appendix 2: Survey Results

1. What is your age?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	18-24		99	66%
2	25-34		51	34%
3	35+		0	0%
	Total		150	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.34
Variance	0.23
Standard Deviation	0.48
Total Responses	150

2. Please select your race.

#	Answer		Response	%
1	White		59	39%
2	Black or African American		44	29%
3	American Indian or Alaska Native		0	0%
4	Asian		30	20%
5	Hispanic		8	5%
6	Other (please describe)		9	6%
	Total		150	100%

Other (please describe)
Black and White
Mixed Race
American
African American and Filipino
Biracial
Pacific Islander
Asian American
Mixed: American Indian, White, Hispanic, and Middle Eastern

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	6
Mean	2.41
Variance	2.48
Standard Deviation	1.58
Total Responses	150

3. Please select the continent where you were born.

#	Answer		Response	%
1	North America		122	81%
2	South America		3	2%
3	Asia		15	10%
4	Africa		8	5%
5	Australia		0	0%
6	Europe		2	1%
7	Antarctica		0	0%
	Total		150	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	6
Mean	1.45
Variance	1.04
Standard Deviation	1.02
Total Responses	150

4. What is your gender?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Male		47	31%
2	Female		103	69%
	Total		150	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.69
Variance	0.22
Standard Deviation	0.47
Total Responses	150

5. What is your religion?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Christianity		124	83%
2	Hinduism		3	2%
3	Buddhism		5	3%
4	Islam		3	2%
5	Agnostic/Atheist		9	6%
6	Other (please describe)		6	4%
	Total		150	100%

Other (please describe)
Spiritual Non-Religious
This survey is already biased Aetheisism and Agnosticisim are not the same
Messianic Judaism
Sikhism
Roman Catholic
messianic jew

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	6
Mean	1.59
Variance	1.96
Standard Deviation	1.40
Total Responses	150

6. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Pre-high school		0	0%
2	High school		66	44%
3	Undergraduate college		61	41%
4	Graduate college		23	15%
	Total		150	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	2
Max Value	4
Mean	2.71
Variance	0.51
Standard Deviation	0.72
Total Responses	150

7. Are you a student at this time?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	No		34	23%
2	Yes (part-time)		6	4%
4	Yes (full-time)		110	73%
	Total		150	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	4
Mean	3.24
Variance	1.63
Standard Deviation	1.28
Total Responses	150

8. I consider the brands I follow to be extensions of my identity.

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Strongly agree		12	8%
2	Agree		66	44%
3	Neither agree nor disagree		44	29%
4	Disagree		21	14%
5	Strongly disagree		7	5%
	Total		150	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	5
Mean	2.63
Variance	0.96
Standard Deviation	0.98
Total Responses	150

9. I follow a brand because it has a story I identify with.

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Strongly agree		11	7%
2	Agree		97	65%
3	Disagree		36	24%
4	Strongly disagree		6	4%
	Total		150	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	4
Mean	2.25
Variance	0.42
Standard Deviation	0.64
Total Responses	150

10. I would follow a brand that reflected my lifestyle.

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Strongly agree		36	24%
2	Agree		95	63%
3	Disagree		17	11%
4	Strongly disagree		2	1%
	Total		150	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	4
Mean	1.90
Variance	0.40
Standard Deviation	0.63
Total Responses	150

11. I would follow a brand that shared my values.

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Strongly Agree		52	35%
2	Agree		85	57%
3	Disagree		10	7%
4	Strongly disagree		3	2%
	Total		150	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	4
Mean	1.76
Variance	0.44
Standard Deviation	0.66
Total Responses	150

12. I am drawn to the colors, logos, graphics, and image of a brand.

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Strongly Agree		49	33%
2	Agree		86	57%
3	Disagree		14	9%
4	Strongly disagree		1	1%
	Total		150	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	4
Mean	1.78
Variance	0.40
Standard Deviation	0.63
Total Responses	150

13. It is important to me that a brand uses multiple social media outlets.

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Strongly Agree		28	19%
2	Agree		66	44%
3	Disagree		45	30%
4	Strongly disagree		11	7%
	Total		150	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	4
Mean	2.26
Variance	0.72
Standard Deviation	0.85
Total Responses	150

14. I tend to follow trends of the Millennial generation.

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Strongly Agree		12	8%
2	Agree		87	58%
3	Disagree		44	29%
4	Strongly disagree		7	5%
	Total		150	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	4
Mean	2.31
Variance	0.47
Standard Deviation	0.68
Total Responses	150

15. When I go to an event I am looking for an experience.

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Strongly Agree		68	45%
2	Agree		79	53%
3	Disagree		2	1%
4	Strongly disagree		1	1%
	Total		150	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	4
Mean	1.57
Variance	0.31
Standard Deviation	0.56
Total Responses	150

16. I will go to an event that features the style of music I like.

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Strongly Agree		67	45%
2	Agree		73	49%
3	Disagree		7	5%
4	Strongly disagree		2	1%
	Total		149	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	4
Mean	1.62
Variance	0.41
Standard Deviation	0.64
Total Responses	149

17. I will go to an event that supports a charity I believe in.

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Strongly Agree		52	35%
2	Agree		87	58%
3	Disagree		8	5%
4	Strongly disagree		3	2%
	Total		150	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	4
Mean	1.75
Variance	0.42
Standard Deviation	0.65
Total Responses	150

18. I like events that have a variety of activities for me to participate in.

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Strongly Agree		42	28%
2	Agree		100	67%
3	Disagree		7	5%
4	Strongly disagree		1	1%
	Total		150	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	4
Mean	1.78
Variance	0.31
Standard Deviation	0.55
Total Responses	150

19. I like to see speakers that look like me.

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Strongly Agree		8	5%
2	Agree		72	48%
3	Disagree		59	39%
4	Strongly disagree		11	7%
	Total		150	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	4
Mean	2.49
Variance	0.51
Standard Deviation	0.71
Total Responses	150

20. The way an event is promoted influences my decision to go.

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Strongly Agree		44	30%
2	Agree		83	56%
3	Disagree		19	13%
4	Strongly disagree		3	2%
	Total		149	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	4
Mean	1.87
Variance	0.49
Standard Deviation	0.70
Total Responses	149

21. I feel more at ease with people who are close to my age.

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Strongly Agree		9	6%
2	Agree		99	66%
3	Disagree		38	25%
4	Strongly disagree		4	3%
	Total		150	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	4
Mean	2.25
Variance	0.36
Standard Deviation	0.60
Total Responses	150

22. I would respond to Christian organizations if they had a clear discernible identity.

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Strongly Agree		30	20%
2	Agree		92	61%
3	Disagree		22	15%
4	Strongly disagree		6	4%
	Total		150	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	4
Mean	2.03
Variance	0.51
Standard Deviation	0.71
Total Responses	150

23. Christian events don't interest me because they don't reflect my style or values.

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Strongly Agree		9	6%
2	Agree		29	19%
3	Disagree		73	49%
4	Strongly disagree		39	26%
	Total		150	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	4
Mean	2.95
Variance	0.70
Standard Deviation	0.83
Total Responses	150

24. I would attend a Christian event if I considered it hip and exciting.

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Strongly Agree		28	19%
2	Agree		80	53%
3	Disagree		31	21%
4	Strongly disagree		11	7%
	Total		150	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	4
Mean	2.17
Variance	0.66
Standard Deviation	0.81
Total Responses	150

25. Christian organizations don't know how to reach the younger generation.

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Strongly Agree		19	13%
2	Agree		54	36%
3	Disagree		68	45%
4	Strongly disagree		9	6%
	Total		150	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	4
Mean	2.45
Variance	0.62
Standard Deviation	0.79
Total Responses	150

26. I would attend a Christian event based on their promotional video.

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Strongly Agree		14	9%
2	Agree		81	54%
3	Disagree		46	31%
4	Strongly disagree		9	6%
	Total		150	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	4
Mean	2.33
Variance	0.53
Standard Deviation	0.73
Total Responses	150

Appendix 3: Focus Group Responses

Focus Group Responses

Video 1: Passion Conference

Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RymHzLQBV2U

1.   Does this video appear branded, if so, what signals being branded?

        Participant 1: I do think that it is branded to generation Y, because of what the narrator was saying. There's always something that is constantly pulling for our attention. This noise everywhere, static that gets in the way of what we're really hearing. And that's very applicable to how I think my life has been for a few years now. It's difficult to find any type of peace and quiet not only in college but with all of these opportunities presented to us where we're in a place where we have advantages that we can take.

        Participant 2: The music. The upbeat thing and all this fun. You get the impression that it's something fun. Something the youth will enjoy. It just seems to me that a lot of the motion videos… they have so shallow meaning. Like not really deep focus meaning. Like Jesus is amazing you know come join with us, have fun. And that is like the main goal. If it seems fun and upbeat people will be drawn to us. It's becoming a cliché.

        Participant 3: It showed a bunch of people praising and congregating together with other people and full of color and life. Which I guess wants to draw you in.

        Participant 4: I actually … I liked most of the video. The beginning part was really interesting at least just the way they decided to make it. But as far as the way we usually think of a brand, I couldn't tell you what the logo is. I get that it's a lot of people together and singing and whatever, but I really can't tell you anything about it…what it was like. In that sense it really didn't seem to work to me, but I also think I'm slightly old for the demographic. Once the music slipped into that sort of like late 90's techno that I remember from high school I was like really? Isn't that kind of done? I don't know maybe that works for kids.

        Participant 5: I actually think it was really good. I feel that it was very intentional from the beginning. And that it wasn't like preaching—like this is who we are but more of this is what you can get from us. This is the experience that you need. This is the experience that we can provide for you kind of thing. It did come across as a brand. It was very relatable as well. I mean when you see all these things that are very current. Like when the girl was looking at the broken mirror and the kind of things that generation Y is really dealing with. Then you see how it comes from black and white to color and life, and which I think that's what Passion is all about. So in think that sense it was very effective.

2.   In this promo does this organization present a discernible story to you?

        Participant 4: Not in the sense of the story of the brand itself, but the idea of going from being by yourself and sort of bland boring existence and dealing with issues and then everyone

together and all the color and life. That sense of story—yes. But as far as like the backstory or the story of where this organization comes from and who they are. There's not that. There's definitely a narrative in there.

Participant 1: The graphics were confusing. The narration made sense to me but the illustration and animation were confusing. It was difficult to read the word Passion at the end. It effected how he received the story.

Participant 5: I think that the narration with what each character at the beginning was going through. That's definitely a story. And there were many stories within itself. Each character had their own story which they showed briefly. Transition to this is us is where I got lost. I didn't see the correlation.

3.   What stood out the most in the video(s) what are some associations you found?

Participant 5: Edgy

Participant 4: Good production and filming in the beginning. Then it got tacky towards the end. It was really cool classy interesting in the beginning then got a little 90's almost. Tried to make it all trendy and hip.

Participant 2: It's almost like they are trying to give the impression that Christianity is not a boring thing. Trying to get out of that zone where people think Christianity is not boring. So every video they make is upbeat, fun, or colorful. But it's not about that. Christianity is not boring at all.

Participant 3: It was disjointed. The beginning made you think it was going to be some deep emotional story and then just turned into a rave that they wanted you to join in with them. And that kind of put me off a little bit. You want a level of consistency.

4.   What words stood out to you?

Participant 1: Jesus

Participant 5: Yes Lord, movement

Participant 4: Jesus

Participant 3: Yes lord

Participant 2: This is us. Too commercialized.

5.   What values do you perceive about the organization from this video?

Participant 4: They seem very open and inviting. Trying to show spirituality.

Participant 5: I am a little bit confused about their values honestly. I feel like in the beginning they were honest. Then it became kind of tacky so I don't know if that was honesty coming from then. Would attractive be a value as well? Attractive by catching my attention.

Participant 1: Authenticity

Participant 2: Togetherness belonging and community

6.   Does this video cause you to identify with it?

Participant 3: Not Particularly

Participant 1: No

Participant 5: Yes I will go.

Participant 4: I didn't. The whole model thing. I never had anyone in my youth group that look like that. It's fake, it's a Hollywood kind of thing. They are not normal people. I don't really see myself represented in that.

Participant 3: The people they used were so perfect.

Participant 2: The branding of the word passion makes me want to check it out not because of the video.

7.   Based on the video would you attend the event?

Participant 5: Yes

Others: No

Participant 1: I still want to go to the conference before I am too old. However based solely on the video I would not go if I had no prior knowledge of it.

8.   From a persuasive standpoint, is this video(s) effective?

Participant 4: The beginning part was really interesting. To its target audience yeah. But I am assuming we are not it.

Participant 3: As for this Millennial they missed the mark. I'm not sold. Not effective.

Participant 5: No the video is not.

Participant 2: It's effective but not for me. Definitely people would be interested.

Participant 1: Maybe if a high schooler was watching it but I can't say that with certainty.

9.   In your opinion what is the overall message?

Participant 4: Come to our conference

Participant 5: Following Jesus is fun.

Participant 2: You belong.

Participant 3: Combination of 5& 4

10.   Would this video appeal to Millennials, if so, why?

Participant 4: Maybe younger ones.

Participant 5: Young Millennials because it's fun and entertaining.

Participant 3: Yes because of the music that was playing. That would appeal to them. They used and the colors that were vibrant and moving in and out through the video.

11.   If you found the video effective should more Christian organizations use the branding techniques in their events and promotional material?

Participant 4: High Production values (all agreed)

Participant 5: Narrative and it incorporated stories (all agreed)

12.   What would you recommend these organizations change or add to the videos that would better connect with Millennials?

Participant 1: They need all of their elements to flow more smoothly. They need to be harmony. The graphics and illustration with each individual's story, the color that they used, the spotlight, all of those are powerful. But the way they presented it was confusing to me. If they had presented it perhaps in a real life situation instead of having it all digitized like those swirling lights. Those didn't make sense to me.

Participant 4: Focus on making it good and less on making it trendy. Yeah, basically. They made it really flashy with high production values, but there was no substance to it. They never actually showed what it was about, and I think that's a problem if you really want people to show up. This was just like a movie teaser that gives no real information or context.

Participant 3: If I go to a biblical conference… I want to be inspired by the scripture and the message that's coming out not go there because people have made it seem like a fun little party. Have a boundary on the trend level.

Participant 5: I got the message of Passion just with the narration but everything else that was going on confused me. So what is this? If I didn't know that was Passion I just wouldn't know.

Participant 2: Christianity is about daily walk. Persistent things. None of the promotional video tackled those daily things. Daily walk—persistent things.

Me: So you think they need to add that?

Participant 2: Well at least simple but true. We leave out the simple part and try to focus on the big chunk. Big chunk is important but the small chunks come up the big thing. If that makes sense.

Me: I'm guessing you're saying they need to add more about daily issues that Millennials face?

Participant 2: Yeah like anxiety, worry not like-brokenness or extremes like suicide and then you're finally changed more of us don't struggle with those suicidal things but everyday struggles with our walk with Jesus. (Focus on the big things and left out the little things).

Video 2: The VOUS Conference

Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CFguts-gkGY

1.   Does this video appear branded, if so, what signals being branded?

        Participant 4: It seems to brand that guy what's his face?

        Me: Wilkerson Jr.

        Participant 4: Yes

        Participant 1: No

        Participant 2: The very common song that everyone can identify with.

        Participant 3: I don't see a brand

        Participant 5: I see something

2.   In this promo does this organization present a discernible story to you?

        Participant 4: I don't think there was a clear story in there. The seriousness of the song
this little light of mine, but it was not conveyed well.

        Participant 5: Loss of Innocence. Light to the world. Don't let it not shine. (Confused)

        (All were confused about story)

3.   What stood out the most in the video(s) what are some associations you found?

        Participant 2: Shine the last word

        Participant 1: The song is a very familiar song, but not presented in the light that it should
be.

        Participant 4: Uncomfortable. It's jarring and you really don't want to go to it.

        Participant 3: My word is threatening. Because I feel like it's telling kids that if you don't
let your light shine darkness is going to come in and take over.

        Participant 5: Stereotypes

4.   What words stood out to you?

5.   What values do you perceive about the organization from this video?

        Participant 3 and 1: I didn't see any discernible values

        Participant 2: It almost sounded so controlling. You don't want to be forced to shine.

        Participant 4: The iconography suggests doctrine and taking it seriously. It kind of failed
at that. It was trying to convey one thing but it sort of failed in the attempt. The last one was all

trendy and everything. And this one was trying to do that. That Pastor that's his whole thing. Trendy. It tried to do too many things at once and not in the right way.

6.   Does this video cause you to identify with it?

      All: No

7.   Based on the video would you attend the event?

      All: No

8.   From a persuasive standpoint, is this video(s) effective?

      Participant 1: If you can't determine the values or the motive of the video then it's not effective.

9.   In your opinion what is the overall message?

      Participant 5: I think they were trying to get to authentic Christianity instead of spiritual correctness. Maybe if I watch it a couple times it would be easy to understand.

10.   Would this video appeal to Millennials, if so, why?

      Participant 4: No probably not.

      Participant 3 and 1: Maybe some edgier individuals

      Participant 5: It sparks curiosity because it's weird and unique.

      Participant 1: It would appeal to individuals who like darker toned material.

11.   If you found the video effective should more Christian organizations use the branding techniques in their events and promotional material?

      No

12.   What would you recommend these organizations change or add to the videos that would better connect with Millennials?

      Participant 4: Lighten up on tone and be clearer on message and don't be creepy.

      Participant 5: Yelling is not effective.

Video 3: Acquire the Fire

Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YpLuoq9cZzk

1.   Does this video appear branded, if so, what signals being branded?

      Participants 4: Nothing except the name at the end. It looks like a disaster movie or a weather channel show.

Participant 1: Storms, Resilience This video was showing people in thunderstorms and hurricane running for shelter hoping to stay alive and facing that environmental tragedy. To me it look branded because they had all the sonar and weather boards.

Participant 2: Looks like Hollywood. Like Day After Tomorrow

Participant 3: It was more like and action movie.

Participant 5: The narrative. There was a story in there. The message was clear.

2.   In this promo does this organization present a discernible story to you?

(They all did sense a story.)

Participant 1: Environmental disaster

3.   What stood out the most in the video(s) what are some associations you found?

Participant 4: It was really intense and horrifying not what I expected.

Me. How did you like that as a technique?

Participant 4: I didn't.

4.   What words stood out to you?

Participant 1: Resilience but it didn't come off well.

Participant 4: Destruction

Participant 2: Survive

5.   What values do you perceive about the organization from this video?

Participant 2: Fear. They are trying to freak everyone out so they would come.

Participant 3: I saw self-preservation was highly sought after. Maybe save yourself and Acquire the Fire to….but probably not.

6.   Does this video cause you to identify with it?

All: No

7.   Based on the video would you attend the event?

All: No

Participant 3: That's sad because I know it's a good event.

8.   From a persuasive standpoint, is this video(s) effective?

Participant 1: No because the point of it didn't not come across. The purpose of the video didn't not come across

Participant 4: It was horrifying and I thought I got it. When the basement collapses and the people apparently die. Then I was like now I don't understand what they're trying to convey. It didn't make any sense.

9.   In your opinion what is the overall message?

Participant 2: You need to survive. Acquire the Fire was the ultimate answer. At the end it was come to this event and we will tell you how to survive.

Participant 4: Death and destruction are coming? There is a way to escape it come over here and we can help you.

Participant 3: You were left with a lot of questions at the end. What about Acquire the Fire can help fix the situation?

10.   Would this video appeal to Millennials, if so, why?

Participant 2: Yes

Participant 1: Yes but not for the purpose that this organization meant it to.

Participant 4: I think if people like disaster movies. But not to come to a random conference. They might check the website out of curiosity. The style of the video.

Participant 3: It didn't give you a good understanding of what is going to happen at the conference I would say No. They wouldn't get it. They might go online because they were confused but they wouldn't go to the conference.

11.   If you found the video effective should more Christian organizations use the branding techniques in their events and promotional material?

Participant 3: I did like how they chose the actors. They might not have been paid actors but they were real people rather than the first video but they weren't all models or like perfection incarnate.

12.   What would you recommend these organizations change or add to the videos that would better connect with Millennials?

Participant 3: Less gloom and doom. More inviting clearer story lines so they can understand what they are going too. Offer solutions instead of promoting the bad. Emphasize how you can resolve some of the bad things.

Participant 4: Have a clear narrative. Better graphics.

Video 4: Winterfest

Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8rLqSruT2B4

1.   Does this video appear branded, if so, what signals being branded?

Participant 1: Worship. This video unlike the other videos we watched had consistency. Its message was to represent and advertise a worship event. You are coming to this event to sing to dance to listen to the gospel be presented.

Participant 3: I agree with number 1

Participant 4: I agree. The fonts seemed kind of plain. It's not really branded if it's sort of generic. I think if they had something specific to them, it would have been better and it would have reinforce that whole idea of one consistent different brand.

2.	In this promo does this organization present a discernible story to you?

Participant 2: Yea they said again so it's an annual thing. The goal and everything was so clear it's a worship event 3 days… blah blah blah. There was like the story of that information was fully conveyed.

Participant 3: I agree with number 2. They had people there. They showed who were going to be guest speakers and they showed you know little clips of them being really passionate about what they were doing. So I think that added to it. I feel like that's a story saying we are not just something to make money we want to connect with you. We want to bring you here to benefit you and not just ourselves and pockets.

Participant 4: They showed a lot of little stories too. Like there's the overarching thing that tied it all together. The fact that it is one conference. It sort of had a general theme. I really like that too. Each performer had their picture and a little clip of them doing their thing and you could see that each one is distinctly different. So they might not all appeal to you but some of them definitely will. The variety. It made it interesting.

3.	What stood out the most in the video(s) what are some associations you found?

Participant 1: 3 Days. That phrase. Also they advertised the cost. More information in the video. They advertised the event by showing what it's about and providing details. (Specificity)

Participant 2: Tell your pastor. That's really good. Shows that it's not just random things you know. You still have to ask you pastor and make sure that its ok you know. Still under authority you know. Because a lot of it is focused on Millennials the younger generation they could do anything. But they are implying that please ask and make sure you guys are ok for 3 days. That was like on your face there.

Participant 4: I thought it was good they had so much information there. It didn't leave you in any way confused about what is was and who was going to be there.

4.	What words stood out to you?

5.	What values do you perceive about the organization from this video?

Participant 4: Worship. Community. Engagement. This definitely suggested Passion to me.

Participant 2: Transparency

Participant 3: Community, Honesty

6.   Does this video cause you to identify with it?

All: Yes

7.   Based on the video would you attend the event?

All: Yes

Participant 3: I'd share that video with others to.

8.   From a persuasive standpoint, is this video(s) effective?

All Yes

Participant 4: I think it is kind of funny. The other ones all had really high production values and they all tried to be really edgy and everything and get you in. This was just like… It had generic text flying around your face the music wasn't my thing. The videos were sort of grainy, but the authenticity and transparency and honesty and all that stuff and the passion in it and seeing all these people actually doing what they do at a conference people engaged. All of that actually drew you in and made you want to go and there was nothing threatening or edgy about it. It was positive it was interesting and it definitely had more passion and sense of community than any of the other ones did.

9.   In your opinion what is the overall message?

Participant 4: Worship and community and hope I guess—the polar opposite of all the other ones. The variety too.

Participant 2: Agreed

Participant 3: I kind of feel like it was a celebration. Because the other ones were like convincing you. Even though this was a promo video it was really just like hey this is what we do. We are happy to do it. We encourage you to get out and take a look and see what we do. I don't know. It celebrated everything they were despite the fact that there weren't high profile and they weren't on another level like that. I don't know. I felt really drawn in and wanted to like join in with them. Something for everybody.

10.   Would this video appeal to Millennials, if so, why?

Participant 4: Probably. It appeals to all of us. I think they would appreciate the fact—on some level with the music and stuff it tries to be that whole hip trendy thing. But at the same time it doesn't try too hard. It shows what they do. That makes it more engaging than trying to be polished and not tell you what they want to do.

11.   If you found the video effective should more Christian organizations use the branding techniques in their events and promotional material?

All: yes

Participant 2: Yes it's clear, just so clear.

Participant 4: It's authentic and transparent and upbeat. It's not trying to demonstrate that it is upbeat it just is. Because It's them being passionate about what they do and showing it. They're not artificially creating it on the screen they're showing past events and all the people just doing their thing and that's way more interesting and authentic than pretending with people on screen and on camera. It's positive. And people are passionate and it makes you want to go because you feel that you know what it's all about.

Participant 2: Not commercialized

12.   What would you recommend these organizations change or add to the videos that would better connect with Millennials?