

"Go Ye Therefore and Make Disciples:" Persuasive Communication Methods in Relationship to Campus Christian Organization Attendance and Participation



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Abstract:

There are many elements to consider when looking at a campus Christian organization. A campus Christian organization is defined as: A group of people under the religious affiliation of Christianity. Music, members, message/sermon, announcements, and advertised social events play an influential factor in the decision making process of continuous participation within an organization (Forsberg, 2009). However, the questions of what communication channels are most common in encouraging people to attend, the types of messages that are most persuasive in motivating people to attend, and the communication practices participants consider important for continued participation remain unanswered. In efforts to answer these questions, 100 domestic and international students were surveyed. These students were asked multiple choice, Likert-scale, and open-ended questions. All of these students attend either the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire or the Chippewa Valley Technical College. The results display the impact of communicative resources on Christian organization attendance.

From the Literature:

- Face-to-face communication and interpersonal verbal invites are more persuasive than computer-mediated messages (Herr, Kardes, & Kim, 1991).
- If an individual already has an invested interest, he or she would be the ideal candidate for recruitment (Nicholson & Pearce, 2001).
- If a student exceeds socially or has developed close relationships, he or she is more likely to continue attending (Burks & Barrett, 2009).
- International students become members of many different groups on campus in order to build diverse interpersonal relationships so they had a large social network to rely on for social interactions, educational advice, personal problems, etc... (Hendrickson & Rosen, 2009).

Research Questions:

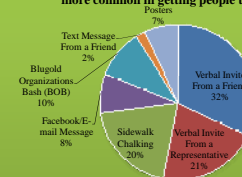
- RQ1: Which communication channels are most common in getting people to attend campus Christian events?
- RQ2: What types of messages are most persuasive in getting people to attend campus Christian events?
- RQ3: Which communication practices do participants consider important for continued participation/remaining active?
- RQ4: How do domestic and international students' participation in campus Christian organizations compare?

Method:

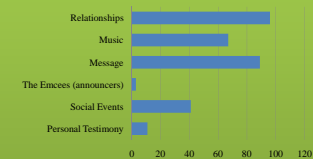
- Surveyed students participating in Christian organizations on campus
- Participants were recruited via university Webmail system and Facebook Link
- Participants were selected based on their attendance of one or more events sponsored by Christian organizations on campus
- Participants completed the survey using Qualtrics online system
- Participants included 113 females and 36 males: 80% were upperclassmen
- Likert scales, multiple choice questions, and open-ended questions

Results:

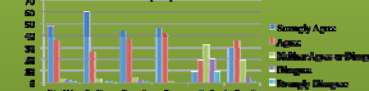
RQ1: What communication channels are more common in getting people to attend?



RQ3: What communication practices do participants consider important for continues participation/remaining active?



RQ2: What types of messages are most persuasive in getting people to attend?



RQ4: How do domestic and international students' participation in campus Christian organizations compare?

Due to low response rate from international students the data could not be analyzed

Implications:

RQ1: A verbal invitation from a friend is the method most successfully used to persuade people to attend events sponsored by a campus Christian organization. The least common method in persuading people to attend is a text message. Organizations should continue to use verbal invitations over computer-mediated communication to increase attendance.

RQ2: When messages are consistent with personal beliefs, individuals are more likely to attend. Individuals are also more likely to attend when persuasive messages focus on maintaining and/or creating friendships.

RQ3: Organizations should emphasize building relationships/community to increase the likelihood of continued attendance. The message given and the music played during weekly meetings also influence individuals' decisions to continue attending. Messages and music that reinforce belief systems will lead to higher levels of continued attendance.

RQ4: The response rate of international students was surprisingly low. This could be due to low levels of comfort using the English language. Further research in this area should focus efforts on targeting a larger pool of international students.

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