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ABSTRACT

THE EFFECTS OF GENERATIONAL COHORT MEMBERSHIP ON EXPECTATIONS AND LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE OF SERVICE QUALITY DIMENSIONS IN PROTESTANT CHURCHES

The Protestant Church is a not-for-profit service organization that provides spiritual support to its members. Members of Protestant churches represent various generational cohorts, and it is anticipated that generational cohort membership influences expectations and the level of importance placed upon the service quality dimensions of a church. While many Protestant churches practice a form of market segmentation, such as carving out special programs for young people (Campbell, 2004), there exists a limited understanding of the concept; specifically, the influence of generational cohort membership on perceptions regarding service quality dimensions of a church.

The primary purpose of this study is to investigate whether or not generational cohort membership influences expectations and levels of importance associated with service quality dimensions of Protestant churches.

A total of 22 churches, representing 11 distinct Protestant denominations, in the Middle Tennessee area participated in the study. Usable responses from 742 church attendees from three generational cohort groups (Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials) were analyzed. The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to test the data. The results indicate that statistically significant differences exist between the three generational cohorts in their “expectations” and “level of importance” of service quality dimensions in Protestant churches.