

# The Relationship between Church Marketing and Church Growth: Evidence from Ghana

Dr. Gabriel Dwomoh<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kumasi Polytechnic

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## Abstract

This paper explores the impact of church marketing and its effect on church attendance growth. Evidence was gathered from the analysis of a randomly-drawn sample size of 132 which involves 12 pastors, and 120 members from six charismatic churches. Results from the calculated Pearson correlation indicates that positive relationship exist between 'church promotion' and church attendance growth although regression results show that among all the variables considered in the study, it is 'Radio PR' that plays a major role in influencing the growth of churches in Ghana. The study concludes that 'Radio PR tool' has been the most effective tool influencing church attendance growth in Ghana.

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## *Index terms*—

## 1 Introduction

his research posits that using marketing elements to promote religious services has become a top bracket business in Ghana. This is occasioned by the upsurge of autonomous, non-centralized, independent established religious movements in Ghana. This situation has favoured marketing of religious activities in Ghana. Although church founders and leaders postulate spiritual reasons for the emergence and expeditious growth of these religious movements, other research has shown that the pivotal reason of their emergence is basically economic. When religious adherents go to see men and women of God' who are implied to develop power, predict the future, explain the present and uncover the past, they pay for the supposedly religious services rendered. Thus, religion is now one of the easy means of achieving riches rather than a means of making people better citizens for a healthier society, hence the need to market their activities. Ghana, like other nations in the third-world, has been witnessing the ascendancy of autonomous and non-centralized religious groups and movements in the past few decades. The country is a fertile ground for all kinds of religious movements. Despite the reasons for the foundations of these religious groups by their founders, there appear to be a common notion that the pivotal reason for the emergence of these religious groups is commerce. But most founders of the independent religious groups would hardly accept this fact. For instance, in a pilot survey conducted by the researchers, none of the founders of the religious groups identified commercial tendencies as a motivational factor for the commencement of religious groups.

Commercial tendencies of the many religious groups in Ghana have of late become overtly evident that it cannot be safely ignored. Religion has been largely seen in Ghana as a source of making money hence Ghana has been described as basically a moneyworshipping nation by Rt. Rev. Dr. Yaw Frimpong-Manso (Ghana Dot.com, 2009). The money-business in colours of religion finds a comfortable place in many churches in Ghana today. Religion has been twisted as it were to suit the intents and purposes of the users. This is what Obiora (2004) describes as: 'Holy' Deceit -the art of trading in God's name. The nutty trend for money has made some people willing to commercialize religion for their own benefits and interests. Many vulnerable people have fallen into the trap of this unholy merchandize. A detailed survey of the effects of religion in human society according to Xavier's (2004) is that religion has a tremendous power both to heal and to harm. On the positive side, religion has led to great achievements in the history of humanity. In Ghana for instance, religious groups

## 4 A) THE CHURCH MARKETING PROCESS AND COMMERCIALIZATION OF RELIGION IN GHANA

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45 and organizations led the foundation for formal education that ushered in the era of Western Civilization. For  
46 example, Opoku Ware senior high school, Aggrey memorial and Adisadel College are among the numerous schools  
47 which were introduced by religious groups particularly the Catholic Church. Apart from this positive aspect of  
48 the increasing number of churches in Ghana, it is also noted that certain aspects of religion enable people to be  
49 compassionate, truthful, disciplined, understanding, peace loving, responsible, creative and open minded ??Mc  
50 Daniel and Cooper 2002). Despite this positive aspect with the increasing number of Churches in Ghana, in the  
51 history of humanity, religion has been experienced as one of the easy and ready tools that can be manipulated for  
52 diversified intentions and purposes (Santos and Matthews 2001). For instance, a brief survey of the Bible shows  
53 that the Hebrew religion supports the killing of people in the name of God. In the Israelites wars of Jericho  
54 recorded in the Books of Joshua, the invasion of the city of Jericho led to putting everyone to death except the  
55 crises in Ghana but what is prevalent in the Ghanaian religious realm is what influences the sustainability and  
56 growth of these churches when they are established by individual people? In answering such a question, the study  
57 seeks to set up the following hypothesis based on the various literatures which the researchers have gone through.

58 H 1 : There is relationship between church advertisement and church attendance growth.

59 H 2 : There is a relationship between word-of-mouth and church attendance growth H 3 : There is a relationship  
60 between church Radio PR and church attendance growth.

## 61 2 II.

### 62 3 Literature Review

63 One aspect of marketing that many researchers have not concentrated much is "ecclesiastic marketing" and  
64 according to Sherman and Delvin (2001) it refers to the application of marketing in order to spread a religion, to  
65 attract proselytes and to obtain their loyalty and that is increasingly used by different religious groups, through  
66 specific institutions such as churches or praying buildings and missions in order to get the wanted answer from  
67 a target market. We consider this definition of church marketing being too commercial, referring to religion as a  
68 normal service, not as a social one. Another view, of Christian origin is offered by Prehn(2001) which states that  
69 religious marketing is a serving measure that consists of a sum of activities (every action and process that tells  
70 the story) involved in moving the Salvation good (produced by God through the Death and Resurrection of Jesus  
71 Christ) in order to help the one who intends to become consumer(a lost human being) to accept this Salvation.  
72 The limits of this approach lies in two aspects. The first one regards the fact that religious marketing is analyzed  
73 only from a Christian perspective. The second aspect is related to the fact that it refers only to the "spiritual"  
74 exchange. In reality, church marketing can be used by any Church or religious organization, and the pursued  
75 goals can be less grandiose (for example, fundraising).In the opinion of Stevens et al. ??2004), church marketing  
76 means analysis, planning and management of the voluntary exchange between a religious organization and its  
77 constituents, with the aim of satisfying the needs of both parties. Religious marketing focuses on analyzing the  
78 needs of its constituents, on developing marketing programs to satisfy those needs, on offering them at the right  
79 place and time, on effective and efficient communication with the constituents and on attracting the necessary  
80 resources in order to support the activities of the organization. The authors describe the "constituents" of a  
81 religious organization as being members, employees, participants, supporters and all other persons affected by  
82 the organization. This definition is considered to be too inward oriented.

83 Religious marketing can be used also in missionary missions, or proselytism, the action being oriented to  
84 some groups outside the respective church. Horne and McCauley (2005) conceptualize church marketing and  
85 stated that it refers to "understanding, creating, communicating and delivering consumer related values. This  
86 is a modern definition, which underlines the creating value role of marketing, but it is too general. Chuck et  
87 al ??2005) in adding his voice to what is meant by church marketing see it as a process by which concrete  
88 decisions are taken (regarding what religious organizations can or cannot take in order to fulfil their mission).  
89 Marketing is not selling, advertising or promotion, though it may include all of them. Marketing is the analysis,  
90 planning, implementing and control of carefully formulated programs, in order to determine voluntary exchange  
91 with specific target groups, in order to accomplish the missionary objectives of the organization. In other words,  
92 marketing may help a religious organization to fulfil its goals, by interacting with different groups.

## 93 4 a) The Church Marketing Process and Commercialization of 94 Religion in Ghana

95 It is obvious that all religious organizations have a strategic thinking. Modern marketing offers the necessary  
96 instruments to a continuous and complete process, whose result is favourable to the organization that uses it.  
97 Studies show that clergy opinions towards these strategic instruments are very diverse (they vary from one country  
98 to another and from one religion to another).On one hand, Sherman and Devlin (2001) studied the Church of  
99 England's clergy's opinions regarding strategic marketing planning and the results were not very favorable. On  
100 the other hand, Newman and Benchener (2004) present the results of survey of American protestant churches that  
101 indicate that 91.8% of the churches have mission statements, 70.5% have vision statements and 63.9% have official  
102 declaration on their values, philosophy and doctrines. Baron and Kenny (1986) declared that even though the  
103 debate whether religious organizations should embrace marketing concepts continues, yet the use of management

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104 and marketing practices by churches appears pretty often This lack of concordance between the declarations and  
105 the actions of religious organizations may lead us to the belief that the real problem is the unfavorable image  
106 of strategic actions, as a result of the way they are used in the business world. There are innumerable cases in  
107 Ghana where religion has been used as a commodity for merchandize particularly among the independent religious  
108 groups. All over Ghana and the world generally, 'marketing' God is fast becoming a top bracket business. When  
109 you go to see a "man of God" who develops power, sees past, present and future, you pay the gate fee and also  
110 the consultation fee. That is only a preamble. Johann Tetzl, a Dominican Friar was one of the commercial  
111 masters of the indulgence. He offered a formula that wiped up the religious sentiments of the people who accept  
112 to pay whatever amount they could afford as a price for indulgence. It is also alleged that Tetzl attached to  
113 the sales of the indulgence that even the sins which a man intended to commit would be forgiven of indulgence  
114 sent to his Archbishop. Luther condemned among other things the sales of indulgence on moral and theological  
115 grounds. The comer cialization of indulgence tore Christianity apart as many considered this irreverent trade  
116 sacrilegious. Nearly five hundred years after the scandal and abuse of indulgences, Christianity is still witnessing  
117 immense commercialization in religious matters, William & Alan (2002).

## 118 5 b) Marketing Church Products/Services

119 Just like other organizations that market product and services, churches also offer products/services and market  
120 them to their congregation members. One of such products according to Gainer and Padanyi (2002) is fertility.  
121 In linking this to the Ghanaian situation, one may realize that most Ghanaian Communities are Patriarchal.  
122 Payments for bride prices are high. Women are expected to be productive in childbearing otherwise the whole  
123 bargain of marriage would be considered a lost and a "bad market". Women go to any length to ensure that  
124 they get children. The religious climate often leads most women to seek help from Spiritual churches. The  
125 Spiritualists often explain the reasons for such infertility within a religious context. Items are usually required  
126 to perform rituals of religious nature. This is another hot spot for merchandize. These religious vendors of  
127 fertility are only too willing to utilize the opportunity to make money by marketing the church using any of the  
128 communication tools to tell the outside world what they can do in terms of fertility. Another product/service  
129 marketed to congregation members is salvation. Salvation can have a double meaning within a religious context.  
130 In otherworld sense, it can be described as where one attains eternal bliss with God. In this sense, the condition  
131 for achieving it is righteousness of life. In another sense, it is moving from a state of danger to a peril-free one.  
132 Such Peril could be provoked by natural phenomena like a storm, hunger, sickness or it could be caused by a  
133 human enemy or a malevolent deity.

134 Salvation is not cheap to get, it must be paid for and using advertising and other communication tools play a  
135 significant role for churches to communicate to the outside world that they can excellently provide this service.

136 Last adopting marketing communication strategies, one of the most common product/service marketed to  
137 congregation members is healing. In the state of ill health, a desperate client is willing to pay any amount  
138 to get well. Now just like other communication tools employed by marketers such as advertising, customers  
139 recommendation and public relations to attract customers to patronize in the products or services offered by  
140 these companies, it is evident from the literature provided by Foreman and Sargeant (2001) as well as Hill  
141 and Hood (1999) that churches also adopt these communication tools in order to sell these products/services to  
142 congregation members and also to attract more congregants to be loyal to the churches which they find themselves.  
143 Though looking at the comments by these authors that churches adopt these communication tools to market their  
144 products and also to attract more members, one need to critically look as to whether these communication tools  
145 really have positive impact on the patronage of these church products as well as church growth. In doing this, the  
146 researchers have set the theoretical framework for the study as: The Relationship between Church Marketing and  
147 Church Growth: Evidence from Ghana The theoretical framework above shows the relationship between these  
148 independent variables and the dependent variable. As can be seen, the independent variables are advertising,  
149 church member recommendation and public relations whilst the dependent variable is church growth.

## 150 6 Church

## 151 7 Methodology

152 The study hinges on two main sources of data, namely primary and secondary. The secondary data which  
153 constitute the core of the literature review are drawn from textbooks, journals, articles, previous researches and  
154 media reports, and the internet. For the primary data the researchers drew them from the field and constitute  
155 the opinions of local and national pastors' and congregation members of Pentecostal Life Church International,  
156 Back To God Family International, Church of Patmos International, Faith Alive Ministries International, Power  
157 Chapel Worldwide and Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries. The researchers selected a branch of these  
158 churches drawn from different cities namely Accra, Kumasi, Sekondi and Akosombo to be the target population  
159 for the study. In all, two Pastors from each church were selected for the study to service the qualitative part of  
160 the study. With regard to the congregation members, using convenience sampling, 20 congregants from each of  
161 these churches numbering 120 in total was also used for the study. The main data collection instrument used for  
162 the study was interviews and questionnaires directed to the pastors and congregation members respectively. The  
163 interviews centred on the impact of church marketing on growth of their churches in terms of increase in number

## 9 A) CORRELATION ANALYSIS

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164 of congregation members. The questionnaires directed to the congregants focus on whether the communication  
165 tools employed by the church influenced them to patronize in the church services. The data obtained from  
166 the study was analyzed using SPSS (Version 16). In order for the researchers to check the reliability of the  
167 figures, this was done through Cronbach's alpha. Again, the use of likert type questions necessitated the use  
168 of this test to check internal consistency. The researchers also adopted Mean, Variance, Minimum, Maximum  
169 and Standard Deviation to check the characteristics of the sample selected for the study. Since there were  
170 multiple variables (Advertising, Congregants word of mouth and Public Relations) as against dependent variable  
171 (Church Growth), the study adopted a correlation and multiple regressions to check the characteristics and  
172 relationships among the variables. In doing this, data with different set of years 2007 to 2012 from these 6  
173 different churches in relation to the amount of money spend on advertising, congregants' word of mouth and  
174 public relations (independent variables) and corresponding church growth (dependent variable) were obtained  
175 from these churches. This makes the number of observations to be 36 from these 6 different churches. The model  
176 specified for the study was:  $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + e$  Here  $Y =$  Church growth  $\beta_0 =$  constant variable  $X_1 =$   
177 Advertising  $X_2 =$  Congregant's word of mouth  $X_3 =$  Radio PR  $e =$  error By this equation, effect of independent  
178 variables on dependent variable was measured.

179 IV.

## 180 8 Findings of the Study

181 Data collected from the study with regard to the pastors showed that 11 members indicating 91.7% were males  
182 whilst 1 member indicating 8.3 % was a female. For congregation members, 72 representing 60% were females  
183 whilst 48 representing 40% were males. On the age of respondents of pastors, 5 of them representing 41.7%  
184 were in the ages of 30-39 years, 6 of them representing 50% were in 40-49 and 1 representing 8.3% was in the  
185 age of 50-59. On the side of the congregation members, 100 members representing 83.3% were between 30-39  
186 years, 15 representing 12.5% were in 40-49 and 5 representing 4.2% were in the age of 51-59. For the number  
187 of years they have been in the church, the responses of the pastors indicated that 2 of them representing 16.7%  
188 have been in the church between 5-10 years, 8 representing 66.7% have been in the church between 11-16 years  
189 whilst 2 representing 16.7% have also been in the church between 17-22 years. On the side of the congregation  
190 members, 56 members representing 46.7% have been in the church between 1-10 years, 51 members representing  
191 42.5% have been in the church between 10-20 years whilst 13 representing 10.8% have been in the church between  
192 21-30 years. The Mean values, Standard Deviation, Minimum, Maximum and Variance for all these categories  
193 are shown below in Table ?? As was indicated from the study, in testing the reliability of the instruments used  
194 which is the questionnaires, the researchers used Cronbach's alpha to test the reliability. With 18 items in the  
195 questionnaire (N), for both the dependent and the independent variable, the values obtained from the Cronbach's  
196 alpha of these variables which can be found in table 3 shows that the instrument used (questionnaire) was reliable.  
197 Interviews conducted with Pastors of the church used for the research indicates 10 representing 83% subscribed  
198 to the fact that adopting church marketing through advertising, word of mouth and public relations play a  
199 major role in expanding their church through increase in numbers of their congregation members. The other 2  
200 respondents representing 17% could not provide specific answer to the researchers' questions since to them they  
201 have not witness any tremendous growth in terms of increase in number of congregation members although they  
202 have spent money on advertising and other means of making their church known to the general public.

## 203 9 a) Correlation Analysis

204 The results of the Pearson correlation used to test the relationship between the variables are presented in the  
205 From the regression analysis, one can see that the co-efficient of determination indicates approximately 38% of  
206 variability in church growth that can be explained by the exogenous variables. Again, the beta co-efficient of  
207  $X_1$  (Advertising) and  $X_2$  (Congregants' word of mouth) show a positive association between them and church  
208 attendance growth though their P values show that they are not significant. Despite the fact that they are not  
209 significant, they had their expected signs as can be seen from the table above. The insignificant p values of  
210 advertising and congregants' word of mouth can be attributed to the fact that due to the influx of radio and  
211 television stations where churches do their advertisement, it becomes difficult for churches to get the timing right  
212 as to the right time people listen to a particular radio or watch a particular television station.

213 Again, the insignificant of the p value of  $X_1$  can also be attributed to the fact that people tend to focus on  
214 their favourite programmes when watching or listening to radio programmes at their leisure times and therefore  
215 place little or no attention when church advertisement is made.

216 Perhaps they see this advertisement as nuisance hence they perceptually block them. It therefore follows that  
217 though churches may see advertisement as a tool which positively affects attendance, however, it may be due to  
218 'situational source of self relevance' if even they witness increasing number of congregants. Hence the role which  
219 advertising plays can be deemed as insignificant.

220 The insignificant of the p value of  $X_2$  means that congregants' word of mouth is not an influential variable to  
221 the growth of churches in Ghana. This can be based on the fact that there is dissonance between testimonies about  
222 the church when the spirit of word-of-mouth is invoked. For example, a congregant who recommends a church  
223 to a friend about getting a healing may decide not to continue with the church when the recommended person's

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224 expectation is not met. It therefore means that churches effort in strengthening the power of word-of-mouth  
225 should not see much investment as the tool is weak in developing its set goal.

226 With regard to Radio PR, at 99% significance level, X3 plays a role in influencing church attendance growth.  
227 This implies that as resources are invested in Radio PR systems, it has a positive effect on church growth  
228 attendance. The significance of this variable to the dependent variable can be attributed to the fact that Radio PR  
229 enjoys positive feed-back from the prospects perhaps due to the benefit of 'Linguistically power' that establishes  
230 the spiritual benefits of the church in the long term memory (LTM) of the prospects. It was established from  
231 the study that the peak time for Radio PR works is between the hours of 10: pm and 5:30 am. It is therefore  
232 interesting to know what really keep these prospects awake at such a time when nature demands their sleep.  
233 Though X1 and X2 are not significant based on the regression, from the correlation analysis, the researchers  
234 can conclude on the hypotheses set for the study as: The Relationship between Church Marketing and Church  
235 Growth: Evidence from Ghana From this, we accept all the hypotheses that the independent variables has a  
236 positive relationship with the dependent variable (church growth) but the variable that is more influential to the  
237 growth of the church is Radio PR.

238 Hypothesis Direction Hypothesis Supported

## 239 10 Conclusion

240 The main objective underlying the study is to assess the relationship between church marketing and church  
241 attendance growth using six different churches as case study.

242 In achieving this objective, the researchers set three different hypotheses in order to assess if using marketing  
243 communication tools such as advertising, congregants' recommendation and public relation has any relationship  
244 with church attendance growth. Results obtained from the study through the calculated Pearson Correlation as  
245 well as interviews with Pastors of the churches selected for the study indicates that positive correlation exists  
246 between these independent variables and church attendance growth although in terms of their significance, it is  
247 Radio PR that plays a vital role in influencing the growth of churches members in Ghana. The positive correlation  
248 of the independent variables with the dependent variable made the researchers uphold all the hypotheses. On  
249 this note one can conclude that indeed there are present day commercial pastors who are really implementing  
250 Marketing tools in execution of their commercial agenda but whilst they have positive relationship with the  
251 dependent variable, from the regression analysis, the one that is significant in influencing the growth of churches  
252 in Ghana is Radio PR.

253 23. Gainer, B., &Padanyi, P. (2002)

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Figure 1: 10 Global

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Figure 2: Table 1 :

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	Age	Gender	NYIC
Mean	40.50000	0.916667	13.66667
Median	42.00000	1.000000	14.50000
Maximum	53.00000	1.000000	21.00000
Minimum	31.00000	0.000000	6.000000
Std. Dev.	6.259538	0.288675	4.097301
Skewness	0.181184	-3.015113	-0.222093
Kurtosis	2.600939	10.09091	2.754656
Variance	39.18180	0.083333	16.78788
Jarque-Bera	0.145280	43.32231	0.128747
Probability	0.929935	0.000000	0.937655
Observation	12	12	12

Figure 3: Table 2 :

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Variable	Cronbach alpha coefficient	Number of items
Advertising	0.969	5
Word-of-mouth	0.918	3
Radio PR	0.935	4
Church Growth	0.977	6

Figure 4: Table 3 :

below

b) Regression Analysis

variable. The table below show the regression for

Regression table measures the amount of total variation in dependent variable due to independent

church attendance growth.

	Coefficient	Standard error	t Stat	P-value
Intercept	78.20086316	14.66284276	5.33326753	1.3975E-05
X1	0.00434645	0.006693296	0.649373551	0.521792811
X2	0.002794015	0.002795174	0.999585153	0.326724025
X3	0.032579821	0.008072298	4.036003043	0.000425586
Adjusted R Square				0.37661145
F				6.8399811
Observations				36

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Figure 5: table below





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The Relationship between Church Marketing and Church Growth: Evidence from Ghana

The table shows that advertising (X1), congregants' word of mouth (X2) and public relations (X3) correlate positively with church attendance growth (Y). This actually support the interview that was done by the researchers with majority of the pastors selected for the study that, marketing communication tools adopted by their churches has a significant role in terms of increasing the number of congregation members which signifies the growth of the church.

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## 10 CONCLUSION

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