

Final Report:
The Archdiocese of Chicago

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Introduction

Over the last few decades, young adults have been disengaged from the church and religion more than ever before. Young adults are less likely to pray, have spiritual peace, and do not have a perspective of the Church being conducive to their problems (Bigley & Weniger, 2020). To address this issue, the Young Adults Ministry of the Archdiocese of Chicago came to our team with the task to find new ways of increasing young adults' participation and interest in the Church.

Our team conducted secondary research and designed a research study throughout the Chicagoland area that examined the following questions.

- What are the young adult's social media habits?
- What are the best ways to engage young adults on social media?
- What are the highest motivations for young adults to attend church and other events?

The results of the survey will inform the Archdiocese's social media and event strategy for young adults church engagement and attendance.

Business Problem

The Archdiocese of Chicago serves approximately 2.2 million Catholics from Cook and Lake counties in northeastern Illinois. The Young Adults Ministry of the Archdiocese of Chicago came to our team with a task to further engage young adults in the Church. They also asked us to see how the target audience uses social media and what types of social media communications will generate highest engagement.

Research Methods

To gain insight we first conducted secondary research which can be found within our Situation Analysis. The most important findings from our prior research that set up our survey questions are:

- 77.5% of the conversations happening online about Catholicism were pessimistic based on Crimson Hexagon findings (See Chart 1).
- 44% of Catholics in the Chicago area are first and second-generation immigrants. The celebration of these stories, people, diversity, and what unites all of them could be potentially an impactful strategy in engaging young adults with the church (See Charts 2-4).
- Young adults use social media to gain insight on their religion and to share their faith-based experiences.
- If the church leadership wants to engage young adults, they need to provide them "roles in leadership, in discernment processes, and in decision-making circles that continuously shape the life of the church" (Urueña, 2018, p.35).

After conducting secondary research, our team hosted a Qualtrics survey, which generated 515 responses from individuals living in the Chicagoland Area. Those individuals answered questions about their demographics, religious affiliation, social

media use, and their political ideology, event motivations, and interests. The questions were formatted with multiple choice and Likert scale answers. To ensure only the most accurate and honest questions were included in our research, multiple “checkpoint” questions were instituted throughout the survey. These questions instructed respondents to choose certain answers to test that questions were being read. As a result, around 100 respondents were eliminated from our research.

One of our goals was to measure exactly what types of social media posts will generate the highest engagement, what our audience’s social media habits are, and what types of events are they are most likely to attend to help Archdioceses of Chicago create a social media and event strategy that will receive the highest engagement.

Survey Demographics

Most of the respondents were never married and under 30 (Table 1). While 58% were Christian (Catholic and other Christian denominations), many have attended a church service in the past 12 months (Table 2), but 55% haven’t attended any small church activities like a bible study (Table 3). It is important to note that our pool of respondents wasn’t entirely representative of the Chicagoland area. Of our respondents, more than 50% identified as white/caucasian. The survey respondents were also predominantly female.

FINDINGS

Social Media Habits

Out of our 515 survey responses, 234 participants use Facebook and 230 participants use Instagram. All other social media application responses can be found on Graph 1.

Frequency of Communication From Organization

When asked how often they would want to receive communication from an organization, monthly was the highest answer amongst the participants. (Chart 6).

Social Media Post Test

Participants were randomly assigned to two conditions, where they either saw a post without the official logo and church language or a post with the official logo and church language. Participants then rated their intentions to share, comment on the posts, and their intention to follow the Theology on Tap's account. We used a 7-point scale anchored by 1 as strongly disagree to 7 as strongly agree. The results showed that in two out of the three social media post pairs, participants rated the no official logo and church language versions higher in terms of virtual behavioral intentions (see Table 4).

Social Media Utilities

Entertainment, event awareness and educational purposes are the top three reasons why the participants use social media. Along with a sense of community and for their own personal expression. We found that religious affiliation doesn't affect the participants' social media usage (Chart 15).

Event Motivations

Based on two motivation questions, we explored what would motivate young adults to come to church or attend church events and activities. The first question was a scale of 1-7 and asked how important are these to your decision to attend a church service. Some other options included good music, a good sermon, and being born into the faith. The top three that inspired the highest motivation were: “makes me feel like a part of the community,” “gives me strength during difficult times,” and “sets a good example for my children” (Chart 7).

We also broke down those motivations by the potential groups that the Archdiocese of Chicago may want to target in your outreach.

- Among Catholics, the reason of ‘give me strength’ is the #1 motivation to attend church, followed by ‘example for my children’ and ‘parishioners are friendly’ ($F(9,170) = 5.61, p < .001$). See Chart 8.
- Among Hispanic participants, the reason of ‘example for my children’ is the #1 motivation to attend church, followed by ‘feel part of a community’ and ‘give me strength’ ($F(9,103) = 2.68, p < .01$). See Chart 9.
- Among non-religious participants, the reason of ‘feel part of a community’ is the #1 motivation to attend church, followed by ‘opportunity to socialize’ and ‘good music’ ($F(9,119) = 6.86, p < .001$). See Chart 10.
- The least likely to bring people to church are being born into faith. Also, we found that liturgy and traditions are not the most appealing aspects of the church for millennials (Chart 7).

We broke down the motivations into Extrinsic-Personal Motivation and Extrinsic - Social Motivation categories based on a previous research study for church attendance motivations (Mcgrath, 2019) and received the following results:

- African Americans are more likely to attend church because of personal and social motivations. See Table 5 for results.
- A spiritual person is more likely to attend church because of personal and social motivations. See Table 5 for results.
- A person with religious belief is more likely to attend church because of personal and social motivations. See Table 5 for results.
- A person with higher parent religiosity is more likely to attend church because of personal and social motivations. See Table 5 for results.

- A person with higher satisfaction with life is more likely to attend church because of personal and social motivations. See Table 5 for results.
- There is a statistically significant difference between White and African American in extrinsic personal ($F(1,403) = 12.29, p < .005$) and extrinsic social motivations ($F(1,403) = 4.76, p < .05$) to attend church. African Americans are more likely to attend church because of extrinsic and personal reasons (Q 67 1-10). See Charts 11 & 12.
- Married participants are more motivated to attend church because of extrinsic and personal reasons ($F(1,498) = 6.53, p < .05$) and social reasons ($F(1,498) = 6.85, p < .01$) (Q 67 1-10). See Chart 13.

Another question we used from a study by Scott, Sheila & Ogbeide to measure what types of events are young adults most likely to attend (see Chart 14). As a result we found:

- Young adults rated a location close to home as the highest motivation.
Recommendation: To reach those adults, add your events to Facebook and tag the location. That way, when they are using social media to find an event near them, they can find you easily
- Young adults want to meet and interact with other people.
Recommendation: when you are creating an event, make sure there is a place for social interaction.
- Young adults are interested in learning and attending interesting events.
Recommendation: Create events that provide valuable experiences for young adults.

Research Limitations

As aforementioned, our survey pool consisted of 515 respondents. A major limitation of this study relates to the diversity of the pool. 63% of our respondents were caucasian/white and predominantly female. This certainly is not representative of the Catholic population, nor the Chicagoland area. We also saw that more than 50% of the pool already identifies as Catholic, or some other vein of Christianity. While not all of the people claimed to have been attending church regularly, we don't seem to have reached the lapsed/formerly religious group of people.

The second limitation observed through our primary research may have been the fact that respondents were incentivized for participating in this survey. While this is an effective way of drawing participants, we know there is some element of survey fatigue and dishonesty as a result. To protect our findings from respondents not taking their time with the survey, we implemented multiple "check-point" questions. These tested whether a respondent was fully reading and digesting a question. If the respondent failed any of these questions, their information was removed from the study.

Finally, because of the time-constraints of this course, we were only able to conduct quantitative research on the business problem. Because the survey consisted of only multiple choice questions, answers were not recorded in the respondents own words. Should we have been able to ask open-ended questions, we would have likely received many more points of interest to dive deeper into. Multiple choice questions, when relating to a topic such as this, can be quite limiting. It's possible that our respondents either fit equally into multiple of the answer choices, or none. Having an open dialogue would increase the amount of information we would have to analyze.

Recommendations

Because our research has so clearly pointed to young adults needing a sense of community, our recommendations have been developed to help build the strength of the, already present, Chicago Catholic community. It's evident that this age range has a preference of using Facebook and Instagram, so the focus of your content strategy should strongly exist here. We have found that young adults use these platforms largely for entertainment, but also to receive content from brands and organizations they follow.

A few ways to engage this audience through social media are as follows:

- Share out content consistently; at least weekly on social media platforms, monthly through emails
- Show people of the Chicago Archdiocese on these platforms
- Announce and remind of group events, promotion on Facebook

To further build up the young adult community in the church, create a mentorship program for young adult involvement in the church as described in the editorial by Urueña, A. M. Not only does this allow attendees to meet new people, it allows you to get to know your people on a more personal level and actually contribute to the life of the church. This could be a formal or casual program, but would be a great starting point for generating more outings and events for this group of people. It also provides ample amounts of social media content - authentic ways of showing the good things you do for the community. Cor Chicago would be a fitting name, meaning that the Church wants young adult involvement not for the numbers, but because the leadership believes in this generation and wants it to be a part of everything that they do.

Conclusion

To reiterate, The Archdiocese of Chicago will make the biggest impact in drawing in young adults through continuing to build the sense of community that comes with being a member. We have identified the best ways to do so are through a revamp of the event and social media strategy. Building community involves speaking to the audience at their level. All messaging and events should be tailored to the generation. Content distribution should be consistent, and should be attractive to the generation while

remaining authentic. As a further step, more research into audience preferences should be conducted in a qualitative manner. Following these steps will greatly boost membership and effectiveness of the Archdiocese strategy.

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Appendix

Chart 1: Crimson Hexagon Audience Sentiment

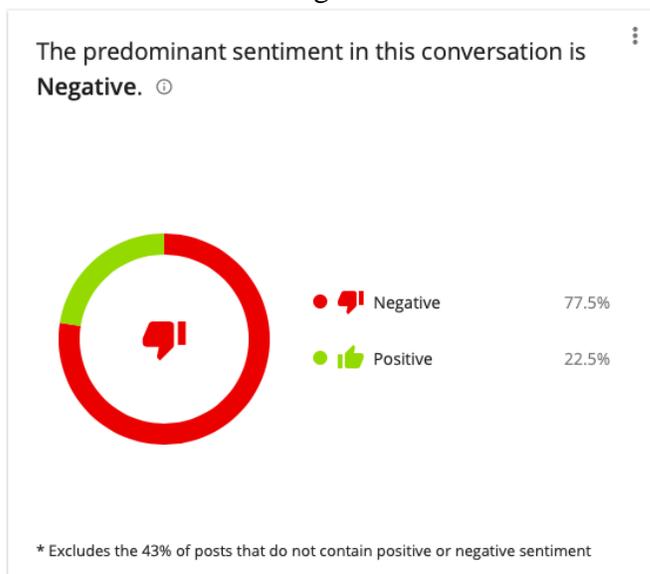


Chart 2: Generational breakdown among Catholics in the Chicago Area by Pew Research

Generational cohort among Catholics who are in the Chicago Metro Area

% of Catholics who are in the Chicago Metro Area who are...% of Catholics who are...

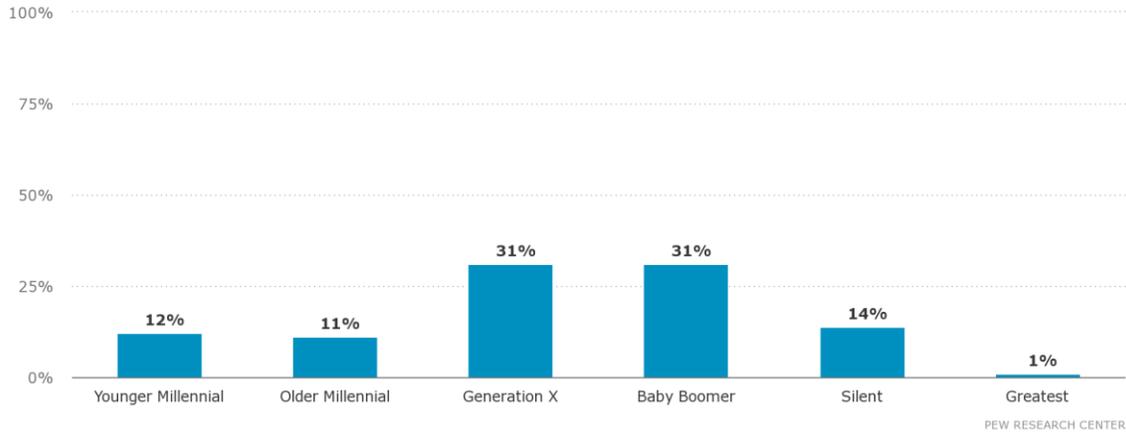


Chart 3: Racial and ethnic composition among Catholics in the Chicago Area by Pew Research

Racial and ethnic composition among Catholics who are in the Chicago Metro Area

% of Catholics who are in the Chicago Metro Area who identify as...

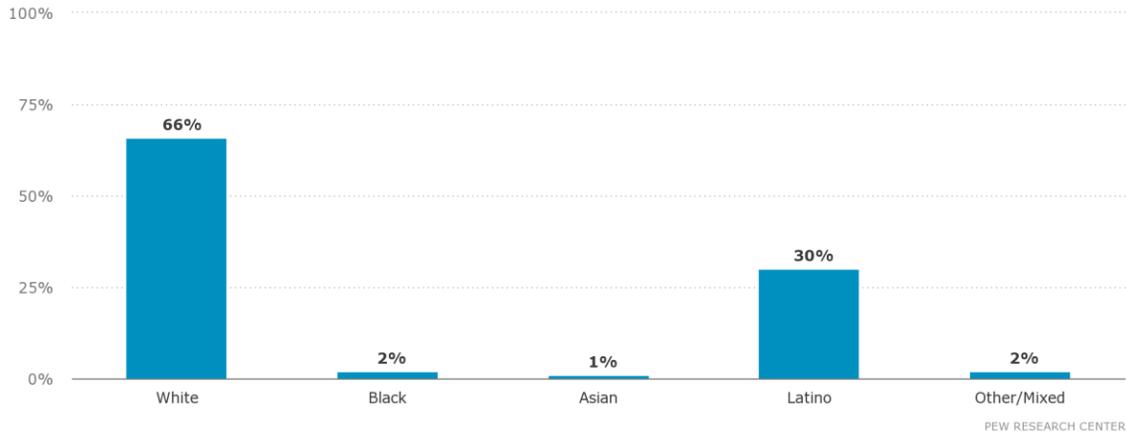


Chart 4: Immigrant Status among Catholics in the Chicago area by Pew Research

Immigrant status among Catholics who are in the Chicago Metro Area

% of Catholics who are in the Chicago Metro Area who are...

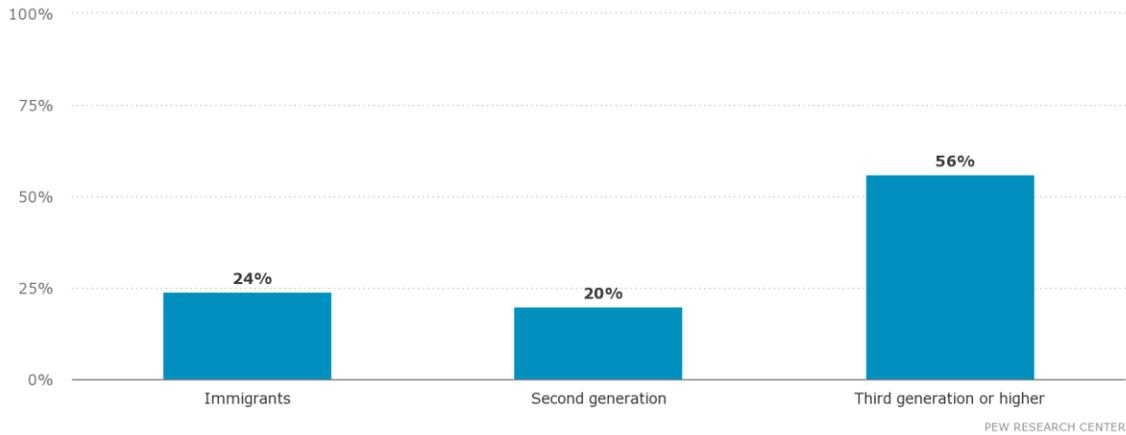


Chart 5: Social media application usage (N = 515)

Social Media Usage

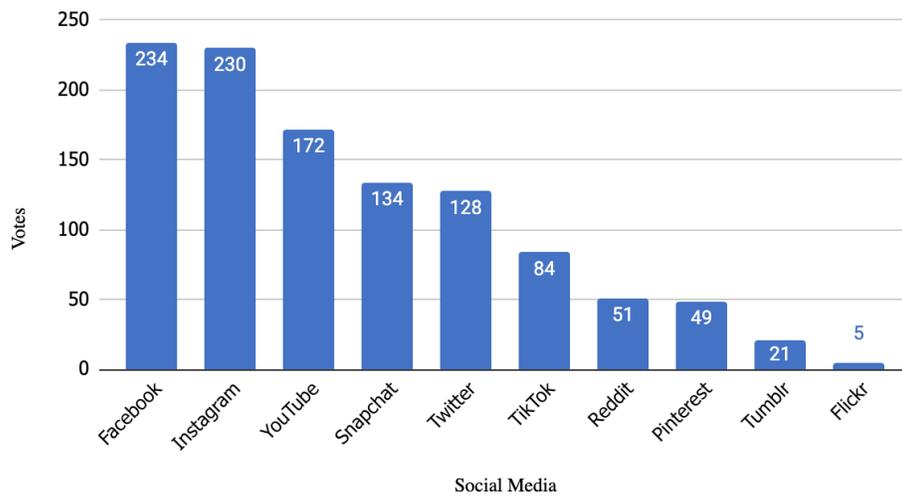


Chart 6: Preferred amount of communication from an organization (N = 515)



Chart 7. Motivations for Church Attendance (N = 515)

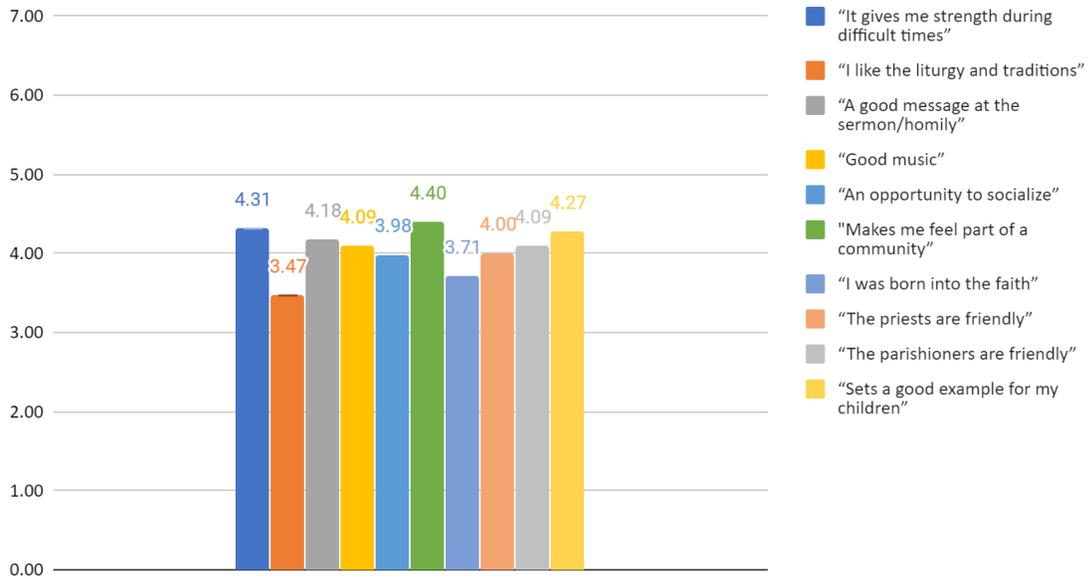


Chart 8. Estimated marginal means of motivations to attend church services among Catholics (N = 179).

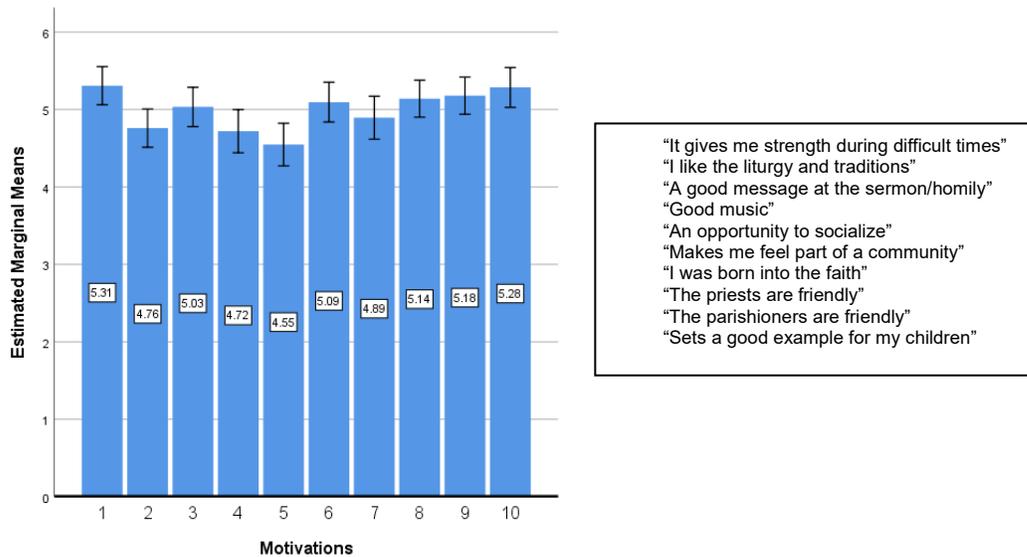


Chart 9. Estimated marginal means of motivations to attend church services among Hispanics (N = 112).

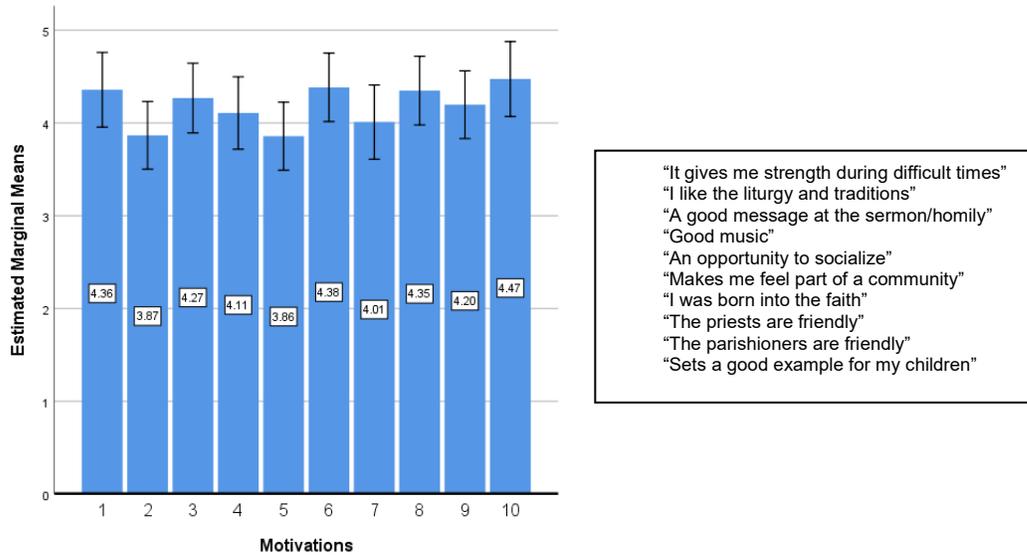


Chart 10. Estimated marginal means of motivations to attend church services among non-religious participants (N = 128).

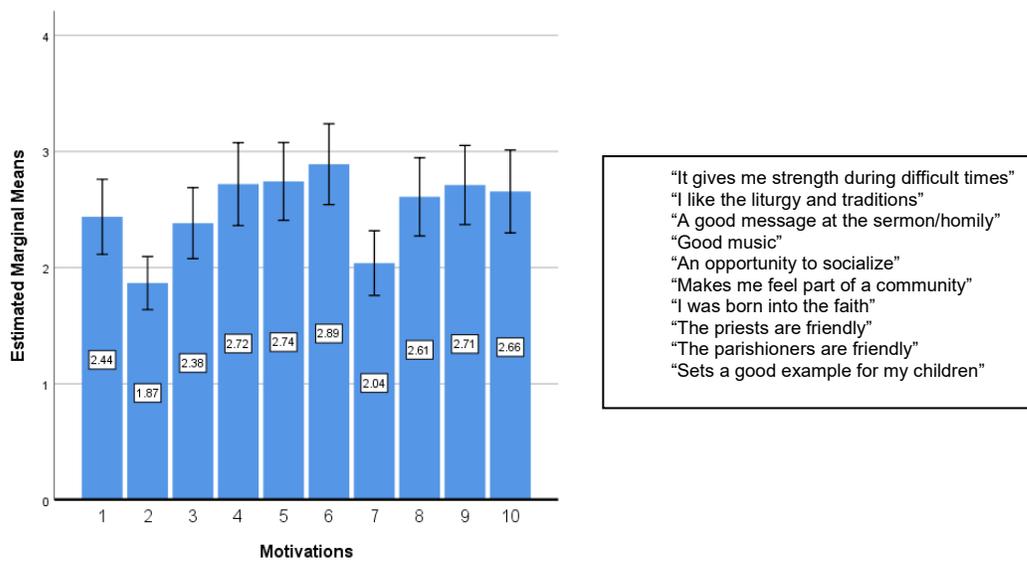


Chart 11. Extrinsic personal motivations to attend church between White and African Americans (N = 405)

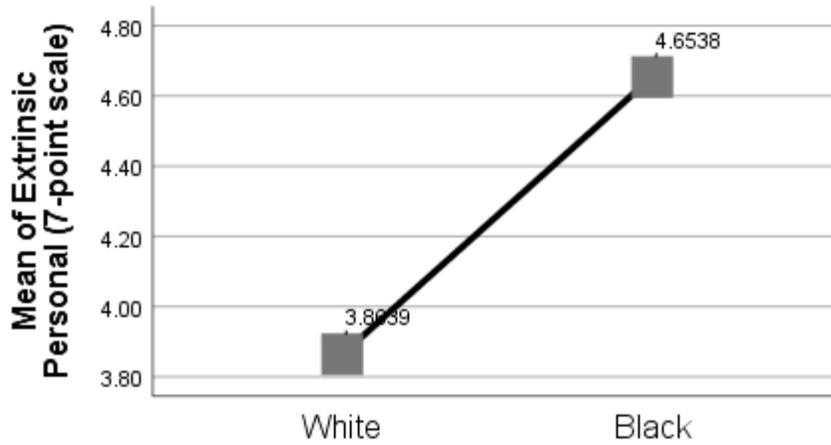


Chart 12. Extrinsic social motivations to attend church between White and African Americans (N = 405)

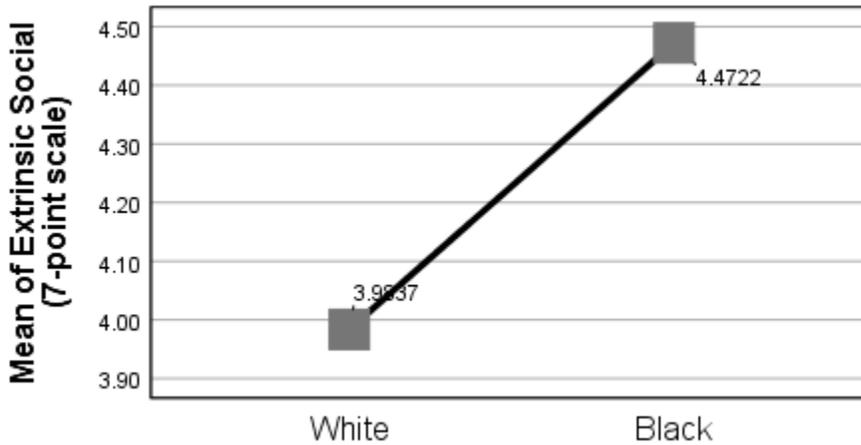


Chart 13. Difference of motivation to attend church between married and never married participants (N = 500).

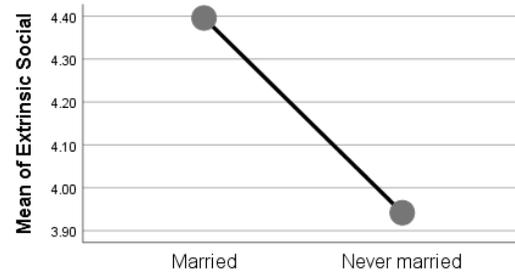
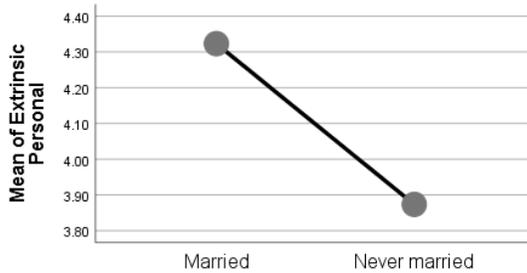


Chart 14. General Event Motivations (N = 515)

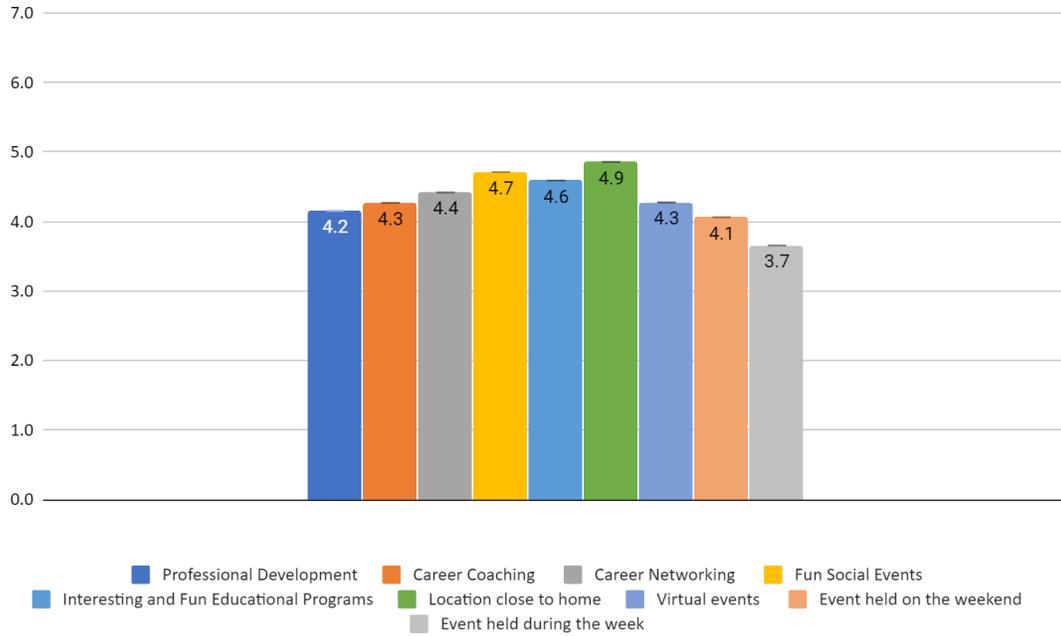


Chart 15. Estimated marginal means of motivations to use social media among Catholics (N = 179) and non-religious participants (N = 127).

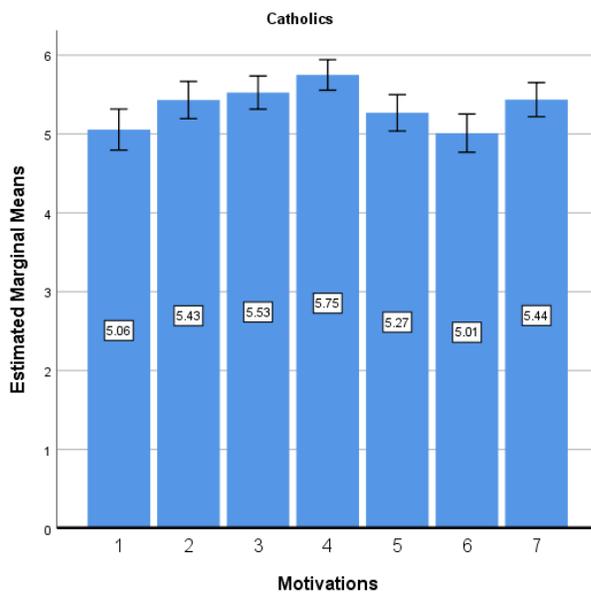
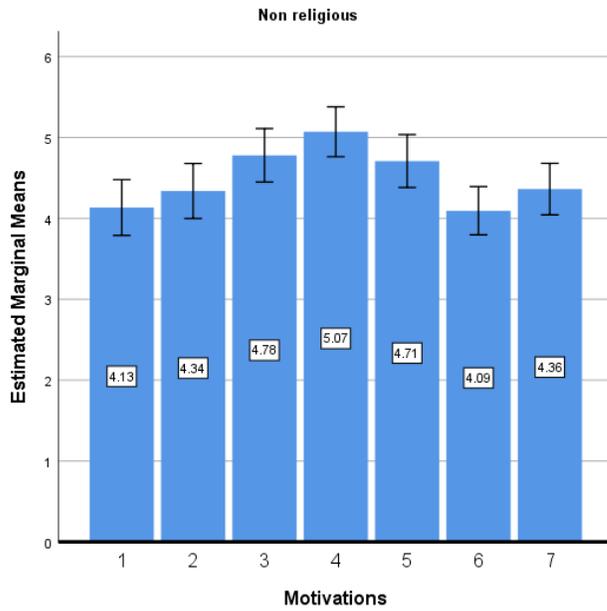


Table 1. Demographic characteristics of study participants (N = 515)

Variables	Percent
Sex	
Male	33%
Female	67%
Prefer not to respond	0%
Age	

	18-24	39%
	24-30	26%
	31-37	25%
	38-45	8%
Ethnicity		
	American Indian	3%
	Black/African American	15%
	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	2%
	White Caucasian	63%
	Other	16%
Marital Status		
	Never Married	69%
	Married	28%
	Separated	1%
	Divorced	1%
	Widowed	0%
Sexual Orientation		
	Heterosexual	74%
	Bisexual	10%
	Gay	8%
	Prefer not to respond	7%
	Other	5%
Living Area		
	Urban	42%
	Suburban	53%
	Rural	3%
Education		
	Less than High School	2%
	High School Graduate	19%
	Some college	23%
	Associate's degree	8%
	Bachelor's degree	31%
	Master's degree	12%
	Doctorate degree	3%
Income		
	Less than \$10,000	8%
	\$10,000-\$24,999	12%
	\$25,000-\$49,000	25%
	\$50,000 - \$74,999	17%
	\$75,000-\$99,999	14%
	\$100,000-\$124,999	10%
	\$125,000-\$149,999	4%
	\$150,000 or more	9%
Religious Affiliation		

Catholicism	35%
Other Christian Religion	23%
Islam	3%
Judaism	3%
Other World Religion	4%
No religious affiliation	25%
Prefer not to respond	7%

Table 2. Church attendance in the last 12 months (N = 515).

In the past 12 months, how often did you attend religious services?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never (1)	165	32.0	32.0	32.0
	A few times a year (2)	128	24.9	24.9	56.9
	Once in several months (3)	35	6.8	6.8	63.7
	Once a month (4)	25	4.9	4.9	68.5
	Once in several weeks (5)	32	6.2	6.2	74.8
	Once a week (6)	99	19.2	19.2	94.0
	More than once a week (7)	31	6.0	6.0	100.0
	Total	515	100.0	100.0	

Table 3. Small Group attendance in the last 12 months (N = 515).

In the past 12 months, how often did you attend any other special activities (for example, youth group, choir, bible class) as part of your religion or faith?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never (1)	279	54.2	54.2	54.2
	A few times a year (2)	71	13.8	13.8	68.0
	Once in several months (3)	29	5.6	5.6	73.6
	Once a month (4)	37	7.2	7.2	80.8
	Once in several weeks (5)	19	3.7	3.7	84.5
	Once a week (6)	54	10.5	10.5	95.0
	More than once a week (7)	26	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	515	100.0	100.0	

Table 4: Virtual behavioral intentions between the two conditions

No official logo and church language	With official logo and church language	Mean Difference	t (df)
		.377 (positive value indicates the left version had higher mean)	2.34* (513)
		.31	1.84 (513) Non-significant (No difference)
		.36	2.18* (513)

Notes. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 5. Church Attendance Motivations based on research study by McGrath, 2019.

Extrinsic-Personal Motivation				Extrinsic - Social Motivation					
“It gives me strength during difficult times”	“I like the liturgy and traditions”	“A good message at the sermon/homily”	“Good music”	“An opportunity to socialize”	“Makes me feel part of a community”	“I was born into the faith”	“The priests are friendly”	“The parishioners are friendly”	“Sets a good example for my children”

Table 6. Predicting extrinsic personal and social motivations to attend church

	Unstandardized		Standardized	
	Beta	Std. Error	Beta	<i>t</i>
Extrinsic Personal (N = 387)				
Race (White/Black)	.56	.19	.12	2.98**
Spiritual	-.71	.16	-.19	-4.36***
Religious Affiliation	-.35	.04	-.40	-9.36***
Parent Religiosity	.18	.04	.20	4.71***
Satisfaction with Life	.16	.05	.12	3.19**
	$R^2 = .46, F(5,381) = 65.82***$			
Extrinsic Social (N = 387)				
Race (White/Black)	.38	.19	.08	1.95
Spiritual	-.74	.17	-.19	-4.37***
Religious Affiliation	-.30	.04	-.35	-7.65***
Parent Religiosity	.18	.04	.20	4.59***
Satisfaction with Life	.21	.05	.16	3.92***
	$R^2 = .42, F(5,381) = 54.14***$			

Notes. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$