



**ASHESI UNIVERSITY COLLEGE**

**TAKE THY SELFIE AND FOLLOW ME**

**The Image of Christianity and How It Attracts or Repels Youth In Ghana**

**By**

**EFUA AKYERE GRAHAM**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original work and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

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I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by Ashesi University College.

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## ABSTRACT

The largest religion in Ghana, the world's most religious country, is Christianity. Here, the pervading belief in God's existence fosters religious involvement. With globalization causing a mirroring of trends, the drop in Western religious participation signifies the potential decline of religion in Ghana. Noting that religion is a major part of the lives of many Ghanaians, it is evident that ascertaining what is responsible for the popularity of Christianity in Ghana could hold key insights for religious and non-religious institutions alike as to what traits individuals value in the organizations that they choose to identify with. This paper reflects opinions of the youth on Ghana's most followed religion and acts as a pointer about traits young Ghanaians value in the organizations they associate with.

In this study, data was collected from ninety individuals using a set of methods including semi-structured interviews, a focus group discussion and an online questionnaire. From empirical evidence, authenticity ranked highly in deciding whether to belong to a religion's sub-branch. Full participation of the youth in Christian activities was therefore greatly affected by perceptions of the church's split between professed ideals and actual actions as well as the desire for a personal connection to drive their religious participation.

This research suggests that where the projected image of Christianity does not match reality, there would eventually be declines in participation. In essence, it asserts that the Christianity that respondents want to associate with is one whose deeds are motivated by a deep empathy for others and that is authentic in its communications and actions.

## Table of Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| DECLARATION.....  | i  |
| ABSTRACT .....  | ii |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....   | iv |
| CHAPTER ONE — INTRODUCTION .....  | 1  |
| 1.1 Background to the Study.....  | 1  |
| 1.2 Problem Statement .....   | 2  |
| 1.3 Objectives .....  | 4  |
| 1.4 Research Questions .....  | 5  |
| 1.5 Conceptual Framework.....   | 5  |
| 1.6 Cognitive Map.....  | 11 |
| 1.7 Cognitive Map.....  | 12 |
| CHAPTER TWO — LITERATURE REVIEW.....  | 14 |
| 2.1 Literature.....   | 14 |
| 2.2 The Voids This Research Aims To Fill.....                               | 19 |
| CHAPTER THREE — METHODOLOGY .....   | 21 |
| 3.1 Overall Methodological Approach .....                                   | 21 |
| 3.2 Research Design and Questions.....                                      | 21 |
| 3.3 Operational Definitions.....  | 22 |
| 3.4 Research Design Matrix.....   | 23 |
| 3.5 Sample Area.....  | 24 |
| 3.6 Motivations/Justifications for Chosen Data Collection Methods.....      | 27 |
| 3.7 Sampling Strategy & Implementation of Data Collection Methods .....     | 29 |
| 3.8 Data Analysis .....   | 32 |
| 3.9 Ethical Considerations.....   | 33 |
| 3.10 Limitations to Data Collection .....                                   | 33 |
| CHAPTER FOUR — FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION.....                                 | 34 |
| 4.1 Response Rate.....  | 34 |
| 4.2 Findings Obtained From Respondents.....                                 | 35 |
| CHAPTER FIVE — CONCLUSIONS .....  | 42 |
| 5.1 Deductions From Data Findings.....                                      | 42 |
| 5.2 Contributions To Knowledge.....   | 43 |
| 5.3 Constraints In Conducting Research.....                                 | 44 |
| 5.4 Implications for Further Research.....                                  | 45 |
| 5.5 Summary .....   | 46 |
| REFERENCES.....   | 47 |
| APPENDIX.....   | 50 |
| Consent Form .....  | 53 |
| Figure 1: Data Collection Tools .....                                       | 50 |
| Figure 2: Focus Group Transcript .....                                      | 66 |
| Table 1: Data Collected From Churches In Greater Accra Region .....         | 54 |
| Table 2: Data Collected From The Youth At Madina Market and Accra Mall..... | 56 |
| Table 3: Data Collected From Ashesi Focus Group.....                        | 65 |

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## CHAPTER ONE — INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the Study

Being the largest religion in the most religious country in the world<sup>1</sup>, Christianity — with followers that account for 71.9% of the Ghanaian population<sup>2</sup> — can easily be said to be in the process of fulfilling the exhortation of its founder, Jesus of Nazareth, to, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” if the focus is on numbers. In the midst of what many call the secularization of the world<sup>3</sup>, this raises a salient question on what features of this religion have made it a favorite in the country that boasts of the most devout population globally. More curious, one could go further to ask what factors have prevented Christianity from totally dominating the religious landscape of Ghana.

Given that the need to differentiate becomes evident in situations where more than one option exists, the existence of alternatives to Christianity such as Islam, Buddhism, African Traditional Religion and even atheism have been instrumental in molding a distinctive identity for Christianity, whether in terms of message, proponents, beliefs or intra-religious diversity. This creation of a unique identity, Graham Dover (2014) says, “... allows organizations to build awareness of their product, emphasize quality, and develop customer loyalty.” Asking if Christianity could fit squarely into the definition above as the latter statement categorically mentions a product is a valid question. However, given that the word ‘product’ is grained from the Latin word ‘productum’ (which means “something

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<sup>1</sup> According to WIN-Gallup International’s 2012 Global Religiosity and Atheism Index, Ghana (with 96% of the population being religious) is the most religious nation

<sup>2</sup> Figures are in line with the census information published by the Ghana Statistical Service (2012)

<sup>3</sup> In line with the Secularization Theory that states that religion retreats as modernity increases, much of the Western world has seen a drastic reduction in Christian affiliation

produced”), products can be defined as “things or processes that are the results of actions.” From this, the marketing actions of the church, to some parties, are critical in developing a value proposition that draws the identified target markets of the church.

Noting that religion is a major part of the lives of many Ghanaians, it is evident that ascertaining what is responsible for the popularity of Christianity in Ghana could hold key insights for religious and non-religious institutions alike as to what traits individuals value in the organizations that they choose to identify with. As the youth<sup>4</sup> — who identify themselves as a generation that has embraced the ‘selfie’<sup>5</sup> phenomenon as a medium of expression that displays their emotions, perceptions of themselves and the world around them — are regarded by marketers as an elusive yet valuable segment in addition to forming a major part of Ghana’s population, this thesis is useful in studying the manner in which Christ(ianity) is presented to the youth. Similar to the ‘selfie’, this dissertation specifically aims to reflect the opinions of the youth with regard to what they find relatable, intriguing or disinteresting about the religion in comparison to other options and what factors account for their choices in being publicly identified with Christianity.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

According to Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the pioneer of an independent Ghana, “...man is regarded in Africa as primarily a spiritual being” (Nkrumah, 1964). With local adages like *Obi nkyerɛ abofra Nyame*<sup>6</sup> supporting this view, it seems that an individual’s choice of religion in Ghana supersedes a fundamental belief in God’s existence. Indeed, if there were no other mediating factors to consider, the view that the

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<sup>4</sup> Defined by the African Youth Charter (2006) and National Youth Policy of Ghana (2010) as “every person between the ages of 15 and 35”.

<sup>5</sup> A photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically one with a smartphone or webcam and shared via social media (Oxford Dictionary, 2014)

<sup>6</sup> A Twi adage that translates as, “No one teaches a child about the existence of God”.



various religions would enjoy equivalent numbers would not be unfounded. Rather, there is a large disparity amongst the plethora of religions in Ghana; Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion (in descending order) are at the top of the national religious food chain.

Buttressed by the deregulation of the media, Ghanaian religious institutions have seized the opportunity to create public awareness of their existence and activities by using a variety of methods ranging from impressive architecture to conspicuous signboards to paid advertisements found in secular media houses. Christianity in this sense is no different. In fact, the Christian faithful have intensified the effort to increase their numbers by organizing Christian music concerts, crusades and door-to-door evangelical missions that aim to touch every possible target market.

Contrary to the perceived dominance of religion in Ghana, there is evidence that point to the waning popularity of religion—particularly Christianity—in Western nations such as the United States of America. In America, for instance, Barna Group, a leading research group on the intersection between religious faith and culture, discovered that “Churchgoing is slowly but incontrovertibly losing its role as a normative part of American life” with “nearly half of Millennials (48%) qualifying as post-Christian compared to two-fifths of Gen X-ers (40%)” (Barna Group, 2014). Increasingly, as globalization leads to a mirroring of trends across nations, there is the likelihood that growing indifference to religion in Ghana either exists or could exist. At first glance, the possibility of a world without religion does not seem to be one that could be a potential source of worry. However, there are findings that point to religiosity “significantly contributing to the reduction of six youth risk behaviours: smoking, alcohol use, truancy, sexual activity, marijuana use, and depression” (Sinha, Cnaan, & Gelles, 2007).

Given that the youth are swift in terms of navigating, adopting and harvesting a following for new trends, a product's ability—or inability—to capture the interest of this group could foretell whether it would be annihilated or be successful in building a cult following. This would mean paying acute attention to the concerns and values of the group, alleviating all skepticism about possible inconsistencies associated with the trend at hand, and identifying what channels would be best in disseminating the message that is wanted.

To appraise the views of the youth who are on the other end of the conversion efforts of Christian missionaries and to evaluate the extent to which their concerns are reflected in spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ, random samples of the youth in the Accra metropolis—regardless of their religious backgrounds—have been approached in this study.

### 1.3 Objectives

The main objective of this study was to examine the extent to which the youth in Ghana are drawn to or repelled from Christianity by the way it is presented to them. Specifically, this dissertation aimed to achieve the following sub-objectives:

- To identify the ways in which the Christian message is packaged in the bid to sell it to the youth in Ghana.
- To conceptualize the responses of the youth to the practice of Christianity in Ghana and the approaches used to disseminate Christianity and its ideals.
- To ascertain if the youth, on average, perceive Christianity as “hip<sup>7</sup>” and what accounts for this estimation.

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<sup>7</sup> En vogue (Schietle, 2011). Derived from the African American word *hep* meaning ‘to be in the know’ (Shleider, 2004)

#### 1.4 Research Questions

This research was driven by the question:

What factors account for the youth in Ghana being attracted to or repelled from Christianity? To answer this, the following sub-questions are asked:

- What tools in Christianity are used with the aim of increasing youth membership?
- What are the responses of the youth to the practice of Christianity in Ghana and the approaches used to disseminate Christianity and its ideals?
- Would members of the youth, on average, consider Christianity as “hip” and why?

#### 1.5 Conceptual Framework

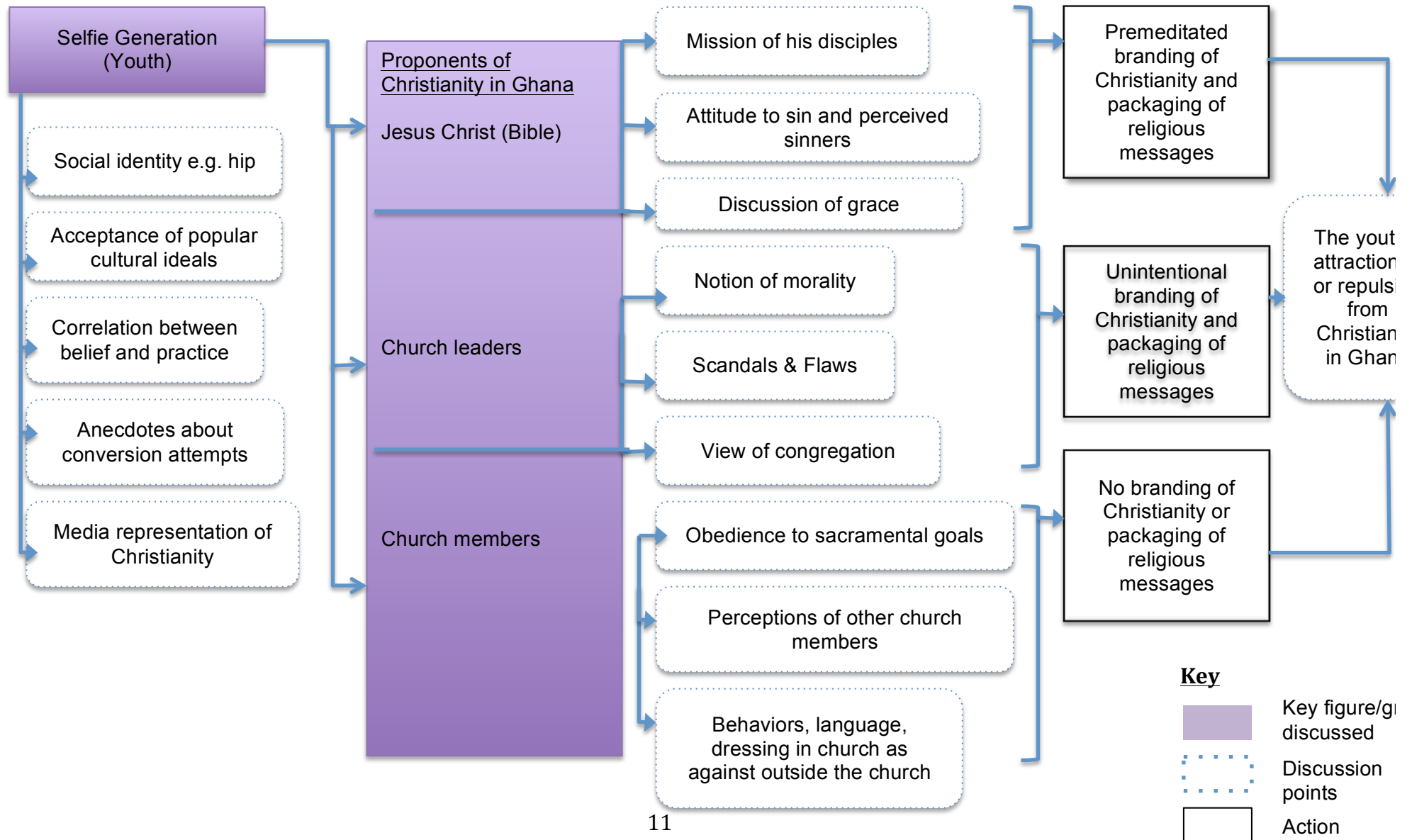
John Marshall and Graham Ritchie in *Welcome To The Human Era* state that, “Powered by technology, the democratizing of information, and the ascendant power of the individual, the way institutions connect with individuals is changing irrevocably (Ritchie & Marshall, 2013).” Indeed, the truth in this statement is made evident by observing current society and noting the scrutiny that institutions go through and the public outcries when there is the realization that there has been wrongdoing of any sort. The same text continues, “...trust in traditional institutions has been precipitously eroding. We now find ourselves members of a vastly different society — one marked by innovation, rapid change, and individual empowerment” (Marshall & Ritchie, 2013). As individuals are increasingly using technology to liaise with likeminded individuals and to identify their past experiences before making decisions on whether to trust a brand, institutions are noting that a way to gain public trust is by building intimate and inclusive relationships with customers; reflecting unforced interactions in society. This shift in thinking has led brands like Apple, Starbucks, Virgin America and Google to gain immense success and propound the view that there are key attributes—like caring intensely about the little things; having deep cultural traits of customer empathy; and talking and acting like real

people do—that institutions need to have to perform as they wish in this current era (Marshall & Ritchie, 2013). Applying this theory to Christianity in Ghana is beneficial in understanding how the religion is perceived by the youth. Even more, it could provide some insights into the values that the youth want Christianity in the country to embody for their increased participation.

Reading *Church for the Unchurched* (Hunter, 1996), one finds a discussion of the various brands of churches, the aspirations these congregations have and the ways in which churches at the moment differ from their goals. By developing two lists that juxtapose distinctive features of the ‘ideal’ apostolic congregation and ‘current’ traditional congregations, he shows how some churches have caused their own undoing. For instance, he states that, apostolic congregations “take a redundant approach to rooting believers and seekers in Scripture...they find as many ways to constantly connect people to the Word as possible” while some traditional congregations “simply want people to “be religious, not necessarily have a real relationship with God. As long as they claim to believe, almost anything will do (Hunter, 1996).”

Comparing both texts, it is realized that the theory on what features leads to successful brands would prove instrumental in understanding what traits might attract members of the society to Christianity while discussion of church brands would serve as a basis for identifying whether or not an individual’s desire to return to a church would be based on their perceptions of the church’s atmosphere.

## 1.6 Cognitive Map



## 1.7 Cognitive Map

On the subject of the factors that are responsible for the youth being repulsed from or attracted to Christianity in Ghana, certain key elements that relate to identity and personal values were considered. These include the social identity that members of the youth want (i.e. the adjectives that these individuals wish they are linked with), the elements of popular culture that are used in shaping conceptions of what suitable forms of behavior are, the observation of professed appropriate conduct and whether or not these are actually practiced in reality.

Each of the elements mentioned above are linked with the practice of Christianity in Ghana. The proponents of Christianity in Ghana can be traced to Jesus Christ of Nazareth (the founder of the Christian faith), church leaders in Ghana as well as the followers of the Christian religion in Ghana. For each of these identified parties, there are key concerns that shape the attitude of the youth to Christianity in Ghana. Some of these are the notion of grace, the acceptance of individuality in the church, conformance to church traditions and standards as well as scandals that involve leading members of churches in the country.

All the above are perceived to be instrumental in the decision of the youth in Ghana to be associated with or dissociated from religion in Ghana. Curiously, the weight of the choices of churches to actively pursue branding and to package messages in a way that attract target groups in society or to leave the images that are associated with Christianity to a person's own standards has not been proven to influence the youth in Ghana's attraction or repulsion from the religion. As this dissertation ultimately seeks to identify the extent to which the youth in Ghana are drawn to or pulled from the Christian religion and its messages in line with their values, the subsequent chapter reviews seminal texts and

uses these as a touchstone for developing methodological approaches and questions for data collection.

## CHAPTER TWO — LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Literature

#### ***Marketing Christianity***

Stating that many individuals believe that the local church ought to engage modern ways of thinking to ensure that it survives in the current age, Graham Dover (2006) in Branding the Local Church: Reaching Out or Selling Out postulates that branding might prove essential to churches. With the reason that “the creation of a unique identity allows organizations to build awareness of their product, emphasize quality, and develop customer loyalty”, Dover further comments that branding is an efficient means of differentiating from other competitors to attract declining consumers and their income. He however states that there has been comparatively little research into the branding in not-for-profit organizations as against for profit companies (Dover, 2006). Yet, researchers believe that branding could have a positive impact on not-for-profit organizations as those with a high brand orientation can create the situation where employees embody the brand of the institution while fulfilling organizational objectives. To prove this, Graham Dover discusses George Barna’s arguments that the Bible is one of the world’s greatest marketing texts by quoting the lines:

“He [Jesus] understood His product thoroughly, developed an unparalleled distribution system, advanced a method of promotion that has penetrated every continent, and offered His product at a price that is within the grasp of every consumer” (Barna, 1988:50). With this, Graham Dover argues that biblical verses like “To the weak, I become weak that I might win the weak”<sup>8</sup> advocate flexibility and defining strategies to attract non-Christians to the message of the Christian religion.

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<sup>8</sup> As seen in 1 Corinthians 9:22 (English Standard Version)



Outlining reasons stated by individuals like Gregory Pritchard, John MacArthur and Douglas Webster that there could be mission drift as well as the notion that churches would begin to measure success in numerical terms when they begin using marketing as a tool, Dover develops a questionnaire that is administered to 110 church heads to identify how they believe marketing tools affects the mission and identity of the church. Questions like, “How relevant is branding to local church leaders and have they benefited or seen benefits from a high brand orientation?” led to the author identifying that brands were useful in differentiating and correcting negative perceptions that society has while it could have negative impact on organizational values. The finding that 62% of the churches surveyed (i.e. 68 churches) had increased in growth a few years after starting marketing showed that marketing plays a huge role in attracting members of the community to church.

With evidence from the large number of church signboards that dot the roads of Accra as well as the advertisements placed on electronic media, one realizes that churches in Ghana are intensively using marketing to broadcast their messages to the Ghanaian public. Identifying the modes by which Christian churches brand themselves could give an idea of the approaches that they feel yield best results in reaching out to people who are not active members of their folds.

### ***‘Cool’ and Christian: Mutually Exclusive?***

Discussing the identity that Christianity in current times has, Brett McCracken uses the phrase “identity crisis” as a way of describing the crossroads that the religion is facing in terms of how it intends to position itself in current times. With this introduction, the author of Hipster Christianity: When Church and Cool Collide ushers in “Hipster Christianity” as a description of the phenomenon when “faith [is] more concerned with its image and

ancillary appeal” (Mccracken, 2010). Using personal anecdotes as well as research to identify the origins of the concept of “cool” as well as the roots of ‘Hip Christianity’, the author identifies characteristics of hip Christians and asks “what happens when Christianity becomes cool” and “whether or not a fashionable, edgy, countercultural Christianity is a good thing for the church.” Sharing his personal experiences, the author mentions the shift from his childhood experience where it was untrendy to be a Bible-toting child to the moment when Christian Rock music was fashionable and even played on secular channels like MTV and questions whether this growing acceptance of the idea that one can and should be both cool and Christian should be readily conformed to. More intriguingly, the author enquires if making Christianity fit within current popular culture — instead of going against societal norms — could lead to a waning number of Christians.

In Ghana, popular arts such as secular and gospel music as well as the local movie industry seem to have successfully merged Christian ideas and topics with their art forms. This view of a hip Christianity is sharply juxtaposed with calls by clergymen who reject the idea of Christianity in the popular arts as these are seen as too ‘worldly’; leading to a case where many Christians are careful to separate their Christian identity from their patronage of these popular media.

### ***Growing Consumer Culture and The Secularization of Religion***

In Dropkick Me Jesus Through The Goalposts of Life: McDonaldization, Consumer Culture and Modern Evangelical Churches, J.B. Watson and Stephen Austin discuss the impact of a growing consumer culture on religion, stating that, “The church growth movement has led to a consumer-driven model of church organization adopted by many evangelical churches, where the senior minister functions as a chief executive officer, and another ministerial staff member often serves as the “minister of marketing” (Watson

&Austin, 2007). Alternatively, they state that religion and culture also have the ability to influence culture.

By outlining how the emergence of consumer culture has shaped other spheres of life, the authors point to the phenomenon where “religious affiliation became a matter of choice” and state that it is tied to ascribed notions of its impact on one’s social identity. The foundation for this belief is that “wherever supply exceeds demand, branding follows.” To give credence to this statement, the text uses Smith and Denton’s 2005 national survey that discusses how the U.S adolescent population has, from birth, been subject to popular culture and mass media advertising that endorse articles or tasks as an extension of themselves. For the authors, this attitude has permeated even traditional institutions as individuals in America at the moment have an ideology called “moralistic therapeutic deism” which makes them see themselves as the yardstick of authentic by The Transformation of American Religion: How We Actually Live Our Faith, written by a sociologist called Alan Wolfe. In his text, Wolfe suggests that the fixation of the modern church with corporate business culture, self-improvement perspectives and popular culture forms part of a broader trend called secularization (Wolfe, 2003). Exploring the concept of secularization that was popularized by thinkers such as Marx Weber and Sigmund Freud, Steve Bruce (2002) discusses declining religious involvement and says that even with the likelihood that as human beings, we have a predisposition to spirituality, there will not be any new religious renaissance because “in the New Age, the sovereign consumer will decide what to believe”.

For Timothy Lawless, the author of The Postmodern Church, the dwindling membership and attendance of church in the United States of America indicates “a massive cultural shift toward postmodernism leading to discontent with the Church” (Lawless, 2012). Providing what he calls “irrevocable evidence that people are not staying

in the church” by citing statistics that suggest that up to ninety-four percent of Churchgoing high school students will leave the Church at the end of their high school education<sup>9</sup>, he makes the justifiable claim that Christianity seems to have lost its weight as a cultural influence. Some factors that could be attributed to this phenomenon include “loss of faith in the church as an institution, the growing influence of liberal theology and mainline denominations, the cultural shift to postmodern philosophical and religious views, and the rejection of absolute propositional truth.” Yet, he also mentions that other polls and surveys suggest that there is rather an increase in religious participation. For those who pitch this argument, the only change is that participation in churches is happening in a different manner as churchgoers prefer to drift among churches and denominations instead of being fully identified as members of a church.<sup>10</sup>

With the above, there came a reactionary movement called the “emergent church” which was led by Christians who were disillusioned with “a Church that seemed out of touch with culture and, at times, too worldly”. By analyzing the works and teachings of popular leaders of the emergent church like Donald Miller and Brian McLaren, Lawless attempts to describe the attitudes of those born in the postmodern era and how those who are religious seekers do not want a religious experience that does not leave room for questions. For instance, analyzing Donald Miller’s popular book, Blue Like Jazz, David Lawless identifies that one key concern of those longing for a new Christian experience is for the Church to be more preoccupied with living out their belief in Jesus Christ instead of only talking about their beliefs. For the author, the doctrine of the emergent church is admirable yet it is at the risk of replacing modernist views with postmodern ones. This will have the effect of duplicating the phenomenon where Biblical truths are excluded so as to

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<sup>9</sup> According to Josh McDowell in page 13 of The Last Christian Generation (McDowell, 2006)

<sup>10</sup> According to Amy Johnson Frykholm, “Loose connections: What’s Happening to Church membership?” (Frykholm, 2011)

remain socially relevant. This insight accrues to the emergent church's rejection of the notion of absolute truth—the principle on which the Church is founded as it is believed that Jesus Christ embodied spiritual truth.

### ***The Characteristics of Successful Brands***

The research on successful brands and current consumer value chains dubbed Welcome To The Human Era (Marshall & Ritchie, 2013) is one that outlines the shift between traditional institutions<sup>11</sup> and 'human era' institutions<sup>12</sup>. By stating how technology and increasing public knowledge of the blunders of large corporations have diminished public trust in companies, the text examines the companies that have a positive brand and identifies a set of characteristics that these institutions embody. Notable among these features are traits such as a 'focus on collaboration', expressing themselves in terms of 'acts and not ads' and 'showing real personality' so as to not be boring (Marshall & Ritchie, 2013). Given that these human era institutions have attained a high level of success that can be attributed to their ability to connect with individuals on a personal note where each party is capable of honestly communicating and living out its core beliefs, it could prove useful to assess if these are features that (potential) consumers of Christianity in Ghana would appreciate.

### **2.2 The Voids This Research Aims To Fill**

In this paper, to fix the tension between the various schools of thought that have opposing views about the church's assimilation of secular concepts, research conducted identifies what key factors are responsible for the image that Christianity in Ghana has as

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<sup>11</sup> Institutions that place a strong premium on bureaucratic procedures and prevent unscripted communications between its employees and the general public

<sup>12</sup> Institutions that strive to promote transparency and have a deep cultural trait of customer empathy

one that is attractive or repulsive to the youth. It seeks to provide conclusive information in the form of two lists that discuss what, in general, about Christianity in Ghana is appealing to the youth as well as what could be driving the youth group away from the religion.

The next chapter therefore describes in detail the various areas, samples and methods chosen to fulfill the purposes stated above.

## CHAPTER THREE — METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Overall Methodological Approach

As there are multiple sides to an individual's choice to be associated with or dissociated from a religion, a qualitative study was chosen for the nature of this research to be able to discover key concepts, generalizations, experiences and observations that Ghanaian youth have on the subject of the Christian religion. This approach is further validated by the qualitative data collection methods such as participant observation and semi-structured questionnaires used by the authors cited in the preceding chapter.

### 3.2 Research Design and Questions

This thesis is aimed at understanding what factors account for the youth in Ghana being attracted or repelled from Christianity. With this in mind, it seeks: a) to identify the ways in which the Christian message is packaged in the bid to sell it to the youth in Ghana; b) to conceptualize the responses of the youth to the approaches used to disseminate Christianity and its ideals to the youth in Ghana; and c) to ascertain if the youth, on average, perceive Christianity as 'hip' and what accounts for this estimation.

These specific objectives led to the construction of the following questions on which this research and its subsequent deductions are based:

- What tools in Christianity are used with the aim of increasing youth membership?
- What are the responses of the youth to the practice of Christianity in Ghana and the approaches used to disseminate Christianity and its ideals?
- Would members of the youth, on average, consider Christianity as 'hip' and why?

### 3.3 Operational Definitions

- Christianity

This refers to the religion based on the teachings of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. While there are various denominations within this religion, this research focuses on the entirety of the religious sect that ascribes to the teachings of Jesus as well as to the Bible.

- Youth

Although the age range for the youth group varies according to geographical location and context (e.g. The United Nations defines “those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 as youth...”), for the purpose of this research, youth is defined in line with the African Youth Charter and Ghana’s National Youth Authority which characterize the members of the group as individuals between the ages of 15 and 35 years.

- Hip

In this study, “hip” is used to describe the phenomenon where an object or person is perceived as trendy. It is derived from the African American word *hep* meaning ‘to be in the know’ (Shleider, 2004).

- Branding

The process through which symbols, emotions or experiences are attached to products or institutions as a mode of piquing and maintaining the interests of a target group to stake out a desired market position (Crainer, 1998).



### 3.4 Research Design Matrix

| POPULATION                         | SAMPLE                                     | WHERE  | DATA COLLECTED   | METHOD USED   |
|------------------------------------|--|--|--|---|
| Youth in Ghana                     | Students or Literate Youth                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ashesi University, Berekuso</li> <li>• Twitter</li> </ul>   | <b>How literate youth view:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religion as a success factor</li> <li>• Key persons affecting involvement in religious events</li> <li>• Ability to go to church “as is” versus fitting specific image</li> <li>• Scandals and choice to be linked to denominations</li> <li>• Discussions about doubt and self-discovery</li> <li>• Weight of popular culture</li> <li>• How approached with conversion</li> </ul> | Convenience Sampling: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus Group</li> <li>• Participant Observation on Twitter</li> <li>• Online Questionnaire</li> </ul> |
| Heads of Churches (Youth Ministry) | Officials in Accra                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legon Inter-denominational &amp; Anglican churches</li> <li>• Kingdom Hall of Jehovah’s Witnesses</li> <li>• Action Chapel</li> </ul> | <b>How officials of churches interviewed view:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marketing specifically to the youth</li> <li>• Reasons for their religion/church being picked over others</li> <li>• Youth involvement in church activities</li> <li>• Hosting events solely for youth</li> </ul>  | Snowball Technique: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured Interview</li> </ul>   |
| Youth                              | Youth regardless of educational background | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Madina Taxi station &amp; Accra Mall</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thoughts on Ghana’s religious landscape</li> <li>• List of what is liked and disliked about Christianity</li> <li>• Identify what the youth would generally want changed about how church in Ghana</li> </ul>   | Convenience Sampling: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Word Association</li> </ul>  |

### 3.5 Sample Area

#### ***Locations Selected for Youth Group Interactions***

With the aim of perceiving the image that Christianity in Ghana has and how that attracts or repels the youth, the youth in Ghana embody the population that this research seeks to understand. Given that Accra, the capital of Ghana, is a bustling metropolis that has youth of the various ethnic groups and social backgrounds, it was selected as the main sample area.

As all the youth in the metropolis cannot be accessed due to time, geographical and financial constraints, four locations (both virtual and physical) were selected to gain representative views of at least 70 respondents. The use of virtual locations in conjunction with the physical world was deemed appropriate for the study, as the youth, with their use of social media as forms of expression, are extremely likely to give honest feedback since the virtual world is associated with the freedom to express oneself without fear of intimidation. The selected locations for interactions with the youth, thus, are:

- Ashesi University College, Berekuso

As the youth in this study are between the ages of 16-35, they can be said to fit into the subset of older members of Generation Y (i.e. individuals born between 1980 and 2000). These are individuals, who as a result of technological developments such as the Internet, television and instant messaging, have a heightened global awareness and a desire for speed in interactions that they feel connected with. Given that an educated populace is often regarded as more conscious of their choices, Ashesi University was selected to identify the factors that currently attract or repel them from Christianity in Ghana. Ashesi University is a relatively new private university with a small student population (of youth from all over Africa) that is making waves in the educational sector of the country. Connecting with members of this campus was considered fruitful in obtaining information

about the conception that formally educated members of the youth have of Christianity. In total, there were 50 respondents from this group. Of this number, 42 responded to an online questionnaire while 8 were accessed through a focus group meeting.

- Accra Mall

Founded in July 2008, the Accra Mall is a public meeting place for Ghanaians of all ages with its range of department stores, retail outlets, foreign exchange bureaus, and cinema. All of these make it a meeting place of members of the youth in organizing activities with their peers. The number of respondents from this population is 26 individuals who were the subject of semi-structured interviews that used Word Association. This method was utilized as a quick and unfiltered means of identifying the main ideas that the youth in Ghana have of Christianity.

- Madina Taxi Rank, Greater Accra Region

Situated outside the Madina market, near the outskirts of Accra, the Madina taxi rank is a location at which members of both urban and rural Ghana — regardless of their income brackets, religion or educational background — meet in their bid to buy and sell and move across the country. Coupled with this is the fact that there is a visibility of Muslim inhabitants or workers at the location that makes it an ideal spot for engaging in discussions with members of the youth from various religions, social, academic and economic backgrounds. This location aided in connecting with 8 members of the youth group with low to medium levels of formal education through semi-structured interviews.

- Twitter

Visiting social media pages, one comes to the realization that these are platforms members of the community — predominantly the youth — use in connecting with their peers regardless of geographical regions, and sharing their thoughts of events around them. On Twitter, conversations are made even more directly as the social media site is

one that allows its users to concisely post whatever is on their mind within the space of 140 characters to their profile and to potentially start a conversation with many participants. Although Facebook is one of the most popular social media platforms in Ghana, the fact that the views of respondents to messages posted online can be seen by any other person visiting that page does not make it as private as Twitter (where only the individual mentioned in a tweet can see at a glance all responses to him or her). It is beneficial, therefore, to use Twitter as a means of obtaining the opinions that literate youth who may not be accessed because of physical constraints have.

### ***Locations Designated for Interactions with Church Officials***

With the realization that the youth are not the only stakeholders in this process of disseminating Christianity, it is essential to understand the underlying motivations or considerations that are used by the various churches in Ghana when reaching out to the youth. As a result of this, the heads of youth ministry of 4 churches across different denominations and varying population sizes in Greater Accra were approached to identify what factors are responsible for their church's approach to marketing. This number was to encompass six main church denominations in Ghana that are namely: Anglican, Catholic, Charismatic-Pentecostal<sup>13</sup>, Methodist, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and Jehovah's Witnesses. The names of the selected institutions are:

- Action Chapel, off Spintex Road

With the Charismatic-Pentecostal churches enjoying huge patronage across Ghana, Action Chapel was selected to be able to gain an understanding of the marketing tools that this denomination uses in reaching out to the youth. Further, the knowledge that the Action

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<sup>13</sup> This group combines the Charismatic and Pentecostal churches in Ghana as multiple texts suggest that the two are similar in terms of their beliefs in tongues and miracles

Chapel Youth Church was one of the pioneers in Ghana to have a separate service that run concurrently with the main church service was a crucial reason for its selection. With this background, Action was found to be a fertile ground for gaining information on the forms of marketing aimed specifically at the youth.

- Jehovah's Witnesses Headquarters, Tema

As a religious organization that actively pursues evangelism as one of its central tenets, the headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses in Ghana was selected for an understanding of what forms this evangelism takes and to identify if peculiar messages or themes are presented to different segments of the Ghanaian populace.

- Legon Interdenominational Church & Legon Anglican Church

Beyond Orthodox and protestant churches (i.e. Catholic, Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian churches) being the first groups of churches to be founded in Ghana, these are unique with respect to how they have combined founding views and modern practices. As churches that are perceived to have reduced in youth numbers with the advent of Charismatic churches in the early 1980s, using the Legon Interdenominational Church and Legon Anglican Church as case studies (particularly because of their proximity to the University of Ghana), it is interesting to note modifications made to the denomination to revive membership and what observations led to them.

### **3.6 Motivations/Justifications for Chosen Data Collection Methods**

A variety of data collection methods were selected for use in this study. These are listed below in chronological order (see Figure 1 in Appendix for the data collection instruments used):

- Word Association

At marketplaces like the Accra Mall and Madina Market, individuals are often busy purchasing goods or services and do not seem to have time to spare for conversations

with individuals they have no history with. Word Association was thus selected, as it is a quick way of feeling for general perceptions of a topic at hand. By asking them to describe—using adjectives or phrases—what they like or dislike about Christianity in Ghana, the researcher gained knowledge of the attributes the youth who were interviewed desired in the religion. Further, it aided in checking whether these were reflected in the branding and messages church officials used in reaching out to the youth.

- Participant Observation

Being a method that is used to explore the sentiments and underlying motivations of online communities, it was thought prudent to use participant observation as a means of gaining access to the views of Twitter users and in kick-starting a series of messages on the subject of Christianity in Ghana that would act as pointers to the kinds of experiences that individuals have in relation to Christianity.

- Semi-structured Interviews

This method was used when speaking with specific members of the various church denominations responsible for the marketing of the church. With this approach, there were a set number of questions that were posed to the respondents in order to guide the flow of conversation but the respondents were at liberty to add information that they possessed that the researcher might not have known about. This approach aided in accessing the views of these individuals that lead to their selection of some marketing methods as more viable than their alternatives. The questions to be asked under this method can be found in the Appendix.

- Focus Group Interviews

Given that this research was aimed at exploring the variety of experiences the youth have had with the practice of Christianity in Ghana and the information they use in choosing to be associated with the religion, this method is useful as it will require the

development of a set of open-ended questions that the researcher is interested in understanding while allowing the researcher to tweak the order in which questions are asked in line with the general flow of conversation with the students. More importantly, this method allows further probing into aspects of the topic that the interviewer did not have prior knowledge of. This method was integrated with rhetoric criticism as in addition to identifying what is communicated, it looks at the style in which a message is delivered; paying attention to the order in which ideas follow as well as non-verbal communication.

This method is insightful as a means of listening to the ideas that members of the youth (be they staunch members of a particular church, mobile Christians or members of another religion) have of the religion and to observe the progression of topics in the discussion. This points to the main factors that attract or repel the youth from the Christian religion.

### **3.7 Sampling Strategy & Implementation of Data Collection Methods**

#### ***Accra Mall and Madina Market Taxi Rank (and its immediate surroundings)***

In line with the preset data collection strategy, Word Association was the first method to be used in interactions with the general youth samples in the Accra Mall and at the Madina Market Taxi Rank. As stated previously, this was made the first step in the sequence as the Word Association method combines speed with a concise view of the sentiments of interviewed groups. This, in turn, acts as a pointer to the themes that are more likely to be discussed in more in-depth conversations with subsequent groups. Using convenience sampling as a means to match the accessibility of patrons of the mall at a particular point in time to their readiness to participate in the research, the interviewer would start from the entrance and speak to all consenting individuals who were seated at the various benches of the waiting areas outside the shops regarding the topic at hand

before moving to the next seating area and repeating the process. In total, the responses of 26 members of the youth were recorded at this location out of the 29 interviewed.

At the Madina taxi rank and its immediate surroundings, the researcher located the benches where individuals were seated and waiting for their vehicles to load. After seeking permission from the taxi coordinator, the interviewer spoke to all present individuals who accepted to partake in the interaction on the subject of Christianity in Ghana, using a Twi translation of the Word Association questions used at the Accra Mall. Once the interview with one respondent ended, the person seated next to them was interviewed as well, if he or she gave consent. The views of 8 members of the youth were gained from this interaction, out of 11 interviewed.

This tactic of approaching seated or waiting individuals was used so as to allow business to proceed as normal while gaining information from individuals who were inadvertently passing time. The researcher decided to interview all individuals at the location regardless of the ages mentioned to waylay the skepticism of the individuals approached on what factors caused their selection against that of another.

### ***Twitter***

As a means of ensuring that data could be gained from a large pool of respondents, a request was made to an individual with 6,476 Twitter followers to put up the question, “What things about Christianity attract you and/or drive you away?” on a Sunday. This strategy was chosen as mostly, worship services in many churches are held on Sunday. With this backdrop, the researcher perceived that starting a discussion on this particular day would generate responses from individuals on the online community who had gone to church and those who had not gone to church. Additionally, it was thought that using this method on this peculiar day would be successful in causing readers of the question to recollect exactly what it is about Christianity in Ghana that draws them to or away from it.



Thus, the question was posed on the Twitter online community using the conventions found on the social media platforms (e.g. Hashtags such as #NoHoldsBarred and #ChristianityInGhana were used). On tweeting the question, the post was made a favorite by 3 individuals, and retweeted (a form of online sharing similar to “forwarding” an email) by 8 people to their followers. By the end of the day, there were 10 tweets made in direct reply to the question.

### ***Chosen Churches in the Greater Accra Region***

The snowball technique was used to identify and establish relationships with church officials responsible for marketing as the researcher had no prior knowledge of the individuals at the organizations that possessed the desired information. With this approach, there were a set number of questions that were posed to the respondents in order to guide the flow of conversation but the respondents were at liberty to add information that they possessed that the researcher might not have known about. This approach aided in accessing the views of these individuals on what led to their selection of some marketing methods as more viable than their alternatives.

### ***Ashesi University College***

With focus groups being unique in qualitative research because they generate data through a “give and take” manner of discussion between respondents in the same space, this method was selected as a basis to tease out the nuances of the practice of Christianity to the youth, group norms and their values. To eliminate the possibility of bias in selecting the Ashesi students on campus to partake in the process, the names of enrolled students were obtained from Microsoft Outlook and plugged into Excel according to year groups. Next, the random function was employed to assign random numbers to each individual. As

the researcher had pre-determined that in the case where a person's name had been assigned a percentage of less than or 10% in a year group, he or she would be selected to be part of the discussion, this was followed. Emails requesting their participation in the focus group were therefore sent to 33 individuals.

Given that there were few respondents when this approach was used, convenience sampling was used to disseminate information about the impending focus group discussion to students and to request that they participate in a focus group. With this method, 8 individuals (i.e. 4 males and 4 females) arrived at the venue and engaged in the hour-long discussion in which the researcher doubled as the moderator. This fit with theory that the optimum focus group should have 6-12 participants to have a diversity of opinions without sacrificing the ability to moderate (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, & Zoran, 2009).

To ascertain whether or not some insights from the focus group represented the views of the larger student body, an online questionnaire was also sent out to all students in the university.

### **3.8 Data Analysis**

After collecting data, the ages of the various respondents were checked and all individuals who were not in the research age range (i.e. 16 to 35 years of age) were screened out. After this, content analysis was used to identify the manifest and implied meanings of the interactions. This means:

1. Preset categories found in literature and emergent categories present in the collected data were used to identify operationalized themes.
2. The number of times a specific theme was mentioned was recorded.
3. Related concepts were grouped together, creating conceptual (also called 'super') categories.

4. Anomalies in answers were grouped and analyzed to see what further insights they provided into the topic at hand.
5. The findings made were further checked against the conceptual framework to identify correlations and/or variations.

### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

- The views of respondents in this research were recorded using only their ages and codes (or their places of residences) in a bid to protect their confidentiality.
- The semi-structured interview was the main method of data collection so as to conceptualize the key themes that the youth discuss on the topic of Christianity and to produce valid results free from researcher subjectivity.
- The use of oral communication enabled all individuals to be represented in the research regardless of their educational background.

### **3.10 Limitations to Data Collection**

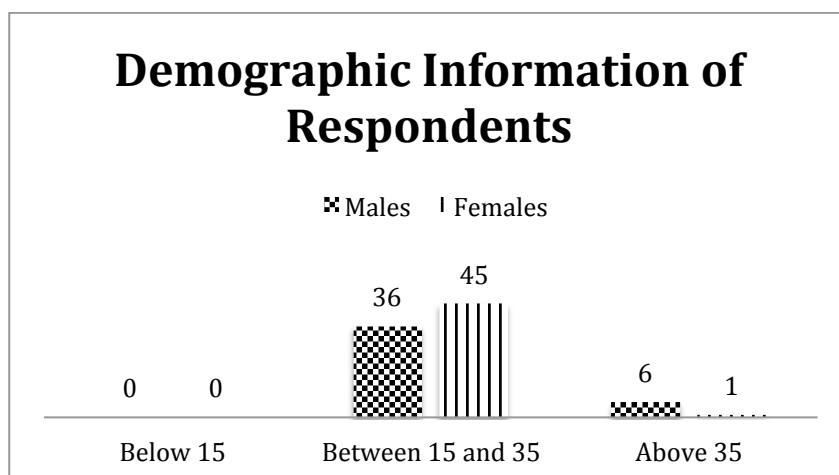
- The use of convenience sampling prevented attaining representativeness as the researcher could not control the characteristics of the youth samples and subsequently match them to the larger population.
- There was a language gap in the translation of Word Association questions into Twi. (E.g. “Are you religious?” when translated was equivalent to “Which religion do you belong to?”)
- In posting the Twitter question, it was perceived that mainly individuals who felt strongly about the topic responded; this could represent outliers instead of the average youth.
- The researcher was unable to access the views of ministers of orthodox churches, as schedules were conflicting. However, some youth in these churches were spoken to.

## CHAPTER FOUR — FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In response to the problems and main questions discussed in the first chapter of this text, data was collected from multiple sources to understand the youth in Ghana's estimation of Christianity. This was aimed at identifying the tools used in reaching the youth with the Christian message, deducing the response of the youth to the practice of Christianity in Ghana and ascertaining whether the religion was considered 'hip' or not. Using the information found in Tables 1, 2, 3 as well as Figure 2 of the Appendix, these intentions were accomplished.

### 4.1 Response Rate

Data was obtained from 90 respondents that included youth in Ghana across the various age brackets, religions, income levels and academic backgrounds as well as 2 church officials from 2 locations around the Greater Accra Region. Additionally, there was a question posted on Twitter, a social media website, with the aim of accessing the views of youth who had encountered Christianity in Ghana regardless of their physical location. This resulted in 10 tweets. Out of this number, 7 individuals were screened out because their ages were above the age range of those in the sample population. Thus, 83 respondents were instrumental in fulfilling the main objective of this thesis and revealing answers to the questions posed.



## 4.2 Findings Obtained From Respondents

### ***Research Question 1: What tools in Christianity are used with the aim of increasing youth membership?***

Meeting the church officials from the two churches visited, it became evident that the choice of marketing, or lack thereof, that these institutions used emanated from the beliefs held by their parent churches. Thus, where one church believed in segmentation and thus actively designed and pursued a marketing strategy that was aimed specifically at the youth, the other did not. Both of these decisions were grounded in justifications. Whereas Church A identified the need for a ‘buffer’ stage between Sunday School and Main service (as it observed that Sunday School graduates were not mature enough to fully understand the messages preached in the main service), the other justified its choice with a scriptural reference about preaching the gospel to all nations.

In the case of Church A, tools used in reaching out to the youth include television adverts, Facebook and Twitter pages and a youth blog as the official interviewed identified that the interests of the various youth attracted them to different pages that it utilizes. Beyond that, the church employed a peculiar method of school visitations, where the church would have a team stop over at a school with Bible messages and provisions on a visiting day. According to them, the act of empathy and attention shown was a draw to the church. Informed by conversations, the official stated that the fact that the youth had their own church where they could preach or contribute to their own messages, have career guidance sessions, as well as have mentors who had conversations on any issue—no matter how sensitive—with them further deepened the choice of Church A.

On the other hand, Church B relies predominantly on preaching, especially using mother tongues, to reach potential members. Additionally, it uses billboards, a web site, in-house publications that are translated into local languages, as well as free publications to

reach out to all people. It is from this point that if successful, individuals would become members of the church.

| Discussion   | Church A  | Church B  |
|--|---|---|
| 1. Attracting members to the church  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Branding: the name of the church, the signposts as well as the brand of the leader.</li> <li>• Evangelism</li> <li>• Crusades</li> <li>• Personal invitation of the family members and friends</li> <li>• School visitations</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preaching work to all</li> <li>• Translation of free publications into local languages e.g. Sehwi.</li> <li>• Church also has a website that with over 750 languages</li> <li>• Billboards</li> <li>• Invitations to Memorial of Christ's death</li> </ul> |
| 2. Does church use a form of marketing aimed specifically at the youth?<br><br>a. Why?<br><br>b. Forms used        | Yes.<br><br>a. Interest often shapes the items a person looks at.<br><br>b. Weekly school visitations, TV ads, Facebook and Twitter, blogs.   | No. There is no segmentation done. All messages are preached to all groups.<br>a. Not applicable<br>b. This has a scriptural basis (Matthew 28). The only difference among groups is the applications of preaching  |
| 3. Reason that you feel the youth pick this religion/church over another<br>a. What informed your previous answer? | On religion:<br>Upbringing is a key factor. Being social beings, not too many people move from one religion to another.<br><br>On church: The youth pick this church over another because of the existence of the youth church. Here, they can preach their own messages and they have shepherds (who mentor and have conversations with them on any kind of issue).<br><br>a. Yes. Conversations he has had. Especially career guidance programs | Choice. There is the parental obligation to teach children but the difference is for people to study the Bible themselves. This has a scriptural basis (Galatians 6:5)<br><br>a. No   |

***Research Question 2: What are the responses of the youth to the practice of Christianity in Ghana and the approaches used to disseminate Christianity and its ideals?***

Interacting with the youth in the Accra Mall and the Madina Market, it was realized that majority of the sample population described themselves as Christians; reflecting the religious distribution recorded in the 2010 Population and Housing Census of Ghana. Interestingly, the number of responses recorded for things disliked about Christianity in Ghana was more than that recorded for things liked: whereas there were sixty-one (61) comments for what is liked, there were eight more comments (i.e. 69) on what is not appreciated (see Table 1 in Appendix for details of these comments).

Even as the mode of worship, followers' dedication to religion, unity among Christians and the notion that churches could be located almost everywhere were found to be the highest ranking agreeable elements, the perceived hypocrisy, inappropriate dressing, and deception used by some ministers of the gospel were identified as leading items causing the sample to rethink their association with Christianity. It was also found that these identified elements did not experience much variation when looked at through the lens of gender. This was especially made evident upon distinguishing Word Association's overall highest mentioned trait—the exhibition of hypocrisy among the church. Here, there was an equal gender distribution of the theme among the 10 individuals who selected it within the Word Association technique.

| Mode  | Theme                              | Males (Word Association) | Females (Word Association) |
|---|------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Messages preached in church services</b> | Religious persona/items            | 1                        | 6                          |
|   | Misleading statements              | 3                        | 0                          |
| <b>Worship</b>                              | How worship is organized           | 2                        | 4                          |
| <b>Proximity of churches</b>                | Churches located almost everywhere | 0                        | 2                          |
| <b>Interactions between denominations</b>   | Unity amongst Christians           | 2                        | 1                          |
| <b>Religious participation</b>              | Dedication to religion             | 3                        | 2                          |
| <b>Intra-congregational conduct</b>         | Hypocrisy                          | 5                        | 5                          |
|   | Inappropriate dressing to church   | 2                        | 4                          |

**Table 1: Highest occurring themes from Word Association method**

Moving beyond the frequencies recorded to identify subtle meanings, it became apparent that majority of the sample switched between the use of ‘us/we’ and ‘them/they’ as they were describing attitudes with a negative connotation evident in the church. The following quotes, for example, were recorded: “Some are hypocrites. After church, they go and fight” and “They don’t preach about the things that God came to do for us; they aren’t there to criticize people”. Further, it was identified that the vast majority of the sample spoke about Christians as against Christianity, when asked what they liked or disliked about the religion. Similarly, discussions on what they would like changed about the religion centered on attitudes and actions of followers. From this, it can be gained that equating Christians to Christianity shows the blurred lines that exist between the brand of the religion and the followers who are expected to embody what it stands for. This corresponds with Welcome To The Human Era that successful institutions in the world today are expected to “empower the individual to be the brand” (Ritchie & Marshall, 2013).



Using the focus group as a method to delve deeper into themes raised at the earlier stages of data collection, topics discussed included persons who influenced their religious participation, appeals made to their emotions during conversion encounters, the idea that there is an accepted/desired ‘type of Christian’, Christianity as a business and the attitudes some Christians display that keep them away from the religion (See Figure 2 in Appendix for the full focus group transcript). The pervading statement was basically that, “It really is just by choice that I associate with the type of religion that I associate myself with”. Here, the participants stated that their current ability to decide on the religion that they want to associate with is different from their formative years, where they had to kowtow to their parent’s requests instead of freely evaluating the options available to them. This need for a personal element to relate with was found in discussing various topics, as evidenced below.

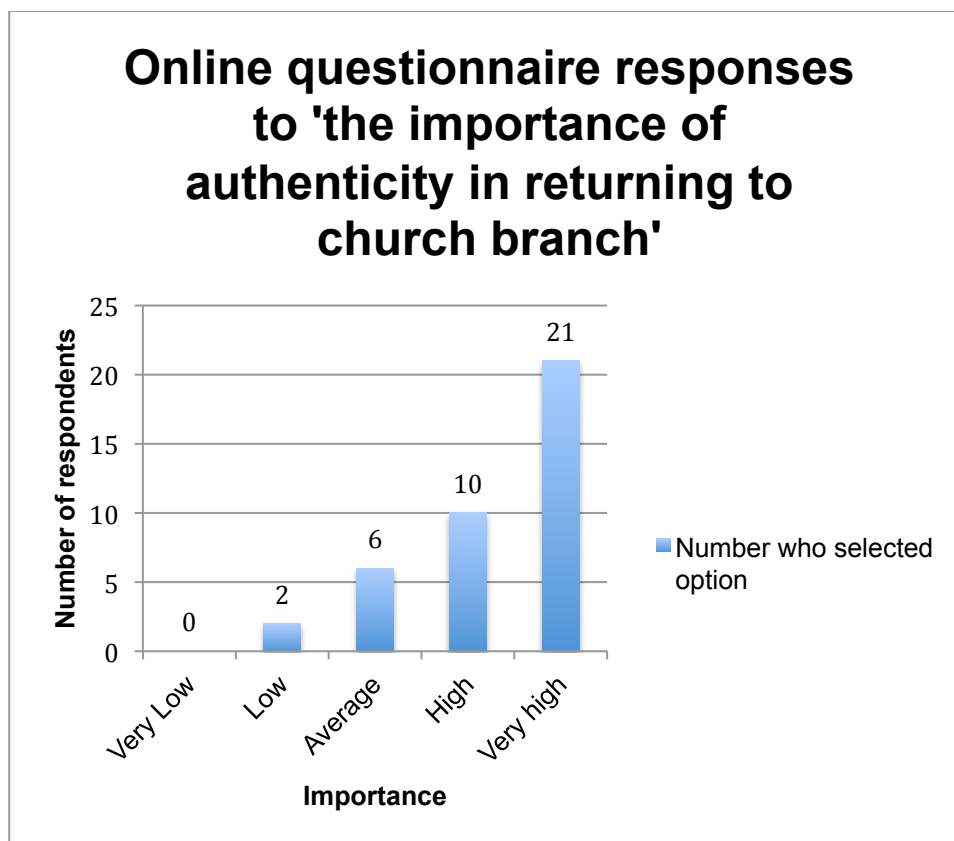
| Word            | Implied Meaning   | Number of usages | Topic under discussion   | Peculiar usages   |
|-----------------|---|------------------|--|---|
| <b>Personal</b> | Concerning one’s private life, relationships and emotions rather than public life | 7                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choice</li> <li>• Individuals influencing religious commitment</li> <li>• Experiences of conversion attempts</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I had to have my own <b>personal</b> connection”</li> <li>• “Love and reasoning [personal thinking]”</li> <li>• “<b>Personal</b> experience—like AH said her dad had. That is what will make you stick to the decision”</li> <li>• “I think it’s more of a personal journey”</li> </ul> |

**Table 2: Focus group instances where "personal" was key to the discussion**

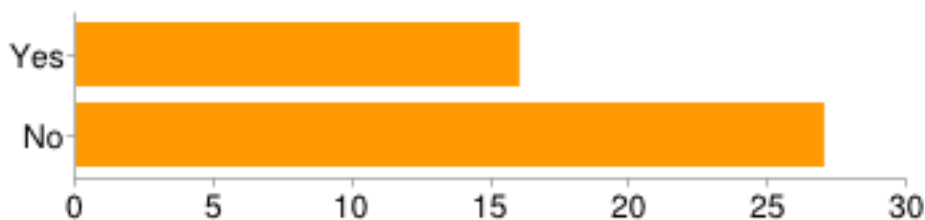
From this basis, it was identified throughout the discussion that the respondents used their personal connections—particularly, their feelings—to evaluate happenings in relation to religion. In fact, the word “feel” was used 21 times. One of such instances was, “I’ve just recently quit a group I was involved in—a Christian group—because I did not **feel** at home there. I didn’t feel like it was a community where you could share your struggles and

doubts with faith because it's a community that expects you to be a 100% all of the time". All but two of the eight respondents in the focus group spoke about their desire for open-mindedness and acceptance instead of fitting a cookie-cutter ideal. This relates with the trait in the Human era that successful organizations are "open, real and even flawed", showing authenticity in their dialogue as well as their actions.

To understand if the focus group's perspectives on authenticity differed from that of a larger youth sample, an online questionnaire was sent to the entire Ashesi University student body, where 42 responses were received. Of this population, apart from 3 respondents (1 who had no religion and 2 Muslims), all respondents identify themselves as Christians. Here, the response from Word Association and focus group discussions about the need for authenticity became apparent, given that 80% of the group specified that authenticity was either important or very important in choosing to return to a local church branch.



**Research Question 3: Would members of the youth, on average, consider Christianity as “hip” and why?**



As suggested by the literature reviewed, particularly Hipster Christianity: when Church and Cool Collide, the relationship between the church and the inculcation of trendy or cool elements is a dicey topic. 7 individuals in the online survey used variations of the reply, “I do not think religion is meant to be ‘cool’”. Here, it was seen that respondents had difficulty reconciling whether or not Christianity was trendy because of the overall notion that religion is sacred *and not supposed to* fit into this category. A few respondents were however able to support this answer with further statements. One of such individuals said, “The idea of Christianity is not about being “trendy” or relevant in the present moment, but living to certain standards which we believe are God's expectations of us. Christianity therefore cannot be described as “cool”, because the notion of being “cool”, or wanting to be relevant in the present time, can sometimes conflict with the fundamental principles of Christianity”. Contrarily, the respondents who stated that they would describe Christianity as trendy based this on facts ranging from Christianity being a major religion, to it being expressed in a myriad of ways (including music and arts), in addition to Christianity enabling worshippers to infuse their own analogy in the type of worship.

## CHAPTER FIVE — CONCLUSIONS

### 5.1 Deductions From Data Findings

The main theme highlighted in all the data collection techniques was the disparity between the professed ideals of members of churches and their actual actions and statements. Thus, it was evident that the full participation of the youth in the Christian community was hindered because of this perceived split. In fact, 13 out of 20 comments on what is disliked about Christianity centered on the followers of the religion. This potentially is the root cause of the use of ‘us/we’ versus ‘them/they’ when stating what the youth dislike about the current practice of Christianity. From this, the equating of Christianity with those who profess to follow it showed the essence of having individuals who embodied the brand.

The projection of Christianity in Ghana as an institution whose followers place the ability to conform to a set of principles before acceptance of people as against fully accepting individuals prior to attempting to regulate their behavior seems to be militating against the participation this religion enjoys in two ways. First, members of the church seem reluctant to show their ‘true selves’ with all their flaws and struggles in the Christian community, as they are wary of becoming outsiders. Additionally, it means that instances where mistakes are made become shocking scandals that are not easily forgiven and moved on. Should the churches place more emphasis on belonging before fitting in, it is extremely likely that such occurrences will be more quickly forgiven because the churches will be seen as a place where real people—people who are prone to making flaws—exist.

Beyond certain elements like the use of the Bible that runs through most churches, there is some confusion stemming from the wide variety of denominations (and their related doctrines) and the idea that such undulating differences must mean some types of worship are wrong. Thus, these denominations act as sub brands that, instead of adding to

the numbers of Christianity, engage in a sort of ‘tug of war’ that attempts to grow their members by attracting those from other churches.

## 5.2 Contributions To Knowledge

In speaking to the church officials to identify the modes by which they brand themselves, it was found that the use of specific marketing techniques were essentially in line with their notions on the segmentation of their congregation. Thus, it was found that even though the 2 churches had opposing views on segmenting their congregation based on demographics, their approaches tied in with the larger activities of the churches in terms of messages preached and to which audience. Further, both churches, by actively pursuing face-to-face interactions backed by personal elements—be it through evangelizing in local languages or frequently visiting high school students with provisions as well as Biblical messages—showed the premium that their institutions placed on having dialogue that reflected how they cared deeply about the individuals’ backgrounds and backing their words with acts. This was the desired brand image. Yet from the research conducted, situations where the projected image did not correspond with the experiences and observations on the ground at churches would cause religious participation at the local branches to dwindle. This corresponds with Graham Dover’s view that “a false projection such as this can quickly be undermined by the reality of the receiver’s observation and experience” (Dover, 2006).

From the research conducted, members of the youth are very much interested in associating with churches that have a followership that lives out the professed ideals in the Bible. Additionally, they would like there to be personal elements that they can relate with and to believe that it forms the basis of their participation in the religion as a whole and the local branches they visit. Yet, there is one trait—“human era institutions aren’t boring”—

that the youth seemed unable to accept or desire in their experiences of religion. Thus, while elements like arts, dance, fun and freedom in incorporating one's own tastes were mentioned as things that made Christianity cool, the youth did not want their experiences of the religion to be tied down to these descriptions and in so doing, lose its 'sacredness' or identity by fitting squarely with popular culture. This corresponds with the views Brett McCracken has in *Hipster Christianity: When Church and Cool Collide* (McCracken, 2010). Additionally, it fits in with the statement that churches today "...should pause, amid their frantic renovations, and consider not just what they would change about historic Christianity, but what they would defend and offer uncompromisingly to the world (Douthat, 2012)."

### 5.3 Constraints In Conducting Research

- Little research presenting longitudinal studies of religious participation or the marketing of religion on the African continent

Based on online research conducted by the author, there were few sources that presented information on religious participation over time in Africa. This differs from the situation in the West where there was research into participatory levels in religion and the potential reasons for this. From this, it was difficult to ascertain whether or not the insights shared by the youth were peculiar to this current generation.

- Inability of the researcher to meet with ministers of orthodox churches

On the occasions where the researcher visited orthodox churches, she was unable to access gems of information about the marketing strategies of those churches because of their pre-set engagements. This skewed the information obtained on tools used in reaching out to the youth and their corresponding justifications to the two churches visited.

- No replication of methods in other academic institutions

While Ashesi was a viable location to engage in discussions with the literate youth in Ghana, there is little certainty about the representativeness of the views expressed. A replication of the methods used in Ashesi would have supported or presented a different angle of the preferences of the educated youth in Ghana with regards to Christianity.

#### 5.4 Implications for Further Research

One interesting field that researchers could contribute to this topic is by conducting longitudinal studies on the target population so as to understand the preferences of the youth and to verify whether or not these have remained unchanged across generations. Doing so could provide an insight as to the preferences of the youth group and the values that are ascribed to at given points in time.

In the process of conducting this research, one church official made an observation that there are rarely instances where an individual ascribes to a religion other than what he or she was raised in. Though this comment presented could be considered as an anomaly since it was not repeated, it highlights a curious phenomenon that can be investigated further by identifying and holding discussions with individuals who have switched religions. Probing into this could show traits that those individuals who join entirely different religions rank more highly than their gregarious instinct or need to belong with those in their social backgrounds.

Additionally, choosing academic institutions of varying populations located at differing locations would cause researchers to obtain a multiplicity of views from literate youth. This will be instrumental in getting a more rounded impression of the views the youth have on the subject of Christianity in Ghana.

## 5.5 Summary

While it might be tempting to state that religious participation, and in this case Christianity in Ghana, seems destined to continue as is by alluding to the weight of individual backgrounds; increasingly choice, backed by evidence of authenticity, is being cited as the reason for belonging to a religion and a local branch. Churches in Ghana ought to recognize that just by existing, they are being weighed on a set of criteria that include their openness and ability to foster authentic relations, as well as empathy. As stated by one respondent, “Just embrace people instead of trying to change them...if they have to change, they are not going to change because you tell them they have to; they are going to change because they see how you live.”



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## APPENDIX

### Figure 1: Data Collection Tools

#### WORD ASSOCIATION

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1. Are you religious?
2. If you were to use two adjectives to describe the way religion in Ghana is, what would you say?
3. Can you pick 2 things you like about Christianity?
4. Can you pick 2 things you dislike about Christianity?
5. Imagine there was something you could change about Christianity/church. What would that be?

#### PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

---

“What things about Christianity in Ghana attract you and/or drive you away?”  
#NoHoldsBarred #ChristianityInGhana

#### SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

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##### *Marketing to the Youth in Religious Organization*

1. How do you attract members to the church?
2. Does this organization use a form of marketing aimed specifically at the youth?
  - a. If yes, is there a special reason for this?
    - i. What forms does this marketing take? (e.g. posters, events)
  - b. If no, is there a special reason for not doing so?
3. Is there any reason that you feel the youth pick this religion/church over another?
  - a. Has there been any observation/conversation that informed your previous answer?
4. Would you, in general, describe the youth in the church as active members?
  - a. Can you identify some ways in which the youth show involvement in church activities?
5. Does the church host any events targeted solely at the youth group (e.g. Youth camp)?

## FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

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The following questions are designed to build rapport between interviewers and students. They are useful in easing the interview atmosphere while providing background information that is beneficial in constructing an image of the values and personal history of respondents that can be instrumental in ascertaining the basis for their religious choices.

### ***Personal Background***

1. What are your personal goals or aspirations?
  - a. In addition to how well you do your work, is there anything else that you believe helps you attain your goals?
2. Do you belong to any religion? Have you always been a part of this religion?
3. As a child, did your family attend religious events of any kind?
  - a. Is there any of such events that you particularly enjoyed that you can share?
4. Are there any key persons or mentors who influence your commitment to religious events currently? Can you tell me about them?

### ***Religious Background of Respondents***

1. Would you be comfortable calling yourself a Christian? Why or why not?
2. Have you ever been the subject of a Christian conversion effort? What happened?
3. What two words come to mind when you think about Christians/Christianity in Ghana? Are there any particular instances that you feel shaped this perception?
4. When last (if ever) did you go to a church?
  - a. What did you have to do to get ready?
  - b. Was there anything different from what you expected?
5. What are your thoughts on the scandals that some “men of God” have been involved in? Would that affect your choice to be associated with that religious denomination or branch?
6. Would you feel comfortable asking a Christian religious leader (or Christian friend) about some doubts you have on religion or spirituality?
7. What things do you find trendy? Do you find these things integrated in Christianity?
8. Describe a time in which something about Christianity (or church) upset you.

## Reflections and Lessons

1. What, if anything, do you wish would change about how Christians approach you with conversion efforts?
2. Do you think your Christian friends, if you have any, treat you more as a project than a true friend?
3. Do you see the church as a safe place where you can share your doubts or 'trials' without being judged?

## ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

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If you have trouble viewing or submitting this form, you can [fill it out in Google Forms](#).

### 5 Short Thesis Questions

\* Required

What religion do you belong to? \*

- None
- Islam
- Christianity
- African Traditional Religion
- Other:

Would "cool" or "trendy" be words you use to describe your religion? \*

- Yes
- No

Kindly support your previous answer with two things that inform your opinion \* On a scale of 1-5 (1=lowest; 5=highest), when you are choosing to return to a local branch of your religion, how important is it that you find authentic demonstrations of the qualities your religion advocates there? \*

2

3

4

---

Not important at all

Extremely important

---

Please pick the option that best describes you \*

- Female between 16-35 years
- Male between 16-35 years
- Female older than 35 years
- Male older than 35 years

## Consent Form

*Please consider this information carefully before deciding to participate in this research*

### Research topic

“How Attractive Do The Youth In Ghana Find Christianity”

### Purpose of the research

This research is aimed at exploring the variety of experiences the youth have had with the practice of religion in Ghana. It is particularly relevant in the light of globalization since the reducing popularity of religion in Western countries like the United States of America could point to the future of the religious landscape in Ghana.

### The role you will play in this research

In this research, you will play the role of a subject matter expert as you discuss your experience of Christianity in Ghana. You will have the freedom to talk about whatever themes come to mind (e.g. music played in church, the number of men in congregations etc.) when you think of how the Christian religion is practiced in Ghana.

### Time required

A maximum of 1.5 hours will be allotted for a full discussion of the topic at hand. Once you believe you have exhausted what you would like to talk about, you have the freedom to express this to the investigator. After this, the interview will be deemed complete.

### Risks

The sole risk of participating in this research is that—without revealing your identity—your views on the topic will be made known to the public.

### Benefits

By participating in this research, you will have the ability to air your views on Christianity in Ghana. This will have the effect of informing religious leaders who come in contact with this research about your concerns, desires and feedback for potential change.

### Confidentiality

Given that only the ages and places of residence of respondents will be recorded in this research, there is a high premium placed on your confidentiality.

### Participation and withdrawal

If you feel uncomfortable at any moment during this process after agreeing to participate, you are free to withdraw from the research. Should you choose to do so, we will ensure that we do not use any information you provided.

### Agreement

By signing this document, you agree to partake in this research and to have your views published.

.....  
Signature

.....  
Date (DD/MM/YYYY)

This research protocol has been reviewed and approved by the Ashesi University Human Subjects Review Committee. If you have questions about the approval process, please contact: Chair, Ashesi University HSCR ([adafla@ashesi.edu.gh](mailto:adafla@ashesi.edu.gh)) In the unfortunate case of any complaints, please contact *Ashesi Human Subjects Review Committee, Office of the Provost, Ashesi University, Berekuso, E/R Ghana*

**Table 1: Data Collected From Churches In Greater Accra Region**

| Question   | Church A  | Church B  |
|--|---|---|
| 1. How do you attract members to the church?   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Branding: the name of the church, the signposts as well as the brand of the leader.</li> <li>• “We also use evangelism</li> <li>• Crusades</li> <li>• Personal invitation of the family members and friends</li> <li>• School visitations.”</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preaching work done regardless of listener’s religious background. Also, it translates publications into local languages e.g. Sehwi. The church also has a website that with over 750 languages</li> <li>• Gives out free publications</li> <li>• Billboards</li> <li>• Invitations to Memorial of Christ’s death</li> </ul> |
| 2. Does this organization use a form of marketing aimed specifically at the youth?<br>a. If yes, is there a special reason for this?<br>i) What does this form of marketing take?<br>b. If no, is there a special reason for not doing so? | Yes.<br>a. Interest often shapes the items a person looks at.<br>i) School visitation (every weekend, a team from the church goes to a school. This really attracted the youth. Tv ads, Facebook and Twitter, blogs.  | No. There is no segmentation done. All messages are preached to all groups.<br>a. Not applicable<br>b. This has a scriptural basis. No differentiations made in Matthew 28. The only difference among groups is the applications of preaching (young ones as against adults)  |
| 3. Is there any reason that  | With regard to religion, upbringing is a key factor.  | Choice. There is the parental obligation to teach   |



|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| previous answer?  | <p>the youth can preach their own messages. They also have shepherds (who mentor and have conversations with them on any kind of issue).</p> <p>a. Yes. Conversations he has had. Especially career guidance programs</p>   |  |
| <p>4. Would you, in general, describe the youth in the church as active members?</p> <p>a. Can you identify some ways in which the youth show involvement in church activities?</p> | <p>Somehow, as compared to the beginning of the youth church. Some are very active while others are passive. This depends on their orientation and the peers they keep.</p> <p>a. Drama, evangelism, people who record services [act as unofficial video and audio scribes], camps, choir</p> | <p>Yes.</p> <p>As an obligation from God, the evangelism is one way. Even young children follow along; there are no restrictions</p> |
| 5. Does the church host any events targeted solely at the youth group (e.g. Youth camp)?  | Yes. Youth camp meetings, choreography show, Gospel Rock show, Evening teaching service on Wednesdays, Friday All night for Young Adults, Feb. 14 <sup>th</sup> Chocolate Night, campus visitations and excursions  | <p>No.</p> <p>There are parts of the website that are dedicated to different youth groups.</p>                                       |

**Table 2: Data Collected From The Youth At Madina Market and Accra Mall**

| <b>'Super' Categories:<br/>What is liked about Christianity</b>   | <b>Frequency<br/>of<br/>Occurrence</b> | <b>'Super' Categories:<br/>What is disliked about Christianity</b>  | <b>Frequency of<br/>Occurrence</b> |
|---|--|---|------------------------------------|
| Freedom in practice of religion<br>[no imposition + no strict rules]  | 3                                      | Time consumption by church activities   | 3                                  |
| Location of churches  | 3                                      | Hypocrisy + gap between actions & words   | 11                                 |
| General conduct of Christians<br>[prayerful +hospitable +longsuffering +decent<br>lifestyles +no crimes/vices +care for families<br>+love +God fearing +respect and discipline vices] | 11                                     | Attitudes of church members [intolerance<br>+ not helping others +pastors preaching<br>against other religions +backbiting<br>+disagreements in/after church+<br>manners] | 12                                 |
| Dedication to religion<br>[dedication to religion +church]  | 5                                      | Establishment of church for selfish gain  | 2                                  |
| Ways of disseminating religious messages<br>[preaching +evangelism]   | 2                                      | Use of deception  | 3                                  |
| Charitable acts [healthcare to society +alms]   | 3                                      | Judgmental attitude   | 3                                  |
| How worship is organized  | 6                                      | Compulsion [muslim students, in rel'ships]  | 2                                  |
| Church events [youth congress +Easter]  | 2                                      | Inappropriate dressing to church  | 6                                  |
| Non-violent to other religions  | 1                                      | Christianity as a social affair   | 3                                  |
| Religious persona/items [Bible + Heaven +God<br>+Eternity]  | 7                                      | Class discrimination [according to dress,<br>focus on money]  | 4                                  |
| Christianity as a system/way of life  | 1                                      | Focus on money [materialistic]  | 4                                  |
| Convictions of Christians [grounded]  | 1                                      | Prosperity Gospel   | 2                                  |
| Unity in the church   | 3                                      | Competition among denominations   | 1                                  |
| Actions/attitudes of 'true' Christians<br>[Selflessness]  | 1                                      | Not making Christianity fun   | 1                                  |
| Nothing   | 1                                      | Criticizing other denominations   | 1                                  |

| Details:<br>What Is Liked About Christianity                  | Frequency of<br>Occurrence | Outstanding quote  |
|---|----------------------------|--|
| Freedom from Imposition                                       | 1                          |  |
| Churches located almost everywhere                            | 3                          | "Walk into any church and join their service so far as you believe"                                |
| Christianity as an entire way of life                         | 1                          |  |
| Absence of strict rules (liberty)                             | 2                          | "You are not restricted to do certain things like praying at particular times"                     |
| How it keeps Christians rooted regardless                     | 1                          | "You remember there is God somewhere, aside everything. Even thieves pray"                         |
| True Christians not being self-centered                       | 1                          | "Those who do it right are not self-centered; they give back"                                      |
| Christians are very prayerful                                 | 2                          | "Christians are very prayerful especially when there are issues"                                   |
| Christians are hospitable                                     | 1                          | "They are hospitable and always want to show off"  |
| Rules   | 1                          | "Real Christians do certain things. Even though there is freedom, they do it right"                |
| Waiting upon the Lord   | 1                          |  |
| Mode of worship   | 6                          | "I like worship and praise. They are interesting. There's good music"                              |
| Time devoted to church  | 1                          | "I like how we devote time to church and how we act in the house of God"                           |
| Christians have youth congress/unions                         | 1                          |  |
| Easter has church people coming together                      | 1                          |  |
| Christians are understanding of all religions and not violent | 1                          |  |
| There is unity among Christians e.g. Crusades                 | 3                          | "The Christian community is very united (as seen through events like rallies], mingle with others" |
| Dedicated to their religion                                   | 4                          |  |
| How they live and care for their families                     | 2                          |  |
| Lifestyles are good/ Decent                                   | 2                          |  |
| Do not commit crimes  | 1                          |  |

| Details:<br>What Is Liked About Christianity | Frequency of<br>Occurrence | Outstanding quote   |
|--|----------------------------|---|
| Love each other                              | 3                          | "Through their interactions and how they help each other, you can see their love"   |
| Bible  | 2                          | "I like the Bible. It is for people to live the Word"                               |
| God-fearing attitude                         | 1                          |   |
| Nothing                                      | 3                          |   |
| Giving of alms                               | 2                          |   |
| Respect and discipline                       | 1                          |   |
| Promises heaven                              | 1                          |   |
| Longsuffering                                | 1                          | "They follow faith no matter how long results are in coming"                        |
| Evangelism                                   | 1                          | "Regardless of difficulties they face, they make an effort to spread their beliefs" |
| Speaking in tongues                          | 1                          |   |
| Not doing vices                              | 1                          | "Not doing vices like smoking/drinking is good for one's health"                    |
| Teaches the way of Christ                    | 1                          |   |
| What to do to get eternal life               | 1                          |   |
| Healthcare given to society through missions | 1                          |   |
| History of the church                        | 1                          |   |
| God aspect                                   | 2                          |   |
| Forgiveness                                  | 1                          |   |
| Preaching                                    | 1                          |   |
|  | 61                         |   |

| Details:<br>What Is Disliked About Christianity               | Frequency of Occurrence | Outstanding Quote  |
|---|-------------------------|--|
| Time consumption by church activities                         | 3                       | "Meeting times for some churches reduce productivity"  |
| Hypocrisy exhibited by Christians                             | 10                      | "Some are hypocrites. After church, they go and fight" "You can't find real people; you find pretenders. If you are serving, serve"                                    |
| Christians judging people                                     | 3                       | "Double standards" " They don't preach about the things that God came to do for us; they aren't there to criticize people"   |
| Delayed answers from God                                      | 1                       |  |
| It is all about money   | 2                       |  |
| Lukewarm  | 1                       | "Some pretend to love you. I would prefer if I was told the truth as is"   |
| Some lack basic manners                                       | 1                       |  |
| Differentiation between rich and poor                         | 1                       | "Church leaders differentiate between rich and poor and isolate"   |
| Forcing youth in churches into relationships with one another | 1                       | "Don't force marriage"   |
| Looking down on people because of how they dress              | 1                       |  |
| Some pastors preach against/insult other religions            | 1                       |  |
| Forcing Muslim youth in schools to go to church               | 1                       |  |
| Establishing churches because of money                        | 2                       | "Some are not God-called. They establish their own churches because of money" " so many other acts flooding church schedule e.g. 1 hour for word but 2 for dedication" |
| Lies  | 3                       | "Deception by priests gives people the impression Ghanaians are stupid" "It does not match with the religion"  |

| Details:<br>What Is Disliked About Christianity                   | Frequency of<br>Occurrence | Outstanding Quote  |
|---|----------------------------|--|
| Not helping others  | 1                          |  |
| Intolerance   | 1                          | "Some don't like other religions (e.g. Islam) instead of being tolerant"             |
| Not living according to all the Bible says                        | 1                          | "There is ablution in the bible but Christians do not practise it"                   |
| Some practices aren't good (e.g. waiting long periods for burial) | 1                          |  |
| Some dressing to church is not appropriate                        | 6                          | "How we dress to church is not good; even though its about the heart, it isn't good" |
| Disagreements in church   | 1                          |  |
| Backbiting  | 2                          |  |
| Disagreements after church  | 1                          |  |
| Stealing in church  | 1                          |  |
| Hanging hopes on Christianity and doing nothing                   | 1                          |  |
| Christianity is sometimes made not fun                            | 1                          |  |
| Christianity becoming a norm & social affair                      | 2                          | "Going to church on Sunday has become a norm/common practice"                        |
| Has become a ground to show off (fashion)                         | 1                          |  |
| Noisemaking   | 1                          |  |
| Over-reliance on pastors  | 1                          |  |
| Politics in the church  | 1                          |  |
| Going to church because of others                                 | 1                          |  |
| Divisions in the church   | 1                          |  |
| Preaching money/ materialistic                                    | 2                          | "Now morals are not preached; we preach money"                                       |
|   |                            |  |

| What Is Disliked About Christianity                      | Frequency of Occurrence | Outstanding Quote   |
|--|-------------------------|---|
| Not as organized as Islam                                | 1                       |   |
| Going out of context by speaking unrelatable grammar     | 1                       |   |
| Unforgiveness  | 1                       |   |
| Nothing  | 1                       |   |
| Drumming and dancing in church should be solemn          | 1                       |   |
| Inconsistency between everyday attire and church clothes | 1                       | "Dressing to church is inconsistent with how they live. "they don't know what they are doing" |
| The individuals in the church                            | 1                       |   |
| Prosperity gospel  | 2                       | "The preaching of prosperity nowadays in church, I don't like it."                            |
| Criticizing other denominations                          | 1                       |   |
| Competition among upcoming churches                      | 1                       |   |
|  | 69                      |   |

| Notes To The Church  | Frequency of Occurrence | Outstanding Quote  |
|--|-------------------------|--|
| Salvation' is an individual affair                         | 1                       |  |
| Stop judging people  | 1                       |  |
| Encourage others instead of being confrontational          | 1                       |  |
| Do not copy blindly  | 1                       | "Concentrate on what you want to do instead of blind copying"  |
| Hold on and wait on the Lord. His time is the best         | 1                       |  |
| Church is not all about fashion                            | 1                       | "Church is not all about fashion. It's about faith or belief"  |
| Be themselves and have love                                | 3                       | "Love yourself and you will love others. That way, favor will come your way"   |
| There should be freedom of worship in mission schools      | 1                       |  |
| Do not follow money  | 1                       | "Fire burns up money completely, not people. Do not follow it"   |
| Be truthful  | 1                       |  |
| Live good lives to please Christ                           | 1                       |  |
| Some Biblical things need to be discarded from practice    | 1                       | "The Bible says do not add/remove 1 word...but some things need to go" e.g. Paul discussing everything being vanity" |
| Worship God with and from your heart                       | 2                       | "Serve the Lord with all your heart and you'll get the benefit from it"  |
| Stop gossiping   | 1                       |  |
| Unity is best  | 1                       |  |
| Establish a board to streamline activities                 | 1                       | "There should be a board of righteous bishops and Christians to streamline how Christianity is practiced"            |
| Dress decently to church                                   | 2                       |  |
| Conservative Christians make Christianity seem restrictive | 1                       | "Being fashionable doesn't make you less Christian; Christianity isn't work"   |
| Remove denominations and make it just church               | 2                       | "Come together as one church instead of denominations"   |



| Notes To The Church   | Frequency of Occurrence | Outstanding Quote  |
|---|-------------------------|--|
| Practice what they preach                                       | 2                       | "So long as you were born into Christianity and have accepted Christ, do what the Bible teaches" |
| Be specific: decide when pastoral titles change and stick to it | 1                       |  |
| Focus needs to change   | 1                       |  |
| Return to being Christlike                                      | 1                       |  |
| Stop the hypocrisy  | 1                       | "There is free will; go to church because you feel like"   |
| Worship God in your own way.<br>Don't follow people             | 1                       |  |
| Preach what Christ says   | 2                       | "Take the word of Jesus out there and live that life!"   |
|   | <u>33</u>               |  |

| Highest Ranking Things Liked       | Highest Ranking Things Not Liked           | Highest Ranking Advice                       |
|------------------------------------|--|--|
| Mode of worship                    | Hypocrisy exhibited by Christians          | Be themselves and have love                  |
| Dedicated to their religion        | Some dressing to church is not appropriate | Worship God with and from your heart         |
| Unity among Christians             | Lies                                       | Dress decently to church                     |
| Churches located almost everywhere | Time consumed by church acts               | Remove denominations and make it just church |
|                                    | Christians judging people                  | Practice what they preach                    |
|                                    |  | Preach what Christ says                      |

| Theme                              | Males | Females |
|------------------------------------|-------|---------|
| Mode of worship                    | 2     | 4       |
| Dedicated to their religion        | 3     | 2       |
| Unity among Christians             | 2     | 1       |
| Churches located almost everywhere | 0     | 2       |
| Hypocrisy exhibited by Christians  | 5     | 5       |
| Inappropriate dressing to church   | 2     | 4       |
| Lies                               | 3     | 0       |
| Christians judging people          | 1     | 2       |

**Table 3: Data Collected From Ashesi Focus Group**

| Focus Group Member | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q5 | Q6 | Q7 | Q8 | Q9 | Q10 | Q11 |
|--------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|
| AH                 | SA | NR | NR | D  | NR | A  | SA | SA | SA | SD  | SA  |
| BC                 | NR | SA | NR | A  | NR | A  | SA | SA | SA | NR  | SA  |
| ED                 | SA | NR | NR | A  | SD | A  | SA | SA | SA | SF  | SA  |
| JA                 | NR | NR | NR | A  | NR | A  | SA | SA | SA | SF  | SA  |
| JB                 | NR | SA | SA | A  | NR | A  | SA | SA | SD | SD  | SA  |
| JF                 | SA | SA | NR | A  | SD | A  | SA | SA | SD | NR  | SA  |
| KS                 | NR | NR | NR | D  | NR | A  | SA | SA | SA | SA  | SA  |
| MA                 | NR | SA | SA | A  | NR | D  | SA | SA | SA | NR  | NR  |

Key

A = Indicated agreement

D = Indicated dissent

SA = Provided significant statement or example (especially of agreement)

SD = Provided significant statement or example for disagreement or redirected focus

SF = Provided significant statement showing mixed feelings

NR = No response

## Figure 2: Focus Group Transcript

**Interviewer:** As a reminder, the topic is “Whether the youth find Christianity attractive or not”. To start with, my name is Akyere Graham, the main person conducting this research. I want to find out what people think about Christianity and what their concerns are. The motivation behind this was an online article talking about why society needs religion, and this research that suicidal tendencies tend to reduce when there is religion.

So first, **What are our personal goals and is there anything that helps you reach your personal goals?** [long pause...some nervous laughter]

**Respondent AH:** Planning. Actually writing it down and having a deadline.

**Respondent ED:** What do you mean by personal goals? Is it career goals?

**Interviewer:** That depends on you and what you deem your personal goals.

**Respondent JF:** Visualizing it. If I am able to see myself in that place and to work toward it.

**Interviewer:** **So is there anything other than you working on your goals that you feel helps it come into fruition?**

**Respondent JF:** I also believe in a God factor that regardless of even without the grace of God to do certain things. Maybe I work so hard towards my goal but if I have God then... it will help me reach my goal.

**Interviewer:** Any thing else? Anybody else?

**Respondent JB:** Err...I believe in a principle that what you sow is what you will reap in the universe where whatever inputs you put in [laughs]...Your output is based on the input that you apply yourself to. So if I have a personal goal of setting up a business and I want to have 20 branches across the world, obviously, I need the resources set required for that; I need to find a network; I need to find mentors to surround myself with people who can help me achieve that goal. It's all about these different elements that when put together bring about the result.

**Respondent BC:** I believe in destiny—that if something is supposed to happen, it will happen so... it is all planned.

**Interviewer:** MA, do you have anything you want to say?

**Respondent MA:** Okay...so, making the best of the opportunities that come your way basically.

**Interviewer:** With this, I was trying to find out if anybody would discuss something that contributed to success in his/her personal goals.

Beyond this, I am wondering: **Through out your personal life, have you ever said that there is anything that influenced you being a part of a religion or going for any religious events? Anyone?**

**Respondent MA:** [Almost immediately] Birth...birth

**Interviewer:** Apart from birth is there anything else?

**Respondent MA:** [Almost immediately] Education?

**Respondent JB:** Choice. It really is just by choice that I choose to associate myself with the type of religion that I associate myself with. Err...because some principles within that religion have proven to work...for me and it is not just blind faith and idealisms [laughs] where you feel like you have to depend solely on something outside of yourself. Err...but you need to apply yourself. So, for me, I practice what I practice.

**Interviewer:** Quick question: **For all of us here, do we belong to a religion?** [Varying responses meaning yes]. We all do? [Yeses are repeated and some laughter]

God factor  
Grace

Destiny

Birth,  
education,  
choice [as  
against  
idealism +  
'hogwash';  
self  
reliance]

Okay, then. **Have we been in the same religions since birth?**

**Respondent AH:** [Quickly] No

**Respondent MA:** Yes

**Respondent KS:** No

**Interviewer:** Okay. So I'm curious: **what changed?**

**Respondent KS:** [Continues] So no because...so in my case, I don't actually believe that you are born into a particular religion. Err, I think at various stages in your life, especially at an age when you can understand and are able to give consent. Legally, we say 18 years but I think that as far as faith is concerned, that happens much earlier in your life. So in my case, mine was, mine was much earlier. It's true I was born to parents who were Christians but I had to make that decision myself and not just make it once but I had to go back and ask myself later if I had made the right decision and look at it again and I have reaffirmed ever since.

**Respondent JB:** I wasn't born into the same religion. I was born into a Christian family but currently, I am...I don't know what kind of religion to say because I attend a church? where you have muslims, African Traditionalists, Buddhists and so I don't know whether to call it Christianity but it's just sort of a fellowship of different faiths where everybody just kind of believes in the fact that there is God and the different underlying principle is that you need to work out your salvation.

**Respondent JF:** So what do you call yourselves? The church...does it have a name?

**Respondent JB:** It's Etherean Ministry

**Interviewer:** Next question: **Are there any people that we feel push or make/mar our commitments to religious events?**

**Respondent ED:** [Yes from a respondent; another voice says it is] For me, it was for a while...My dad doesn't bother so much but my mum, she...both my parents are Christian, by the way but my dad has always been the laidback type. My mum was the try to get you to go to church early even when you don't want to type but after a while...after a series of discussions with her, she realized that, "No, it is not about forcing; it's about you making your choice". And so for sometime now, I haven't been forced so there hasn't been any reason that I've had to go to church apart from the fact that I want to go.

**Respondent JF:** My story is pretty much similar to ED's. My entire life, I was pretty much forced to go to church [pauses] without necessarily understanding why I had to go to church but then that was for my formative years. Probably after hitting maybe 18/19, I had the freedom to actually choose: do I want to go to church? Which church? So I actually changed my church from the church I grew up in and so going to church, going to like all nights, it was solely up to me. Then, I had to have my own personal connection. Why am I going to church? So it's more like, there is a personal something to it not because of parents.

**Interviewer:** **Just to be clear, would everybody here be comfortable calling themselves Christian?**

One respondent laughs, one female says I am, the series of I am's continues...

**Respondent MA:** I am not a Christian.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Have you ever been—What would you like to call yourself, please?

**Respondent MA:** I'm a Muslim

**Interviewer:** **Have you been subjected to a conversion effort by a Christian?**

**Respondent MA:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** What happened?

Making  
decisions,  
faith, right  
choice,  
searching  
for  
affirmation

Insure of  
what to call  
fellowship

Weight of  
parental  
pressure,  
force,  
desire

Formative  
years,  
personal  
connection

Conversion  
effort

**Respondent MA:** What happened?

Interviewer: Is it a lot or it happened very few times?

**Respondent MA:** Oh, I can remember 4 times? 4/5? Yes. High School [Respondent AH makes a hmm sound]

Interviewer: What happened? Pick one

**Respondent MA:** Hmm. Let me see. So one time, we came back from Prep and one of my seniors right outside the house asked me to...he told me to wait. So I waited. When we went in, he started talking to me, you know, about how Christianity is the way, he doesn't want to see me going down this path...for about an hour. Yeah. Err. You just want that one time, right?

**Interviewer:** You can say as many as you like.

**Respondent MA:** Okay, Another time, one time, there was another muslim in the dorm with me and they used to have this all-night service and they would be praying and giving test-imo-o-nies and stuff. They were giving testimonies and the other muslim went to join them and they were praying and then he converted. Yeah. Yeah

**Interviewer:** So pressure was put on you to also convert or was the other muslim trying to convert you?

**Respondent MA:** Nope. He wasn't really a strong muslim, I would say.

**Respondent JB:** Can I just say.. So I guess I could call myself Christian but I've had this conversion thing used on me by other Christians. They used to come up to me and say, "Your kind of Christianity is the wrong kind of Christianity, Why do you practice this? There's only one right way and you have to follow it otherwise you are doomed to hell with the rest of the world." ...Umm, I found that very insulting

**Interviewer:** Was that an issue of denominations or it was an issue of doctrines?

**Respondent JB:** It was an issue of doctrines; an issue of what those people thought was, I guess, a lot of people think there is one right way to do things and when you don't do it the way they do it, then you're wrong—and then they try to make you do it their way. That's what it was.

**Interviewer:** If everybody was supposed to say two words that come to mind when they think of Christianity in Ghana, what would they be?

**Respondent JA:** [Quickly] Fake. (interviewer says 'one more word') It's the same thing, hypocrisy. [Laughter heard around—particularly from Respondent JF]  
[Respondent MA asks to be skipped]

**Respondent BC:** 'Fast money' and umm... 'Sunday'

**Respondent ED:** 'Unloving' and 'double consciousness'

**Respondent KS:** When I think of Christianity in Ghana, I think 'loud' [laughs and gets laughter from all around] and I think the second one would be like 'confusing'. Loud and confusing.

**Respondent JB:** For me, it would be 'dogmatic' and 'confused'

**Respondent JF:** 'Sole proprietorship' [loud laughter from all around] or 'business' and err... 'many'. Yeah, they are just too many.

**Respondent AH:** I would say 'judgmental' and 'not openminded'

**Interviewer:** Starting with that, are there any events that you feel shaped this perception?

**Respondent AH:** Okay. So my dad is a Buddhist and where we live, when he started... He just didn't start. He was a Christian first and then something happened and then he decided to become a Buddhist. So when he started, people used to come—people used to stand outside our wall when he is like doing his chanting every morning and they used to scream some really mean stuff but he is the type of person that doesn't really care so...yeah. Growing through high school and stuff, it's

Appeal to  
emotions,  
conversion

strong' v  
weak  
followers

Fellow  
Christians  
trying to  
convert one  
of them

Doctrines,  
right' way  
of doing  
things

A type of  
Christian  
that is  
expected

Judgmental  
& not open-  
minded

Many,  
churches  
springing  
up

sole  
proprietor-  
ship:  
subtly  
questioning  
authenticity  
& money  
[selling holy  
oil and  
water]

Dogmatic:  
not  
accommo-  
dating or  
inclusive

Requiring  
individuals  
to fit a  
specific  
mold

Confused:  
many  
variants of  
Bible, focus  
on  
prosperity v  
spirituality

Back-  
ground,  
Loud:  
praying  
aloud

like, if you're not *that* type of Christian—and I went to a Christian school so if you're not that type of like prayerful you know, they judge you. And my housemistress did it throughout. And she knew my dad was a Buddhist so she was always looking at me and my siblings some way. Yeah. So that is why I said they are judgmental and not open-minded.

**Respondent JF:** So I said 'many' because and it's a recurring event that has been happening to me over the last couple of weeks: I've got a lot of ... One, it started with my auntie who had been out of Ghana for a very long time and she comes back—two different aunts, actually. Two different times I had this conversation with them, they've both been outside Ghana for maybe 10 years and they come back and they say they've realized this trend that there seems to be a church at every corner and on the street. And everyone is always praying, all nights and making noise, like, "What's going on? What is happening in Ghana? Is everyone a pastor?" And I actually thought about it. I mean, I'm in Ghana so I really didn't realize how churches are springing out around me but then you think about it and then you realize that there are so many churches. When you think about your neighborhood and the number of tiny churches [someone say yeah] and people's homes that have been turned in to churches and that contributes to me saying 'many'. There are so many churches around. And err 'sole proprietorship'. With all this, there are a lot of...at home when I am bored, I watch Multi TV, there are a lot of churches that have TV stations now. And all I see is business. Like, it's a great business opportunity. They are selling holy oil, holy water [says it in unison with another female respondent; someone adds 'handkerchief']. They heal, they pray for you and you have to pay money and consultation. Everything is like, "Pay some money upfront". And these churches are owned or ran by single individuals and I think it fits the description of sole proprietorship because I just did some revision last week. [Gets laughter from about 3 people]

**Respondent JB:** I said 'dogmatic' because I mean, religion—Christianity especially—is based on certain principles that were formed centuries...millenniums ago [smiling as she speaks]. Umm but currently, you'd not find it...it's not accommodating things that are happening within the world; within society. It's been done for the longest time and so therefore, regardless of the fact that times have changed, cultures have changed and wherever it was that Christianity was created from, right now, we have people from all over the world practicing it and so then, you need to realize that you might have to make some changes to become more inclusive. They just *stick* to one thing and if you can't operate within that one thing then, we don't want you in here. You know, you're kicked out. And I said confused because I would think Christianity is one religion where [laughs] it's Christianity but you have Methodists, Presby, Anglican, Catholic, Charismatic, Orthodox amongst [Respondent JF adds not forgetting individuals you really don't] [JB continues] yeah...you really don't know where to place and they are all preaching variants of whatever it is that is present in the Bible and you're like, "Okay. What is this really about?" you know, you have the Prosperity Gospel right now where it's money, make money, make money because material wealth is what proves that God has blessed you. And you have those focusing on the spirituality angle and you're like, "What should I focus on?" I mean, they're really confusing.

**Respondent KS:** Loud because I...err...and this is probably my background. I grew up in a church where when it was time to pray, when you drop a pin, you would hear it [smiling as speaks]. Umm now, I have a hard time going to some churches because it's just really loud and it's really, really distracting. I think I never learnt how



Marketing  
to outsiders

Indigenous  
vs Western  
culture,  
Attire

Spotting  
differences  
between  
churches

Unloving:  
experience,  
command-  
ment,  
'enough'

Two lives &  
their  
separation

Fast money  
upbringing  
music

account-  
ability,  
uses of  
money  
scandals

church  
specific to  
Sundays

choice  
autonomy  
self

All night,  
Condesc-  
ending

to pray in a very loud and I'll end up listening to what the next person like me is saying. And [laughs] that is pretty confusing. I am actually surprised that people are not having an open-air evangelism event but they actually have microphones, they have megaphones pointed from their church to the community and I am not sure if anybody really wanted to come for service would still be out. If they wanted to come to your church, they would probably be inside. I find that pretty, pretty loud and it's something that is pretty prevalent here. Umm, a second thing I find confusing is how much of the culture is in there. So some look very Western and some look somehow African. So there are the drums, the loud ones. Also, like the coat-suit wearing is a mix, right? It's like the coat-suit wearing things and there are those who go like. There are some people who are teaching literally Western culture—not necessarily something in the Bible but I keep seeing a lot of cultural dimensions to the teachings and I find that pretty confusing. And again, the denominations are like, whoa. And I am not sure if it is just the denominations. There are just a lot of churches and I don't know how much difference is there between all of them.

**Respondent ED:** So I mentioned unloving first and I think for much of the Christian culture that I have seen and experienced in Ghana, it's the concept of love which is pretty much...which forms the biggest commandment in the Bible, pretty much is lost on us. We don't practice that *enough* as Christians here in Ghana and so that's why I used the word unloving. Double consciousness because we seem to have two lives that's the church Christian life and a secular life. Whereas I think those two shouldn't have any separation. They should be mixed and intertwined very well. So that is what I mean by double consciousness. They have a Sunday life where they are really nice and friendly to everyone and throughout the week they are just very hostile and nasty to everybody else.

**Respondent BC:** I said 'fast money' because I grew up in a Catholic church basically because I went to Catholic schools throughout till secondary school but I'm Methodist but I didn't mind. I like the music and the process was so easy. Yes so I liked that and I realized that I learnt something from the nuns that sacrifice. They are always giving and they tell you what they are going to do with the money and they actually do it. If you come up to them and say this is for you, they tell you no—they are going to use the money for this and this and they would bring you an actual receipt that maybe GHC 20, I used it for this child. But now you don't get that any more. You hear that okay, Sunday we've been blessed with this amount of money. That's it. You don't [laughs] know where the money is gone to so fast money. People are actually using that money for their own personal benefit and right now, the newspapers are full of stories about pastors. Yes. The second one was Sunday. So personally, I don't think church is something that is supposed to be specific to Sundays. It depends on you. If I feel like going to service on Monday and skipping Sunday, it's my choice. But the fact that I am sleeping in bed doesn't mean you should come and judge me that I didn't go to church on Sunday. I went to a wedding on Saturday, I listened [laughs...general chatter around] You know, it's my choice. It's how I approached the situation because it is me—not you so...I'm very open-minded. Yes, I'm Methodist. I was confirmed last year and my dad tried to make me go to church every Sunday after that but he gave up because he realized that I don't mind.[sighs] As long as I listen to what you are saying and I can actually pick something from it, I'm fine.

**Respondent MA:** Okay. I didn't give my words. My words are "all night" [laughs all around] and "condescending". Okay so 'all night'. Err, I share a wall with one church, across the street is one church and down the street is one church. [laughter around]



So they have all night services. Because of that, I can sleep through literally everything. The condescending. So most of the people I've met who have tried to 'convert' me have been condescending.

Fake  
Hypocritical  
Way of life  
Consistency

**Respondent JA:** I said "fake" and "hypocritical" which are the same thing but two different words. In line with what ED said, there's a way of life for some particular times and there is another way of life for another time so you are not sure. Like, what are you? Do you understand? There are just too many things: today you are this; another day, another thing. Christianity, I believe, is a way of life. So if it is a way of life, everyday all-day, you should live that life so it's a bit confusing when people who claim to be Christian. Sometimes, we find ourselves in some situations, we the Christians ourselves and you're not... I feel there are so many things that apart from the too many denominations that also confuse you. I just feel like too many things are happening. One day, you hear that there is a church which is made up of a church that follows the snake. You see the part that Moses' rod turned to snakes so they pray with snakes in the church. I heard this on CNN. There is another day that is something else. It's like that also comes from the Bible so are you going to say that they are wrong, are you going to say that they are right. There are just too many things confusing. I just feel like there is too much fakery in the system that sometimes wonder if you are doing the right thing or living the life of a Christian. Like JB was saying, there are particular ways things are done so if you are not doing it in that way, then you are not a Christian—you are a different type of person.

Denominations,  
How to  
evaluate  
Confusing

Fakery

**Interviewer:** What qualities do we want in the different religions we associate with? Whether your denomination or your religion. If there were two qualities that you would want to see exhibited by all the people who believe in it, what would they be?

**Respondent JF:** Love and simplicity

**Respondent AH:** Open-mindedness. That's the only thing that comes to my mind.

**Respondent JB:** Empathy and respect for women

**Respondent KS:** Christians should live like Jesus. That's one. I'll come back with the other. I actually think a lot more Christians should actually quote the Bible more than quote pastors.

**Respondent ED:** Love and openness

**Respondent BC:** Music and knowledge. [laughs] My church we sing a lot

**Respondent MH:** Love and reasoning [personal thinking]

**Respondent JS:** Discipline and...there's a religion I really respect—it's Muslim. I like how they are focused.

**Respondent JB:** Can I add one more thing? I would like for people of all religions, all walks of life to be accepted. Just embrace people instead of try to change them because it's how you deal with people...if they have to change, they are not going to change because you tell them they have to; they are going to change because they say, "Oh you know what? I think you are kind and you are loving and I want to be like you so therefore I will follow your path." If you show them who you are, I don't see the need for conversion.

**Interviewer:** Since somebody used the word 'conversion', what would you change about the way some people have tried to convert you to Christianity?

**Respondent JA:** I feel like people try to convert you to a different denomination.

**Respondent ED:** If I was trying to convert someone, I would live or show them what my faith tells me rather than talk.

Live out  
faith  
God  
changes  
people

**Respondent KS:** As a Christian, it's about recognizing that it is actually God who changes people and not try to—not that I won't do my part but I won't try too hard. Just pray because I believe in the power of prayer; that God can do whatever it is he wants to do when he wants to do it.

**Respondent BC:** I think that when people are forced to do something, they come out of it easily because it wasn't their own choice. But when you do things by choice, because you've actually sat down and thought about it or maybe some personal experience—like AH said her dad. That is what will make you stick to the decision. But if someone comes and says do this, or you feel like you have to do this or that because of something that someone has seen in a dream, maybe I will change because I'm scared but it won't last. So conversion, you have to approach it in a way that you just talk to the person calmly saying, "This is what I think but it's entirely up to you". I believe if God wants you to become one, he will show you and you will see it. [AH speaking in agreement]

**Respondent JB:** Look, I just think, "Why are you trying to convert someone? Why? Why try to convert?" Different things work for different people. If Christianity is working for you, Islam is working for someone else, Buddhism is working for someone else. Let what works for me...be happy in your happy space but don't try to get me to be you. Just, don't convert anybody.

**Respondent JF:** I...I don't know, I have an issue with the word 'convert'. I am a Christian and I do what my Bible tells me: I go out into the world and spread the gospel. It didn't say, "Go and convert people." So I'm a Christian and I don't deliberately see my friends and say, "Hey, are you a Christian?" I think it's more of a personal journey. At a point in time, maybe you'll start questioning certain things from your religion. Like, is this the right path for me; does it conform to the values you believe in. As you go round thinking around and reading around...I've got friends like who when they reach that point in their lives speak to me. I tell them these are my values, I don't know what you think of them but they are working for me and I think they are great; what do you think about it? But it's not dogmatic. I don't pull you that hey, are you a Christian? So the word conversion, I don't subscribe to it. I don't think any Christian should make a deliberate effort to *convert* someone to their religion. I don't like the conversion approach but the evangelism approach is fine.

**Respondent AH:** I think basically, everyone has said what I want to say about conversion is that I think sometimes it makes people hypocrites. It makes people liars. It makes them...I don't know. Like in high school, I became really spiritual. I knew it wasn't time for me to be that 'cause right now, I'm out of high school and I'm not like how I was and right now, I'm trying to figure out some things on my own before I join which ever religion I will join. And so right now, I'm like...I'm just nimble. They made me what I wasn't. I feel like they made me into a lie and I was mocking God at the time. It makes me feel bad that they made me do that. Yes, so I don't know whether they knew that but it's wrong...it's really wrong.

**Respondent JB:** Can I make a point? You heard how she said "They made me do" even though she was the one who was doing it. That's, in my head, that is what conversion is. So it's like I'm only doing it because you said I had to do it through whatever means it is that you get me to do that. So that makes me not take responsibility for my actions; it is all *your* fault. Is that really what you are seeking to achieve? If this is the result you are getting, your work done is zero.

**Interviewer:** To this point, would you feel comfortable talking to maybe your 'diehard' Christian friends about struggles you have with [Respondent JB says

Compulsion does not last

Why convert someone?

Does Bible advocate conversion or evangelism?

Personal journey

Conversion can make people hypocrites

Points out how above issues the lack to converters"

no before sentence ends] **religious concepts or confusion you have about anything?**

**Respondent AH:** No, because they are not open-minded. Most of them.

**Respondent JA:** I also think that...well, it depends. 'Cause I'm very observant. I think I'm laidback in certain things so for me, before I even come and approach you, I need to check and make sure before I come to you that you don't say "this and this said...pastor this said that"[Respondent ED has a quiet laugh]. No. I won't even get close to you. If you are somebody that I know that when I come to you, genuinely, want to help, I know I will get the right things. Before I come to you, I know I want someone giving. I won't go to someone that I know that before I open my mouth, I'll feel like I'm already in hell. [General laughter] Do you get it? For me, I would observe but it doesn't seem that there are a lot of people out there that are genuine enough for me to go to. So then who will I go to? In prayer, I'll just go to my bed and cry.

**Respondent ED:** My experience kind of ties in with this question. I've just recently quit a group I was involved in—I was actually an executive in—a Christian group. Because I didn't feel at home there; I didn't feel like it was a community where you could share your struggles and doubts with faith because it's a community that expects you to be a 100% all of the time. You get a lot of bashing if you share your struggles or seem to be struggling. That said, I realized the importance of community in faith. In the last year or two, I've been steadily trying to build on the side another community where I can be honest and open and share my struggles. That has been what has kept me going over the time. So, it's yes and no. I have a group where I cannot share my feelings and thoughts. On the other hand, there's another community I can do that with and not feel judged.

**Respondent KS:** I have no problem talking to anyone actually [laughs to himself]. As a matter of fact, I think I rather get you thinking because I'll put you in a position where you have to try and answer some of the questions. And most of the time, and for a start, I might start with questions that I probably have an answer to. I always like to see people struggle with these hard questions (e.g. Where did God come from?) because I think a lot of times, we like to avoid them and deal with the very simple things. But the things, I think, that we live our lives by—just as I would want to trust that the doctor who is treating me has the right credentials, I actually just feel like the things of faith are just so important that people must just put a bit more diligence in that. Again, this takes you back to reading and not just saying, "My pastor said".

**Respondent JB:** From past experiences of doing it, people I spoke about who tried to convert me, usually when I brought up questions, the go to answer was: (i) it is in the Bible. Why do you have to question the Bible? Take it as it is. So then I realized what is the point to me having this discussion? (ii) If you try to challenge that, they tell you that you're obviously not as intelligent as you think because you do not question God. How dare you question God? The whole "you're blaspheming" is all negativity. I would rather avoid that kind of reaction because with the kind of person that I am, it will not end well for anybody. I would rather interact with people who have questions because I feel as though die hard Christians feel like they have all of the answers. But people who are questioning themselves and questioning their faiths push themselves to find answers. So no, I won't.

**Interviewer:** Next question: **are there things about Christianity that you like?**

**Respondent JB:** I like that Christianity...I think that Christianity is founded on love. And I think love is everything; love makes everything alright. It is not just a romantic

Move  
beyond  
quoting  
pastors

Does not  
want  
judgment

Inability to  
share  
struggles  
because of  
bashing

Ability to  
answer  
hard  
questions

Searching  
for answers  
oneself

Is question-  
ing the  
Bible and  
questioning  
God  
 juxtaposed  
against  
intelligence  
?

Christianity  
founded on  
love?

feeling you have for something or someone; love is you being able to accept people as they are. Like Jesus and the Samaritan woman, the person whose ear Jesus healed...

Personal  
relationship  
with God

**Respondent JF:** I think Christianity for me gives me confidence. And I am not talking about church—it just has to do with my relationship with God. I call myself, sometimes, a struggling Christian. I'm still trying to get to know God and somehow, somehow, anytime there is something going on, things just turn out right for me just by talking to God; having that personal moment with him.

**Respondent ED:** Like Jessica said, love and attempts—

**Respondent JF:** Excuse me, aren't you the one who said unloving as part of the two things you use to describe Christianity?

Existence  
of  
community

**Respondent ED:** No. That is in Ghana. But what Christianity presents to me: love which, to clarify, I think we can do more. Again, community—the attempts at community. I think if we do it the right way, it can go a long way to help us build up our love more.

Opinions  
about right  
& wrong

**Respondent BC:** To me, Christianity is more like what JF said. It is your personal relationship with God, it's your choices and your mistakes, your everything. Like JB said, what is right to you might not be right to me. So it is my journey. You, on the other side, who thinks it is wrong, it is none of your business because you are not my God.

**Respondent MA:** So I haven't actually thought about what I like about Christianity. I know some things that I don't like; I haven't really thought about things I like because I haven't detached Christianity from the way it is in Ghana.

Easy  
Existence  
of God

**Respondent JA:** I think it is easy. Why do I say easy? I feel like the fact that I believe there is a God makes everything easy for me in the sense that, I feel comfort. I just feel like everything going on around me, there is just somebody up there who genuinely cares and that is the essence of it all. It doesn't really matter what people say.

Not  
dependent  
on human  
effort /  
merit

**Respondent KS:** Two things I like about Christianity is that: i) it is not dependent on us. Inasmuch as we have parts to play and all of that, just knowing that...I don't know how to say it. It is totally something that is not by our merit—it was done and given to us so all we have to do is accept it. I'm just happy that it is not about me and how much effort we put in. We as humans have very evil tendencies. If Christianity was by humans-like if a human being was in control or made it up—I wonder what it would be like. Some countries would not exist, probably. li) The fact that we have been able to see countries that have been built on it and it actually amazes me how much for example, the empire of Rome was transformed by it. Or how much a country like the USA can be the champion of openness and free speech and all take that back and say that it is because of the founding principles of the Bible that allowed them to be open to people of different faiths. I think Christianity can be very accommodating and countries have proven it over and over again. I'm really proud of that.

Empires &  
countries  
founded on  
Bible

Accommo-  
dating