Media Dependency in Gen Z Christians

by

Emma J. Best

M.A. Thesis

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Author Note

Emma J. Best

I have no known conflict of interest to disclose.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Emma J. Best

Email: [redacted]

Approvals

This master's thesis is accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation from the School of Communication and the Arts at Liberty University.

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John Dunkle, Ph.D. Thesis Chair

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Marie Mallory, Ph.D. Committee Member

_____

Robert Mott, Ph.D. Committee Member

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Abstract

The purpose of the study "Media Dependency in Gen Z Christians" is to understand and explore the way Gen Z Christians utilize different forms of media as it relates to their faith. This quantitative research approach focused on the extent to which Gen Z Christians utilize extra-biblical and biblical media, which media they are more likely to consume, and which media they prefer. This research provides insight for the audience in terms of the habits of weekly Gen Z media usage and reliance in a digital media-emersed world, as well as insight into the way that Christian Gen Z learns about their faith by utilizing these media. Specifically, this study provides insight into the media dependency of Gen Z Christians and to what extent they rely on communication from extrabiblical media rather than the Bible itself. This topic provides value through its distinctive findings regarding the habits of Christian Gen Z's use of the Bible itself, and the relationship between the variables of generational cohort and habits of media usage through the lens of the media system dependency theory.

Keywords: media dependency, Gen Z Christians, quantitative study, media system dependency theory

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Chapter I: Introduction

This is a world that bombards American Generation Z (Gen Z) with an overload of information, each input begging for priority. The typical young adult can access information about any topic within seconds. Due to the changes in the availability of information access, culture has embraced the grasp of the digital age. **"**Contemporary young people suffer from information overload… [it] has become such that it makes it very hard to draw on the right information to make wise choices about the big decisions of life" (Hughes, 2014, p. 12). Similarly, Christians are adapting to the digital age as society and culture continues to change. Churches are streaming services online, creating resources for spiritual growth, and even creating music that suits this generation. Gen Z Christians may have access to all this information and struggle to discern what is true and what they should believe about their faith. While information availability is a gift to the modern world, there is a subjectivity to information in the plethora of resources and media that exist today. This research study examines the extent to which Gen Z Christians use communication from extra-biblical faith-based media for their consumption of biblical knowledge rather than the actual Bible.

The Rationale for Study and Limitations

Many modern American Christians are associating with churches that do not affiliate with traditional denominations, meaning a rise in Christian nondenominational churches that lean into more modern ways to engage their audience. With the engagement of a mobile audience, churches are creating countless supplemental resources for spiritual growth. Some of these resources include streaming services, writing original worship/Christian music, creating podcasts about spiritual topics, using social media as a platform to reach younger audiences, and even writing digital and print content for Christians to read. The focus of this study is the media

dependency of Gen Z Christians and how this impacts their faith. Since the world of media changes the availability of Christian knowledge, this study examines to what extent Gen Z Christians use communication from extra-biblical media (EBM) for their consumption of biblical knowledge and how they use communication from biblical media (BM) for their information about faith. To define these terms more specifically, extra-biblical media, or EBM, is any faith-based media that is NOT the Bible itself, such as Christian podcasts, books, music, social media videos (YouTube, Facebook, TikTok, etc.), streamed church services/sermons, television broadcasts, radio broadcasts, blogs, commentaries, and devotionals. Biblical media, or BM, are any media that is the Bible itself. This could be a physical print Bible (in any translation), a digital Bible such as a Bible phone app, a Bible through computer (software/website), or an audio form of the Bible itself. This study does not examine biblical literacy trends or how well Gen Z knows their Bible, as someone who considers themselves a Christian. This study sought to understand media dependency trends as it relates to these Gen Z Christians. This study surveyed Christians over 18 years old in America but specifically looked at the trends of Gen Z. In order to understand the media dependency of Gen Z, one must also consider the media use trends of the older generations. Gen Z is described as anyone born between 1997-2012. The definition of this generation is stated in an article by Pew Research,

> Unlike the Boomers, there are no comparably definitive thresholds by which later generational boundaries are defined. But for analytical purposes, we believe 1996 is a meaningful cutoff between Millennials and Gen Z for a number of reasons, including key political, economic and social factors that define the Millennial generation's formative years… In this progression, what is unique for Generation Z is that all of the above

> have been part of their lives from the start. The iPhone launched in 2007, when the oldest Gen Zers were 10. By the time they were in their teens, the primary means by which young Americans connected with the web was through mobile devices, WiFi and high-bandwidth cellular service. Social media, constant connectivity and on-demand entertainment and communication are innovations Millennials adapted to as they came of age. For those born after 1996, these are largely assumed. (Dimock, 2019, pp. 3-5)

In consideration of the rationale of the study, the media itself must be examined. While it is true that media is a crucial resource in today's day and age, anyone can post their opinion on biblical topics. These opinions may not necessarily be accurate biblical information. A social media "Christian" influencer can share their take on a biblical principle via an online communication medium that goes viral, and that influencer may not even be traditionally biblically literate. While online supplemental Christian resources are intended to facilitate spiritual growth for Christians, many Gen Z Christians may rely solely or heavily on these materials for biblical knowledge. This may cause Gen Z Christians to believe things inconsistent with the Bible if they are not studying it personally. This can be dangerous to the Christian religion if many members of the faith believe contradictory things about the Bible, which is their source of objective truth. However, it is not necessarily the case that all extra-biblical media sources do not align with the message of the Bible. They are often helpful resources that expand on the understanding of biblical knowledge and are helpful in the faith of Christians. For this reason, this research studies the implications or outcomes of media use in the Christian faith. It is crucial to note that in the Christian worldview, if the standard of objective truth within Christianity is the Bible, then any theological statement or religious value that strays outside of, or contradicts, what is written in the Bible can be considered untrue or be misrepresented. This

ties into the media dependency of the generations that grow up with media as their primary resources, which is why the study seeks to simply understand these media dependency habits.

Background of the Study

The culture in the United States shifts constantly. In today's age, culture is dominated by media usage and involvement. Neil Postman in Amusing Ourselves to Death states,

> Whether we are experiencing the world through the lens of speech or the printed word or the television camera, our media-metaphors classify the world for us, sequence it, frame it, enlarge it, reduce it, color it, argue a case for what the world is like. (Postman 2006, 10)

As Postman explains, trends in cultural media usage are not only measured in numbers but in the way the culture immerses itself in that medium. Postman also states, "We do not measure a culture by its output of undisguised trivialities but by what it claims as significant…The irony here is that this is what intellectuals and critics are constantly urging television to do (Postman 2006, 16). Today, replace the word television with social media, and it is evident that this generation claims digital media as significant in the same way Postman argued in his original writings. Not only is information primarily communicated through the medium of digital media apps such as Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat, but it is also communicated through social media influencers. A study on daily social media usage shows that "social media are an integral part of daily Internet usage, and in 2020 we passed an average of 144 minutes per day spent on social media and messaging apps" (Da Rold, 2022, p. 161). Due to the rise in daily social media engagement, businesses, entities, products, and services have reinvented their marketing techniques to deliver through algorithms on social media platforms. Marketing tactics

can pinpoint exactly what things the users are interested in seeing and delivers messages accordingly. Christian organizations and churches are not blind to this fact.

> Christian institutions have been aware so far of the tremendous opportunities offered by online marketing strategies to reach very large groups of people. One of the most significant phenomena started in the mid of twentieth century within the Protestant tradition is that of megachurches. (Da Rold, 2022, p. 162)

While it is transforming relationships and reshaping social norms, it is also bringing tremendous opportunities for the development of digital art communication of cultural elements (Hong, 2022). Gen Z culture is heavily influenced by this online form of communication. Surely these trends influence the church. Not only are churches catering to the cultural time, but their members are infusing their consumption of Christian knowledge through these means as well. Within the top 10 trending podcasts on Apple Podcasts, six of the top 10 in the Religion & Spirituality category are Christian influencers imparting their interpretation of Biblical principles ("Top Shows," 2023).

Another background factor in this study is the topic of biblical literacy. For the purposes of this study, biblical literacy is defined as the concept of knowing the Bible and being able to recall elements from within its content. Within America, biblical readership has declined significantly. According to a study done by Gallup Consulting and Global Research,

> In terms of frequency of readership, 16% of Americans say that they read the Bible every day, 21% say they read it weekly, 12% say they read the Bible monthly, 10% say less than monthly and 41% say that they rarely or never read the Bible. (Gallup & Simmons, 2000, para. 1)

In more recent data, when surveyed, 81% of Americans claim to believe in the existence of God (Gallup, 2022). However, when asked if one believes religion is increasing its influence on American life or losing its influence, 21% believe religion is increasing its influence and 78% believe it is losing its influence (Gallup, 2022). It seems to be the consensus that the institution of religion may be decreasing in popularity among Americans, and the message of Christianity is standing firm in the personal values of Americans. If this opinion is not valued by all, it is at least acknowledged by the majority. According to this same statistical study, Americans still believe in the legitimacy of the Bible. Although the importance of religion is decreasing to some Americans, the legitimacy of the existence of God and the belief in the legitimacy of the Bible are staying nearly the same**.** Although these authors considered more age groups of Americans than strictly Gen Z, it illustrates the way the view of the Bible and Christianity are changing in American culture. These studies displaying the prevalence of the Christian religion in society show the possibility for ranges of biblical literacy in Americans and Gen Z even in a postmodern age.

Regarding biblical literacy, a definition and background of the term must be established. To define it, biblical literacy, for the purposes of this study, refers to the extent to which one can rightly read and understand biblical stories, symbols, people, and values from Scripture. In the post-resurrection church, Bible information was done in the manner of church and synagogue out-loud reading. It is stated in accounts of reading Scripture in the Bible that people would gather in the synagogues to hear the spiritual leaders read. The book of Deuteronomy states that it was tradition to read the law in the scriptures before the people. Deuteronomy 31:10-13 explains,

> Then Moses commanded them: At the end of every seven years, in the year for canceling debts, during the Festival of Tabernacles, when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God at the place he will choose, you shall read this law before them in their hearing. Assemble the people—men, women and children, and the foreigners residing in your towns—so they can listen and learn to fear the Lord your God and follow carefully all the words of this law. Their children, who do not know this law, must hear it and learn to fear the Lord your God as long as you live in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess.

In Luke 4:15-17, Jesus also practiced this way of reading in the synagogues.

> And He began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all. And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath and stood up to read. And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place…

In the 12th and 13th centuries of the church, the written Bible was not translated into a common language for regular people to read, so their biblical literacy came strictly from auditory learning in the church (Wray, 2011). In the 13th century, theologian and priest John Wycliff translated and produced the Bible into English for people who were not in the clergy to read on their own. After this, biblical literacy could be attained from the personal reading of all who were traditionally literate. As history continues, many people who had access to the Bible still did not utilize the knowledge and values from the Bible because of changing cultural values such as the Scientific Revolution, Industrial Revolution, and Evolutionary Theories (Wray, 2011). However, According to Bauerlein and Bellow (2015), in early America, there existed a higher percentage of biblical literacy due to the Great Awakening in the foundation of the United States with the leaders founding the nation on biblical principles. Nevertheless, flashforward to modern-day

society, biblical literacy is not as common of a value as it once was in America. According to The State of the American Mind, “After three and a half centuries of common standing in America, however, biblical literacy has undergone a precipitous decline, according to social science data and anecdotal evidence” (Bauerlein & Bellow, 2015, p. 36).

The last factor to be considered when examining biblical literacy is the influence of the digital age on the frequency of reading print books. Within this study, obtaining biblical knowledge through communication from a digital Bible, such as a Bible app, computer software Bible, Bible through a website, or audio Bible, would count as biblical literacy. It is important to note that digital resources are dominating information acquisition in Gen Z's daily life. According to Pew Research,

> The share of teens who say they use the internet about once a day or more has grown slightly since 2014-15. Today, 97% of teens say they use the internet daily, compared with 92% of teens in 2014-15 who said the same. (Vogels et al., 2022, para. 8)

However, researchers believe that members of Gen Z still read traditional print material. A study done by Voxburner, a marketing research organization, found that Gen Z prefers reading in the form of physical books rather than online e-books. “Recent Voxburner research has found that 62% of 16-24s prefer buying books over eBooks. When asked which products currently available for download were preferred as physical objects, 62% agreed with books” (Voxburner, 2013, para. 1). A study done during the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States reported the changes in reading habits in every generation. Gen Z reported a 34% increase in reading more physical books after the start of the pandemic (Paveleková et al., 2021). The same study reported, “Gen Z has increased their reading more than any other generation since the start of coronavirus… Physical books are preferable over digital books for every generation” (Paveleková et al., 2021,

p. 32). Gen Z experienced a surge in reading because of recent global events; it is possible for Gen Z to read their physical Bibles despite being the digital media generation. Digital culture still may impact the discipline of reading in Gen Z. According to Gutjahr (2017),

> The reading of Bibles in our digital culture is subject to the same mournful tendencies that characterize a broader critique of technology with North American literacy culture (and beyond). From *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (1985) to *The Gutenberg Elegies* (2006) to *The Late Age of Print* (2011), the moribund state of printed book culture is regularly debated and often lamented. (The Bible in Digital Culture section, para. 5)

Even though Gen Z still exhibits traditional reading habits that contribute to the possibility of biblical literacy, it is evident that the digital culture impacts the way that Gen Z consumes media and information. It is possible that this plays a role in the biblical literacy of Gen Z Christian Americans.

The Problem Statement

In today's age, resources exist to supplement spiritual life that communicates messages to Christians such as podcasts, best-selling digital books, famous speakers, and worship music. A large number of young Christians are members of Gen Z, and as the digital generation, they also utilize mediums of online communication, especially social media. While these things are inherently good and meant for spiritual growth, the problem hypothesized is that many Gen Z Christians rely solely or heavily on communication from these materials for their biblical knowledge. When there are countless resources for consumption digitally, members of Gen Z may wonder what the appeal is to traditional study and reading. Due to consuming information about the Bible through the interpretation of whoever is posting the information, Gen Z

Christians may believe untrue things about the Bible if they are not studying it for themselves. According to Alister McGrath, a voice analyzing the Protestant church,

> The idea that lay at the heart of the sixteenth-century Reformation, which brought Anglicanism and the other Protestant churches into being, was that the Bible is capable of being understood by all Christian believers– and that they all have the right to interpret it and to insist upon their perspectives being take seriously…The dangerous new idea, firmly embodied at the heart of the Protestant revolution, was that all Christians have the right to interpret the Bible for themselves. (McGrath, 2017, p. 2)

If McGrath is to be taken seriously, then it would be dangerous for Christians to be personally uniformed with the contents of the Bible. For this reason, this thesis studies to what extent Gen Z Christians utilize and rely on extra-biblical media for their biblical knowledge rather than the actual Bible, or biblical media. The general purpose of the study is to observe and evaluate the topic at hand and conclude the findings through this quantitative study.

Professional Significance

The professional significance of this study is shown through the purpose, outcome, and impact on Christians affected by the topic. The study is necessary for the church due to the need to recognize the demographic of the young people in the congregation. It is necessary to understand the biblical literacy of Gen Z when aiming to minister to them, facilitate growth in their faith, and market to their needs. This study is also worth conducting in understanding the role of Christianity as a value in today's American culture. This study has professional value for people working in the field of Christian ministry, understanding media and culture, and Gen Z Christians looking to change the narrative of biblical importance in America. This study uses the media system dependency theory to explain this phenomenon and observe the extent to which

Gen Z Christians rely on communication from digital extra-biblical sources. This study can impact Christians in the way they examine their own media dependency. It also can impact Christians within the church who are responsible for crafting their outreach in a culturally relevant way to reach the maximum amount of people as trends in digital media change. This study would also have professional significance to Christians who are concerned about the cultural changes in the church. Not everyone is accepting of the church evolving in terms of cultural influence, as many believe the church should stand firm in tradition. At the same time, others within the church may have concerns about the cultural changes of the church because they feel the need to ensure that the cultural changes reflect the message of the Bible and the values of the church. In both regards, this study aims to be a tool for learning in the field of communication. This study also seeks to give a clear picture of what Gen Z is doing, what types of media choices are being made, and how they are consuming media. It aims to provide insight into the communication patterns of Generation Z, as they differ from Millennials, Gen X, Boomers, and all other preceding generations.

Chapter II: Literature Review

In order to fully understand the topics surrounding the research, Chapter II examines the terms and ideas that play into this study. The empirical literature surrounding digital media usage in America and Christian extra-biblical materials is examined in depth. Next, the theoretical literature is examined in relation to the topic of study using the media system dependency theory. Finally, the research questions and hypotheses surrounding the research are stated for consideration.

Empirical Literature

The empirical literature in this literature review includes topics such as biblical literacy, digital media usage in America, and Christian extra-biblical materials. All these topics are examined in depth in relation to communication studies, specifically in relation to Generation Z. The literature provides an in-depth analysis of biblical literacy and how it relates to various generations of people, as there are many resources adding to the research surrounding this topic. There also exist many resources on Generation Z and the way they interact with digital media. There is limited research on the topic of extra-biblical resources utilized by Gen Z, which is this study's target demographic.

Biblical Literacy Overview

To begin, biblical literacy is a term of significance within the proposed study. biblical literacy is the concept of knowing the Bible and being able to recall elements from within its content. The Bible itself is the primary scriptural authority of the Christian faith. According to Wray (2011), "The word *Bible* is an English spelling of the Greek word *biblia*, which means 'little books…' The Bible… begins as a collection of individual books, or scrolls, written over a long period of time by different authors" (p. 26). With one central message, written over many

years, on three continents, by approximately 40 different authors in three different languages, the Bible is the cornerstone of the Christian faith. Most Christians who practice the faith believe the Bible to be of importance to the Christian life. According to a study done by Pew Research,

> In 2014, about four-in-ten Christians (42%) said reading the Bible or other religious materials is an essential part of what being Christian means to them personally. An additional 37% say reading the Bible is important but not essential to being a Christian, and 21% say reading the Bible is not an important part of their Christian identity. (Geiger, 2017, para. 6)

Although ideas of biblical literacy have changed over the years, the values of biblical principles are written into the American values. They are woven into foundational American documents, in-laws, and schooling. Due to the postmodern society of today's America, some biblical values have been removed from some of these entities to be inclusive of all beliefs. In a quantitative study done by Wachlin and Johnson (2005), the biblical literacy of teenagers according to teachers in public and private school systems was reported. When interviewed, "seventeen of the interviewed teachers specifically mentioned stories in their definition of Bible literacy- major stories, main stories, key stories, stories alluded to in other literature, basic stories, and important stories" (p. 21). These researchers found a difference in biblical literacy according to socio-economic class and cultural grouping. The findings were as follows:

> Relatively few public schools offer students access to Bible literacy. The majority of teachers reported that their schools offered "little or no" academic study of the Bible. Only 4 of the 30 public schools in the study (compared to all four private schools) offered a unit or course about the Bible. There was a pronounced trend toward inequality in access to Bible literacy: The educationally and economically advantaged school districts

> in this sample were far more likely to offer academic study of the Bible than were less-advantaged school districts. (Wachlin & Johnson, 2005, p. 23)

Based on this study, biblical literacy in teenagers is not originating from the public school systems like it once did in early America. Therefore, biblical principles and the importance of reading the Bible must come from within the family unit and church institutions.

The Role of the Bible Today

Scholars suggest that there is a postmodern secularization of the American people and family. “Many scholars suggest that as societies develop and modernize, they become more secular and less religious since it becomes increasingly unnecessary to depend upon religion. Stated simply, religions are expected to weaken and gradually disappear as society progresses” (Jeffrey & Evans, 2007, p. 208). Christianity, while still practiced in the United States, has various degrees of importance in America. For decades the Gallup Organization existed as one of the only entities conducting research on Christian values and principles through large surveys of the American people (Jeffrey & Evans, 2007). According to *The Bible and the University* (2007), “if it were not for Gallup and, in recent years, the Barna Group, there would be enormous gaps in our knowledge of national trends and patterns when it comes to indicators of faith, religion, and spirituality in America” (Jeffrey & Evans, p. 211). These statistics give researchers a look into the role of the Bible in America today and how the statistics have shifted from as early as the 1970s to today. Within America, biblical readership has declined significantly. In more recent data, when surveyed, 81% of Americans claim to believe in the existence of God (Gallup, 2022). While the large majority of Americans say they believe in God, this may not correlate exactly with the importance of Christian life to these same Americans. Additionally, claiming a belief in God may translate to other faiths entirely due to the vast religious diversity in the United States.

However, in August of 1976, 45% of Americans surveyed believed that the Bible is the inspired word of God and similarly in May 2022, nearly 46 years later, 49% of Americans still believed the same (Gallup, 2022). The Bible plays a role in the minds of the American people, even though societal and cultural times may be shifting to a more secularized society.

According to these statistics, it seems that the postmodernist society still has a large impact on the role of faith in Americans' lives. If the importance of the Bible in Christian life has little significance to an American who believes in God, the values of Christianity may play into decisions on politics and personal values. According to a Gallup study on the role of the Bible in U.S. life,

> In more recent years, various religious leaders and religious entities have staked out positions on the Bible that they claim define truth and that, in turn, have become an integral part of their religious positioning. The most prominent of these positions is the belief that the Bible is inerrant and must be viewed as literally true, a position adopted as part of the evangelical movement in this country over the past centuries and by a number of Protestant denominations. (Newport, 2022, para. 9)

However, to Christians, the Bible is not meant to strictly influence some values and political positioning, but more to emphasize transformation in spiritual life. Bible readership in today's age seems to be declining because of the research on the role of faith in American society. However, this is not necessarily the case. According to Jeffrey and Evans (2007),

> Bible readership has been tracked by Barna since 1991. In 1995, Bible readership in America hit a low of 31 percent, and then began to slowly increase to higher levels, and finally returning to the 40 percent mark in 2000. After several years of no change, increases began again in 2004, continuing through to the present, when 47 percent of

> adults report reading the Bible during a typical week, other than when they are at church. According to the Barna tracking data, this is the highest readership level achieved since the 1980s. Over a sixteen-year period, the Barna tracking data provide very clear evidence that would seem to counter the claims that Bible literacy is both declining and at all-time lows. (pp. 212-213)

Gen Z Religion Trends

The label Generation Z, which is categorized as people born between 1997-2012, are the primary targeted age group in this study. Members of Gen Z were raised in a different cultural time than their parents and grandparents. According to population research, Generation Z now constitutes 25.9% of the US population… That's more than Millennials, Gen X, and Baby Boomers (White, 2017). Many members of Gen Z grew up in post-modern American society, where they may not have been raised traditionally in church like many Boomers and Gen X were. According to Rothfuss,

> With previous generations, specifically Gen X, mode of connectivity was person-to-person. Gen X did not have the luxury of the internet, so they relied on church as one way to connect them to others of the same faith and of the same ideals. Today, all that needs to be done is change your preferences on your Facebook page and you are all set; you are connected to a group of people who think, talk, and feel the same way you do without leaving the comfort of your own bed. (Rothfuss, 2021, pp. 15-16)

It is recognized that this is a generalization to state that many of the older generations grew up that way due to factors such as location, family of origin, church denomination, and experience. According to Gallup data,

> Church membership is strongly correlated with age, as 66% of traditionalists -- U.S.

> adults born before 1946 -- belong to a church, compared with 58% of baby boomers, 50% of those in Generation X and 36% of millennials. The limited data Gallup has on church membership among the portion of Generation Z that has reached adulthood are so far showing church membership rates similar to those for millennials. (Jones, 2021)

Religiosity decline in Gen Z may be impacted by the post-modernistic secular cultural trends. The older generations such as Boomers and Gen X grew up around religiosity as an open value in American society, whereas now religion is not featured so prominently in the public mind (Halafoff, 2020). "As for Generation Z, raised in the mid-90s onwards, in a post-9/11 and post-secular period… Gen Xs and Millennials are now far less religious than their parents, less Christian and more religiously diverse as well" (Halafoff et al., 2020, p. 200). In turn, with less statistical religious values instilled by parents, Gen Z has leaned less towards religion and may see it as being less valuable in their lives. When asked if one believes religion is increasing its influence on American life or losing its influence, 21% believed religion is increasing its influence and 78% believe it is losing its influence (Gallup, 2022). Statistics gathered on Gen Z claim that Gen Z is a post-Christian generation. In 2018, Barna calls Gen Z the first generation not afraid of the term atheism. They state, "Americans' beliefs are becoming more post-Christian and, concurrently, religious identity is changing. Enter Generation Z…they are the first truly 'post-Christian' generation" (Barna, 2018, para. 1). However, in 2023, a study by Barna states, "Teens in the U.S. are far more intrigued than their global peers, with 77 percent being at least somewhat motivated to keep learning about Jesus throughout their lives" (Barna, 2023, para. 9). This same study shows that three-quarters of American Gen Z are curious about the Christian religion and that 52% of all teens are motivated to learn more about Jesus Christ, and 80% of

committed Christian teens are motivated to learn more about Jesus Christ throughout their lives (Barna, 2023).

Although society as a whole values religion less than in previous generations, more and more Gen Z people are still turning towards faith. Within American Evangelical churches, there exists a rise in modernized churches, with contemporary music, aesthetic buildings, and inviting communities for young audiences such as Gen Z. This shift in the traditionalism of the church style has promoted more Gen Z members to encounter the Gospel. Scholars are noticing this shift in popular Christian culture. In an article evaluating this trend, researchers explain,

> In order to make Christianity relevant to new generations, "Cool" churches appropriate elements of secular youth and popular cultures, be it dress style, body decoration, trendy graphic design, social media aesthetics, pop music, celebrity culture, and the methods of the entertainment industry. (Rocha, 2021, p. 582)

Churches are appealing to the younger generations with these elements. According to Pew Research Center, 56% of American young Millennials and members of Gen Z identify as Christian, and 66% of them claim to attend a religious service anywhere from every week to a few times a year (Pew Research, 2022). Considering this, even though Gen Z may live in a more secularized society than their parents and grandparents, the new modernized shift in contemporary Christianity is reaching them and catering to their style. Rocha (2021) also explained,

> I consider how this repackaged Christianity, directed at the middle-class Millennials and Generation Z, is created not only by megachurches in a bid to attract new generations as it is usually argued. It is also produced by celebrities, the fashion industry as they infuse

> their wares of spirituality, and young Christian entrepreneurs who see their commodities as part of the Great Commission. (p. 583)

Whatever the implications of a modernized generation of churches, members of Gen Z are in their element in church more often than not with the rise of megachurches in the United States. This may be contributing to the increased desire to learn more about Jesus among Gen Z Americans, especially due to the popularized digitally modern megachurches.

The Digital Media Age in America

America is amid a more connected time than any other era in all of history. The information digital age in the United States includes the connection of computers, smartphones, television, music, and social media. Within that comes various mediums of communication and information such as apps, streaming platforms, short and long-form content platforms, and social media. Communication through digital media is a primary method of communication for most members of Gen Z.

Communication Through Media

Throughout the years media has impacted the way people communicate and receive information with every new development. In the early days of media communication, even technologies such as the telephone and radio changed the frequency of the way people received information. Then, with the popularization of the Internet, media communication became quicker, more accessible, and useable to anyone to use who has access to this technology. According to Robinson and Lee (2014), “The Internet can combine and meld the functions and features of both personal and mass forms of communication…it becomes clear that as Internet usage becomes more prominent, its potential displacement of alternative activities becomes more substantial” (p. 940). People rely on the Internet as a form of connection with each other and the

world. The Journal of Mobile Media and Communication reports, “In 2011 global penetration for mobile subscriptions reached 87 percent of all people, compared to just one-third of households having internet access. In fact, mobile communication is recognized as the fastest-diffusing medium on the planet ever” (Campbell, 2013, p. 9). The rise in online and media communication is not only impacting some people, but it is impacting all Americans. Online social media is one of the primary forms of interpersonal connection in 2023. According to the International Journal of Scientific Progress and Research,

> Social media will continue to become increasingly integrated into the normal human experience like most of the communication technologies that preceded it. They will continue to increase the volume of the human communication process, and we will continue to learn how to use them for good and for bad.” (Subramanian, 2017, p. 70)

Social media communication is even impacting users' communication styles. Social media users in today’s age tend to be trusting when communicating online, social connections are not as strong as they are face-to-face, and they tend to interact primarily with those who also share their points of view (Subramanian, 2017). These forms of digital media transformed the way people learn, get an education, connect with others, read, receive entertainment, and even simplify common tasks. It is also a way that people are receiving communication regarding faith. Even the creation and transmission of music is impacted by digital media. “In the face of its sociocultural massiveness and socioemotional richness, the coming of digital technologies has changed how popular music is consumed and the peer-to-peer sharable nature of digital media has altered how music functions as communication” (Turner & Tollison, 2021, p. 358). Even companies and institutions are adopting styles of communication through digital media, the

Internet, and social media. Specifically, churches in America have adopted this style of communication with their congregations and digital media use in their services.

Online Media Adopted by Churches

Churches have integrated digital media and media communication into the way they run their churches and services. Not only are modern nondenominational churches in the U.S., and some other denominations, utilizing media, but they are leading in the cultural trends. According to a study done on digital media integration in churches, "Megachurches demonstrate their ability to market to the masses… many megachurches are making conscious decisions to institute satellite campuses…They are doing this by using video technology, with prerecorded sermons and major simulcasts on video screens" (Stanton-Webb, 2012, pp. 247-248). Churches are even writing their own songs and participating in the popularization of contemporary Christian music. They then post them on streaming platforms for people in their church to stream and for people outside of their church to discover. This way of integrating a genre of music into the church naturally has socially interactive features that increase the potential for music to transmit effect and interpersonal information about identity (Turner & Tollison, 2021). Churches are using media as a tool. One specific church that led in the integration of digital media in the early 2000s is Hillsong Church out of Sydney, Australia. An article assessing Hillsong's impact on church media usage states,

> Additionally, megachurch networks are supported by extensive online media practices in the form of videos, blogs, live streaming and continuous updates of the church, pastors, and other leaders through social media: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Periscope, accessible 24/7. The integration of media technology in Hillsong's worship services is part of the larger trend among contemporary Evangelical/Pentecostal churches that

> validates technology as a God-given opportunity which can be used for proclaiming the good news of the gospel and the production of entertaining church services that mirror the surrounding media-savvy popular culture. (Klaver, 2016, p. 423)

Churches all over the world adopted the utilization of media as a tool and as a form of communication with their congregation. Some critique this modernization of media into the church in a traditionalist stance, however in response, churches claim the leverage of media to further the Gospel in a culturally relevant way. In a commentary of the relationship of media and church institutions, the topic of digital ecclesiology is explained this way,

> The way the church behaves digitally in our world today is no different, morally or spiritually, than any other mode in which the church is manifest. If the church is a servant to the marginalized and an advocate for justice, the church will use its digital presence as a way to fulfill those missions. If the church emphasizes the formation of Christian community, social media will be an increasingly important contributor to the nurturing of communal connections. Proclamation of the Word will always be central to the church's calling, and new media will join older media as vehicles for the announcing of the good news. (Campbell, 2020, p. 3)

Gen Z Digital Media Trends and Usage

Because Gen Z is the target focus of this study, it is crucial to examine the way Gen Z consumes and uses media. This study focuses on the way that the members of Gen Z utilize supplemental Christian extra-biblical media (EBM) for their biblical knowledge. According to Pew Research Center, 72% of teens claim to have access to a smartphone, computer, or device to access the internet, and 97% of teens claim to use the internet every day (Vogels et al., 2022). These people, who fall into the category of Generation Z, are equipped with the tools to access

media daily. They are the most affected generation by birth because they grew up alongside the growing technology (Karim, 2019). Modern daily life for a member of Gen Z revolves around the necessity for it. Schools from elementary to high school utilize the Internet for their assignments, and all universities use the Internet as the primary form of assignment submission, research, and communication with faculty. According to the same study,

> When reflecting on the amount of time they spend on social media generally, a majority of U.S. teens (55%) say they spend about the right amount of time on these apps and sites, while about a third of teens (36%) say they spend too much time on social media. Just 8% of teens think they spend too little time on these platforms. (Vogels et al., 2022)

Gen Z uses the Internet for many purposes. Gen Z is the newest and trendiest generation, commonly known as the iGen, Gen Tech, Gen Wii because of their technology-dependent nature (Karim, 2019). Music streaming, podcasting, social media, video browsing, and television streaming are some of the ways Gen Z utilizes digital media. Unlike their preceding generations, who keep the television and radio mediums in business, "Gen Z is drifting away from the traditional media mainly because of the strong penetration of the smartphones and internet and thus the social media platform" (Karim, 2019, p. 3). Because of the consumption of so much digital and short-form entertainment and content, concentration on reading complicated sources such as the Bible may seem boring and difficult to understand for some members of Gen Z.

Christian Extra-Biblical Media

In today's modern age, many supplemental materials exist to aid in spiritual growth and knowledge for Christians (EBM). There are materials for all age groups, genders, life stages, and preferred formats. These exist in the form of written studies, streamed sermons, biblical commentaries, podcasts, music, websites, and social media platforms. Life Church, a church

based in Oklahoma, has a website with a page dedicated to Christian extra-biblical resources specifically for young people and Gen Z (*Youth,* 2022). Christians are utilizing the resources on digital media to aid in spiritual knowledge. Social media and extra-biblical medias are created to assist in spiritual knowledge, yet there is concern about the way social media impacts Gen Z in their ability to correctly understand biblical knowledge. A study done in 2021 regarding social media and the way it impacts spiritual formation in Gen Z states,

> The findings of this study were that social media technology has altered the spiritual formation process of Gen Z students at the university, as they are not able to be fully present during spiritual formation activities, with Bible reading, quiet time, and prayer life being significantly impacted by these apps. Additionally, the social media app Instagram was found to have the greatest impact on student spiritual formation, over the three other most popular apps (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter) at the time of this study. (Ninan, 2021, p. V)

While this may be of interest to Christians using these materials, a few of the different popular forms of Christian extra-biblical media are examined in the literature.

Podcasts

Podcasts are a large rising form of media widely consumed by Gen Z. According to Podcast Demographic Statistics, "The majority of podcast listeners are between the ages of 18 and 34" (*Podcasting demographics,* 2022). Generation Z in particular has a specific fixation on podcasting. The same article states, "Firstly, the podcast industry is still relatively new, so people who listen to podcasts are perhaps more likely to be early adopters. Secondly, podcasting is an extremely accessible medium. This accessibility means that people from all walks of life can enjoy podcasts, regardless of income or social status" (*Podcasting Demographics,* 2022). In the

realm of Christian podcasting, there exist many Christian commentaries, biblical explanations, Christian life advice, and Christian influencer podcasts. Within the top ten trending podcasts on Apple Podcasts, six of the top ten in the Religion & Spirituality category are Christian influencers imparting their interpretation of biblical principles ("Top Shows," 2023). Some of the top trending Christian podcasts are WHOA That's Good podcast by Sadie Robertson, Made for This by Jennie Allen, Joel Osteen Daily Podcast by Joel Osteen, and Follow HIM by Hank Smith and John Bytheway ("Top Shows," 2023). The number one podcast on the charts used for biblical knowledge explanation is The Bible Recap Podcast by Tara-Leigh Cobble and D-Group, which explains every chapter of the Bible to listeners who want to better understand scriptural knowledge ("Top Shows," 2023). Not only are Christian influencers releasing online communication media such as podcasts, but churches are releasing their own podcasts for their own congregations. Harris Creek Baptist Church, located in Waco, Texas, has its own podcast specifically for members of Gen Z. The Becoming Something Podcast is charted #60 in the world for Apple Podcasts in Religion and Spirituality ("Top Shows," 2023). The description of the show explains how this podcast's main goal is to assist in Spiritual knowledge for those who listen, stating, "We'll release an episode each week with answers to real questions that college students and young adults are asking us. Listen in as Jonathan Pokluda, Nate Hilgenkamp, and Kathy Davidson help you navigate life in your 20's and 30's" (*The Becoming Something Podcast,* 2022).

Streamed Sermons

Streamed sermons are another extra-biblical material released as media by churches in the United States. According to Lifeway Research, "As new technologies have emerged, churches have placed their primary weekly worship service online in much the same way they

did with radio and television" (Earls, 2020). People are able to access pastors' sermons and church services through many church websites, live streams, and even YouTube. Famous pastors have soundbite clips posted on YouTube as a way for people to hear clips of a message and gain spiritual knowledge from them. Much of this began when COVID-19 broke out in the United States to continually connect churches to their congregations despite having to be physically apart. The sermon streaming capability is widely used according to Lifeway Research. They found that churches report "around half (52 percent) post the sermon online after the service is over, while 22 percent say they livestream the entire service and 10 percent say they livestream only the sermon" (Earls, 2020). They can reach a digitally connected audience in order to deliver a piece of online content usable to the digital generation.

Religious Social Media Influencers

Another interesting trend in extra-biblical resources is the content produced by religious Christian influencers. These influencers are dominating social media platforms to Christian audiences by posting content about their own life, their faith, resources to use, and their commentary on biblical principles. A social media influencer (SMI) is widely utilized not only in Christian influence but in business and marketing as well. According to Sundermann and Raabe (2019),

> SMIs gain their prominence due to their work on social media platforms only… In comparison to celebrities, SMIs are co-producers of content, meaning they can alter the message in a way that it is perceived as authentic by their followers…SMI are not directly employed by organizations, and can therefore still act as independent, third-party endorsers in the sense that they are using some degree of freedom by creating creative content. (p. 279)

Social media influencers are changing the narrative of relatability to social media consumers, which is widely Gen Z. According to a study done on SMIs, 13% of Internet users buy things that are suggested by an SMI blog, page, or video. 50% of teenagers and 33% of people from 20-29 years also respond in similar ways to influencers in the realms that they have an interest (Sundermann & Raabe, 2019).

Within Christian influence, some popular Instagram Christian influencers are Jennie Allen, Tim Tebow, Sadie Robertson, Steven Furtick, Jonathan Pokluda, and Emma Mae Jenkins to name a few. According to an online article on the rise of Christian influencers, Christian influencers are using their platforms to draw Christians from far and wide (Agwu, 2021). Agwu has concern about Gen Z using Christian influencers as a primary source of biblical knowledge, stating, "it appears that the source of their [Gen Z] biblical knowledge (in some, but not all cases) tends to be strictly from private devotion and Christian influencers on social media" (Agwu, 2021). When people follow an influencer on social media, the more followers, the more attention. The more attention an influencer receives, the more legitimate their statements seem to those who follow. Someone with many followers can be perceived as having truthful authority, strictly based off the number of people who follow them (Agwu, 2021). The same can be said for the impact of Christian religious influencers across any social media platform.

Christian Biblical Medias

Another form of Christian media to consider are biblical media. Within the scope of this study, biblical media is any media that is the Bible itself. There are many forms of the Bible today that are not the physical printed Bible. Within this study, the Christian biblical media (BM) are considered the print Bible, Bible phone apps, computer Bible software, and the audio Bible.

Due to the technology of today, the Bible has been transformed into formats that are easily accessible to Christians. Religious texts, such as the Bible, are still a foundational component of the Christian faith, as discussed in Chapter I through McGrath's dangerous idea. Books, specifically religious texts, still impact the current culture. As stated by van Peursen,

> We are still in the Order of the Book, despite the rapid technological changes that are taking place. This relates not only to the role of text and book in society, the dominance of which is clearly felt by those who cannot read or write, but also to the way in which the book has shaped our minds, our conceptualizations and our world view. (2014, p. 45)

This author goes on to suggest that culture is experiencing a tremendous impact of the computer that is impacting everything, even the Bible (van Peursen, 2014). He states, "We see that in general the transition from the printed to the digital medium for reading the Bible does not meet strong widespread opposition…Some advocate the use of a printed bible in church, others encourage the use of smartphones, not only for reading the Bible, but also for twittering during the service" (van Peursen, 2014, pp. 49-50).

Thomas and De Sousa in their study on the use of Christian social media and apps to enhance religiosity suggest that for Christians, reading the Bible is more important than the format used (Thomas & De Sousa, 2018). These authors suggest how the new generation, Gen Z, is more digital-friendly and therefore more likely to use digital Bible in comparison to older generations. The Bible apps and computer software such as Bible websites make the Scripture easy to access on a smartphone and more convenient than carrying a physical Bible. Thomas and De Sousa state,

> Digital Bible is a blessing as it can be accessed and shared more easily, reproduced with low cost and carried around more conveniently. Different online versions and

> commentaries make the reading and study more interesting and quick. Some of the apps come with many translations of the Holy Bible with different features including offline reading. Besides, the possibility of quick search of a particular book of the Bible or a verse is easier on the digital Bible. (2018, p. 177)

These authors even state how youth are more inclined to read news, social media, and text over digital mediums, which makes youth more likely to access the Bible in these ways as well.

Another author, Baring, talks about the attitudes of Christians towards reading their Bibles. It is a factor regarding Christian use of BM to understand the way Christians read the Bible and the need for this practice. He states, "By insisting that the Bible should be read with greater frequency the church invites the reader into an engaged encounter of the text where the world of the reader meets the world of the text," suggesting that some denominations of Christianity, the church emphasizes reading the Bible (Baring, 2008, p. 176). Although, this argument is primarily protestant. Concerning the research done by Baring, another author states that in her study she believes "it is expected that some participants may feel pressure to present what they consider to be a more favorable representation of their Bible reading habits than what is accurate" (Stephens, 2021, p. 14). This suggests that Christians may desire to look like they read their Bibles more when completing a survey about their habits to look more favorable if their church does emphasize reading the Bible like Baring states. All of these factors play into the use of Christian BM in relation to this study.

Theoretical Literature

Within this study, the examination of a communication theory is necessary for understanding the communication elements that contribute to the research. The following section proposes the application of the media dependency theory.

Media Dependency Theory

The media dependency theory, also known as media system dependency theory, was originally created by Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin DeFleur in 1976. In their original paper titled A Dependency Model of Mass-Media Effects, Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur explain the rationale and components of the theory. This theory combines multiple approaches surrounding the topic of media and audience relationships. Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur state, "The primary reason for this focus is that the degree of audience dependence on media information is a key variable in understanding when and why media messages alter audience beliefs, feelings, or behavior" (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976, p. 5). MDT is based on ideas of the uses and gratifications theory, which states that people use media for specific reasons to gratify particular needs (Katz et al., 1973). The uses and gratifications Theory is more concerned with the effects of the usage of media, while the MDT focuses on other areas of mass-media and audience interaction. The MDT suggests that the audience is an active part of the communication process. According to the original proposal of the MDT, Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur state,

> There are numerous ways in which people are dependent on media to satisfy information needs. For example, one form of dependency is based on the need to understand one's social world; another type of dependency arises from the need to act meaningfully and effectively in that world; still a third type of dependency is based on the need for fantasy-escape from daily problems and tensions. The greater the need and consequently the stronger the dependency in such matters, the greater the likelihood that the information supplied will alter various forms of audience cognitions, feelings, and behavior. (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976, p. 6)

This theory proposes that the media's influence is based on the extent to which individuals and social systems are dependent on it. Also, there are numerous ways in which people are dependent on media (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976). If there is a great need, the stronger the dependency will be. For example, if one is in great need of a cellphone for communication with others then that person would be individually dependent on the media found in that device because it satisfies their need. Also, this theory provides an explanation of the way mass media can impact a societal group, and to what extent their reliance on information impacts their need for it. The theorists define dependency as "a relationship in which the satisfaction of needs or the attainment of goals by one party is contingent upon the resources of another party. So defined, dependency on media information resources is a ubiquitous condition in modern society" (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976, p. 6). This theory suggests that all people have a dependency on media in some way, and the media attracts individual use based on its ability to fulfill the needs of that individual.

This theory also predicts certain kinds of effects on audience members. It states that societal systems and media systems with consideration to the audiences will produce cognitive, affective, and behavioral effects (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976). The impact on cognitive effect primarily surrounds the creation and resolution of ambiguity given by the usage of media. People may use forms of media to learn specific types of information necessary to their needs. For example, in an instance of a natural disaster, the resolution of ambiguity surrounding the details of the disaster to the nation would be a plausible cognitive effect on the audience. The affective effects are the impact of emotional responses and feelings of an audience based on the media. This is a way in which the audience is involved in the communication process of information via media. Certain types of communication from media may impact the feelings and

emotions of those using it. Finally, the behavioral effect is the influence of media over action. Media can ignite behavioral changes within the audience based on their need. The premise of the theory, summed up by Ball-Rokeach, is that the "theoretically possible range of individual dependency on the media system is determined more by structural dependency, the pattern of interdependent relations between the media and other social systems, than by the personal and social psychological characteristics of the individual" (Ball-Rokeach, 1985, p. 489).

How it Applies to the Study

Modern American society relies heavily on the usage of media in many forms, specifically digital media as has been proposed throughout this review. The media dependency theory is one way to examine the way Gen Z uses media available to them, such as Christian extra-biblical materials in the form of digital media, for their consumption of biblical knowledge. The extent to which Gen Z relies and depends upon media as a form of resolving ambiguity around biblical topics may explain their reliance on it as proposed in the hypothesis. Their consumption of biblical knowledge through forms of media may impact their cognitive desire to reduce ambiguity continually, the affective impact on their feelings toward faith, and their behavior in the continual consumption or overreliance on these materials. As it relates to the uses and gratification of repeated media dependency, Gen Z may become dependent on relying on communication from media for biblical knowledge because it satisfies their desire to know more about the Bible and is easier to consume than reading the Bible itself. This theory is used to examine the findings in Chapter V of this study.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

The present study exists to answer the following research questions and hypotheses.

RQ1 To what extent do Gen Z Christians consume extra-biblical faith-based media (EBM)?

RQ2 Are Gen Z Christians more likely to consume extra-biblical media than the Bible?

H_1 The proportion of EBM consumed by Gen Z Christians per week is larger than the proportion of biblical media.

H_0 The proportion of EBM consumed by Gen Z Christians per week is not larger than the proportion of biblical media.

RQ3 Are Gen Z Christians more likely to prefer EBM than the Bible?

H_1 Gen Z Christians will prefer BM over EBM.

H_0 Gen Z Christians will not prefer BM over EBM.

Chapter III: Methodology

The problem addressed in this study is the impact of media dependency on Gen Z Christians. This study sought to determine the extent to which this specific phenomenon occurs within the target population using a quantitative research method. Chapter III describes the research method, study context, participant sample, procedure, and data analysis methods.

Research Methodology and Design

This research study examines the extent to which Gen Z Christians use communication from extra-biblical faith-based media for their consumption of biblical knowledge. This study uses a quantitative method of research through survey. The rationale behind choosing a quantitative method for this study is to develop empirical data to display the role of media communication in the sample population. The objective of this study is to "create, expand, and refine theory through systematic observation of hypothesized connections among variables" (Allen et al., 2009, p. 4). This study aims to provide an understanding of the reality of media dependency and media usage within the field of communication as it relates to Generation Z. This study focuses in on media dependency concerning biblical media and extra-biblical media. The most effective way to describe this phenomenon is through an unbiased and refined descriptive data analysis using correlation testing.

The design of the study is an anonymous survey, which is analyzed using descriptive statistics and post-hoc testing. This survey method generally provides valuable information about a population's characteristics, interests, attitudes, and influences (Bowling & Ebrahim, 2005). These studies also "describe the phenomenon of interest and observed associations in order to estimate certain population parameters, to test hypotheses, and generate hypotheses" (Bowling & Ebrahim, 2005, p. 200). The descriptive nature of the study looks to analyze parallels, frequency

of occurrence, trends, and measurements relating to mean, median, mode, range, and other descriptive analyses. This study identifies differences by studying the sample size, significance, and data variance within the survey findings. The data is then evaluated using two Chi-Square Tests of Independence. The data is analyzed using the data program, JASP. After the data was collected, the hypotheses were analyzed according to the results and reported in the fourth chapter.

Chi-Square Test of Independence Assumptions

In order to run a Chi-Square test of independence, the variables must pass two assumptions. The first assumption is that the two variables should be measured at an ordinal or nominal level, or categorical data. The two chi-square tests run in this study both include nominal variables. The two variables in the first test are generational cohort (Gen Z and non-Gen Z) and preference for media consumption. The variables in the second test are generational cohort (Gen Z and non-Gen Z) and which media they actually spend more time on (EBM or BM).

The second assumption is that the two variables should consist of two or more categorical, independent groups. For the first test, the groups within the variables are Gen Z and non-Gen Z for generational cohort, and prefer, not prefer, or no preference for the preference of media consumption. For the second test, the groups within the variables are Gen Z and non-Gen Z for generational cohort, again, and EBM, BM, or equal time for the time on media variable. Therefore, both assumptions are met in order to run the chi-square tests of independence.

External Validity

The external validity of this study was considered to ensure that the results of the study generalize to, or have relevance for, settings, people, times, and measures other than the ones

used in this particular study. A few criteria were met to ensure a degree of external validity. First, the population and sampling were crafted to enhance the external validity of the study. The study utilized random sampling to recruit the participants using convenience and snowball techniques, which is a form of non-probability sampling. This was used to ensure the representation of a broad population of Christians in the United States.

Next, to generalize the findings within the diverse demographic group that is Christians in the United States, specific criteria were used for the sampling procedure. The criteria for participation included any Christian over the age of 18, which was specifically chosen to mirror the realistic characteristics of the target population in the U.S. to minimize the risk of bias. The study chose not to solely isolate the sample demographic subgroup of Gen Z Christians in order to understand their habits compared to other groups in the population. This method increases the likelihood that the results describe an accurate representation of the characteristics and backgrounds of the target demographic group.

In an effort to enhance the ecological validity of the study, the research was conducted through an anonymous online survey to closely resemble the media availability of the real-world context this study investigates, as well as increase validity through anonymous online participation. This is the context in which the variables operate daily, and it was chosen to conduct the research this way to strengthen the findings as everyday situations.

When considering the criteria for study, the inclusion and exclusion criteria was ensured to balance internal and external validity. The researcher aimed to include a diverse range of participants within the group, while controlling factors that would exclude the participants from eligibility of study. These criteria questions were given before the survey to ensure the external validity of the conclusions.

Finally, the external factors were considered with their potential impact on the results. To ensure that the conclusions were valid, the survey included test-retest questioning to ensure the robustness of the findings, as well as post-hoc testing of the data. This approach helped to ensure the external factors of the study are accounted for when considering the applicability and transferability of the results beyond this particular study to other settings, people, times, and measures.

Access and Instrumentation

This study was conducted through the instrumentation of an online survey. The survey was administered through Qualtrics and sent out using an anonymous link via social media, snowball sampling, and word of mouth. The rationale behind this decision was to widen the sample to any Christian in the United States, not a specific region such as the South. According to a study done by Gallup in 2018, 45% of the Southwest region of the United States is considered "very religious," in terms of Christianity, whereas only 26% of the Northwest region of the United States is considered "very religious" (Norman, 2018). While this may be true based on cultural religious affiliation in an area such as the Bible Belt, another study by Pew Research Center (2014) found that 64% of the Western region, 73% of the Midwest, 65% of the Northeast, and 76% of the Southern United States claim to be Christian. These statistics show that while some regions may have a higher cultural inclination towards Christianity traditionally, such as the Bible Belt, it is not necessarily the indicator of the number of practicing Christians in the United States. Therefore, there is no regional limit on the survey being administered. Gen Z Christians exist in every region of the United States and the study aimed to analyze their media dependency in relation to their consumption of communication from extrabiblical media. The

study was administered online to whoever received the survey and voluntarily chose to participate.

Participant Selection and Data Collection

The participants of this study were narrowed to a sample of Gen Z Christians who are 18 years of age or older, however, the survey was open to Christians of all ages. To answer the hypothesis regarding Gen Z, the data received was examined regarding the media dependency of Gen Z and compared to the media dependency of all other older generations. Anyone who is not Gen Z was used as the control group. In some instances, the data of the non-Gen Z is reported by generational breakdown, but often it is grouped into a "non-Gen Z" specific category. This study aimed to have a sample of no less than 150 participants and desired 500 participants. A large sample was preferred due to a wider range of data to be collected with more participants for a more accurate data analysis. The sample was recruited using convenience and snowball sampling, which is a form of non-probability sampling. Convenience sampling was achieved by recruitment via social media platforms (such as Facebook and Instagram), and by word of mouth. The survey was left open for the sample participants to take for two weeks. The analysis of the data is displayed in Chapter IV of the study and conclusions are drawn regarding the research questions and hypotheses in Chapter V.

Chapter IV: Results

The following chapter presents the results of the survey regarding the media dependency of Gen Z Christians and to what extent they rely on communication from extrabiblical media rather than the Bible itself. The results of the survey are analyzed using a combination of descriptive statistics and a Chi-Square Test of Independence to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses.

Data Testing

The program used for statistical analysis in this study is JASP. The data from the Qualtrics survey results were downloaded into the program through Excel and evaluated using descriptive statistics analysis, frequency analysis, and the Chi-Square Tests of Independence analysis on JASP. After the statistical tests were run through the program, the data was displayed in the tables below throughout the following chapter. Additionally, reliability testing was performed using test-re-test after 1 week. The same data were produced in each instance.

Description of Participants

In this research study, an anonymous survey was released for two weeks online through social media using convenience and snowball sampling. Originally, there were 603 responses to the survey. Three respondents were thrown out because they did not meet the demographic parameters for the study, leaving a total of exactly 600 responses.

Ages and Generations

The 600 respondents ranged in age from 18 to 79 years old (Figure 4.1). The table below displays the descriptive statistics of the sample, showing the mode of participant age being 23 years old, the average age being about 35 years old, and the maximum age being 79 years old.

Figure 4.1

Ages Descriptive Statistics

	Age
N	600
Mode	23.000
Mdn	30.000
M	35.693
SD	15.232
Range	61.000
Min	18.000
Max	79.000

The parameters of this study excluded anyone younger than 18 years old. Out of the 600 responses, n=278 respondents were adult members of Gen Z (2005-1997), and the rest were members of the preceding generations. To further break down the generational cohorts, the other 322 respondents were Millennials (1996-1981), Generation X (1980-1965), Baby Boomers (1964-1946), and the Silent Generation/Post War Generation (1945-1928) which are the generations above Gen Z (Beresford Research, 2023). The distributions in the generational cohorts are displayed in the figures below (Figure 4.2, Figure 4.3). The respondents were 46.3% Gen Z, and 53.7% non-Gen Z, which is a very even distribution of the sample. In order to understand the media use habits of Gen Z Christians, it is also crucial to understand the media use habits of non-Gen Z Christians. As the next generation of adults in the United States, understanding Gen Z's media consumption is a way for researchers to predict trends, understand habits, and use the information to reach their interests. In relation to the preceding generations, the information about their habits sheds a light into changes or variations between each generation.

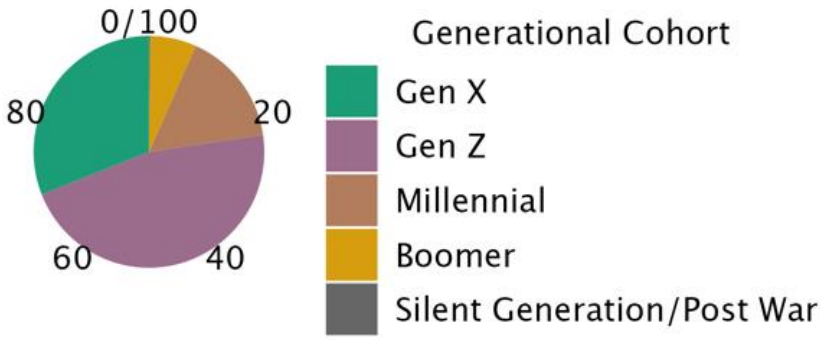
Figure 4.2

Frequencies for Generational Cohort

Generational Cohort	*f*	%
Gen X	186	31.000
Gen Z	278	46.333
Millennial	96	16.000
Boomer	39	6.500
Silent Generation/Post War	1	0.167
Missing	0	0.000
Total	600	100.000

Figure 4.3

Generational Cohort Displayed



Demographic Information of Participants

All responses were kept anonymous from any identifying information and were only asked demographic questions for data analysis purposes. The demographics of the participants are described by sex, marital status, level of education, household income, and religious denomination (within Christianity).

Sex

The distribution of participants by sex shows the majority of respondents were female. The figure below displays 81.3% of the respondents identified themselves as female, 18.5% of

the respondents identified themselves as male, and 0.2% chose not to disclose their sex (Figure 4.4). Also, the demographic information is displayed in terms of its relation to the generational cohort, which shows the breakdown of female to male per generation (Figure 4.5). Gen Z displayed a split of 199 females to 79 males, which also showed the majority of male respondents were of the Gen Z generational cohort.

Figure 4.4

Frequencies for Sex

Sex	*f*	%
Female	488	81.333
Male	111	18.500
Prefer not to say	1	0.167
Missing	0	0.000
Total	600	100.000

Figure 4.5

Generational Cohort to Sex Comparison

Generation	Female *f*	Male *f*	Undisclosed *f*
Gen Z	199	79	0
Millennial	85	11	0
Gen X	171	14	1
Boomers	33	6	0
Silent Gen	0	1	0

Marital Status

In relation to marital status, the majority of participants reported being married, which made up 53.667% of the responses (Figure 4.6). This is because this is a combination of the preceding generations to Gen Z, which are predominantly married. Only 48 of the Gen Z

respondents were married, with 2 being divorced, otherwise, the rest of Gen Z reported being single/never married.

Figure 4.6

Frequencies for Marital Status

Marital Status	*f*	%
Divorced	24	4.000
Married	322	53.667
Separated	4	0.667
Single, never married	242	40.333
Widowed	8	1.333
Missing	0	0.000
Total	600	100.000

Level of Education and Household Income

The respondents reported their level of education ranging from high school diploma/GED to a doctoral degree. A bachelor's degree was the highest frequency within the sample being 46.1% of the respondent's education level. It can be assumed due to age the range of Gen Z that their education levels will fall between high school and college/master's degree. The variation in education levels is shown in the figure below (Figure 4.7). Household income was also reported by the respondents, indicating an even distribution between all the income levels in the sample (Figure 4.8). The most frequent subset of responses was a household income over $100,000 dollars, at 262 responses, which was around 43.7%. These demographics showed a wide variety of experiences for the sample population. In the United States, it is typical for people of varying ages to have varying household incomes, especially if the older respondents are married with two incomes or have more job experience. For this datum, it is a strength to see a wide variety of incomes and education because it displays that the respondents come from all different stages of life, yet all respondents share a common belief.

Figure 4.7

Frequencies for Level of Education

Level of Education	*f*	%
Associates degree	55	9.167
Bachelor's degree	277	46.167
Doctoral degree	13	2.167
High school diploma/GED	148	24.667
Master's degree	107	17.833
Missing	0	0.000
Total	600	100.000

Figure 4.8

Frequencies for Household Income

Household Income	*f*	%
$20,000 to $34,999	40	6.667
$35,000 to $49,999	56	9.333
$50,000 to $74,999	93	15.500
$75,000 to $99,999	86	14.333
Less than $20,000	63	10.500
Over $100,000	262	43.667
Missing	0	0.000
Total	600	100.000

Denomination

The last demographic question answered by the respondents is a report of their claimed denomination within the Christian faith. The primary focus of this question is to understand the faith background of the respondents as it relates to their consumption of Christian media. This study exclusively deals with denominations that value reading the Bible as the sole holy book. Any denominations that did not meet the parameters were disqualified. The denominations represented in the sample were Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican/Episcopal, Lutheran, Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Pentecostal/Charismatic, and Non-denominational.

An “Other” category was also included for write-ins. The top 5 most reported denominations were non-denominational at 58.4%, Baptist at 26.2%, Roman Catholic at 7.2%, and Methodist and Pentecostal/Charismatic tying at 4.1% (Figure 4.9). The less frequently reported denominations were Anglican/Episcopal, Eastern Orthodox, Lutheran, Presbyterian, the “other/write-in” category, and those who preferred not to say (Figure 4.10). Some of the reported denominations in the write-in category include Messianic Judaism, Oriental Orthodox, Assemblies of God, Nazarene, Mennonite, Wesleyan, Disciples of Christ, Brethren, and United Church of Christ.

The denomination breakdown of just the Gen Z sample (n=278), shows the majority of Gen Z identify as non-denominational at a frequency of 159 and 57.2% of the sample. The other more frequent denominations reported by Gen Z are Baptist at 26.6%, Pentecostal/Charismatic at 3.2%, Methodist and Presbyterian tied at 2.9%, and the “other” category at 4.3% which included the write-in denominations previously mentioned (Figure 4.11).

Figure 4.9

Frequencies for Denominations Top 5 Total Sample

Denominations Top 5	***f***	**%**
Baptist	141	23.500
Methodist	22	3.667
Non-denominational	314	52.333
Pentecostal/Charismatic	22	3.667
Roman Catholic	39	6.500
Total	600	100.000

Figure 4.10

Frequencies for Denominations Bottom 5 Total Sample

Denominations Bottom 5	*f*	%
Anglican/Episcopal	6	1.000
Eastern Orthodox	2	0.333
Lutheran	8	1.333
Other (Please specify)	27	4.500
Presbyterian	16	2.667
Total	600	100.000

Figure 4.11

Frequencies for Gen Z Denomination

Denomination	*f*	%
Anglican/Episcopal	1	0.360
Baptist	74	26.619
Lutheran	2	0.719
Methodist	8	2.878
Non-denominational	159	57.194
Other (Please specify)	12	4.317
Pentecostal/Charismatic	9	3.237
Prefer not to say	1	0.360
Presbyterian	8	2.878
Roman Catholic	4	1.439
Total	278	100.000

Research Question 1

The first research question surrounds the consumption of extra-biblical media (EBM). The research question states: To what extent do Gen Z Christians consume extra-biblical faith-based media? This research question was determined by a report on the types of EBMs used, the amount of time spent using each reported EBM, time spent using EBMs to learn about faith, time spent using EBMs in general, and favorite EBM. RQ1 seeks to understand the EBM

consumption habits of the sample and determine the way EBM is used in the everyday lives of Gen Z Christians.

Gen Z EBMs Used

The sample of Gen Z Christians (n=278) reported the EBMs they have used before by checking a box next to the listed EBMs in the survey and writing in "other" EBMs used (Figure 4.12). The list of EBMs provided included podcasts, Christian books, worship/Christian music, social media videos (such as YouTube, Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, etc.), streamed church services/sermons, television broadcasts, radio broadcasts, blogs, commentaries, and devotionals. Figure 4.12 displays the number of times each EBM was checked by the Gen Z respondents. A few of the significant write-in EBMs included Christian TV shows and movies, Christian life apps (different from Bible apps), media from parachurch organizations, and media from Christian conferences. There were only two Gen Z respondents who indicated that they had never used any of these EBMs.

Figure 4.12

Gen Z EBMs Used Before

EBM Used Before	***f***
Podcasts	211
Christian Books	233
Worship/Christian music	268
Social media videos	241
Streamed church services/sermons	245
Television broadcasts	39
Radio broadcasts	49
Blogs	88
Commentaries	122
Devotionals	236
Other	8
None	2

Gen Z EBMs Most Used

The Gen Z respondents then reported their most used EBM. The top EBM reported as "most used" is worship/Christian music at a frequency of 152 and a valid percent of 54.7%. The other top EBMs are social media videos at a frequency of 30 at 10.8%, podcasts at a frequency of 28 at 10.1%, Christian books at a frequency of 19 at 6.8%, devotionals at a frequency of 16 at 5.8%, and streamed sermons at a frequency of 12 at 4.3%. The "other" category ranked with a frequency of 21 at 7.5% which includes all the other EBMs. which are television broadcasts, radio, blogs, commentaries, and write-ins (Figure 4.13, 4.14).

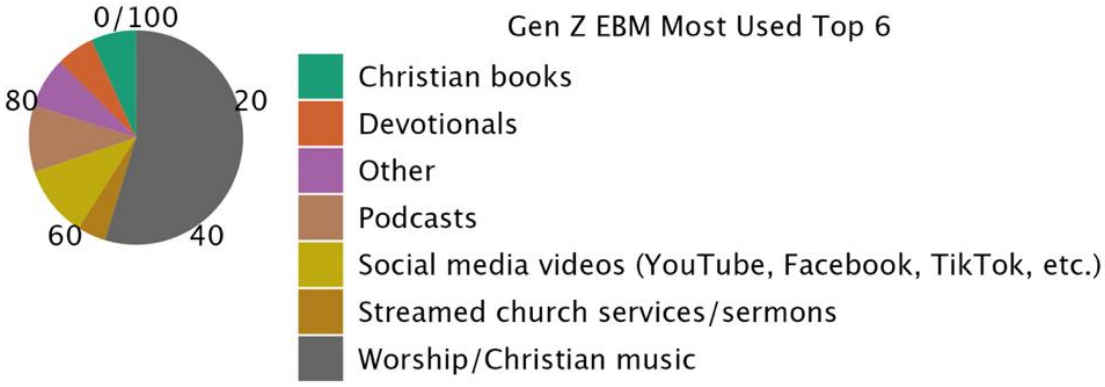
Figure 4.13

Frequencies for Gen Z EBM Most Used

Gen Z EBM Most Used	*f*	%
Christian books	19	6.835
Devotionals	16	5.755
Other	21	7.554
Podcasts	28	10.072
Social media videos (YouTube, Facebook, TikTok, etc.)	30	10.791
Streamed church services/sermons	12	4.317
Worship/Christian music	152	54.676
Missing	0	0.000
Total	278	100.000

Figure 4.14

Gen Z EBM Most Used



Gen Z Time Spent Using EBMs

The Gen Z respondents reported the time spent using EBMs in a few different ways. First, they reported the amount of time spent using EBMs to learn about faith per week on a scale from 0 hours to more than 5 hours. Next, they reported exactly how many hours they spend with each individual EBM listed per week. Finally, they reported how many hours they spend per week consuming EBMs in general on a scale from 0 hours to more than 5 hours.

Time with EBMs for Learning About Faith

First, the Gen Z sample (n=278) reported how much time they spend weekly using EBMs *to specifically learn about faith* on a scale from 0 hours to more than 5 hours. The top scale reported by Gen Z was 1-2 hours per week, at 28.8%, and a frequency of 80. At a close second with a frequency of 72, was 2-3 hours at 25.9%. Interestingly, the lowest scale reported was 0 hours per week, which is a frequency of 7 at 2.5% of the Gen Z sample. The middle three scales were all very even in distribution ranging between 12-16% of the respondents (Figure 4.15, Figure 4.16).

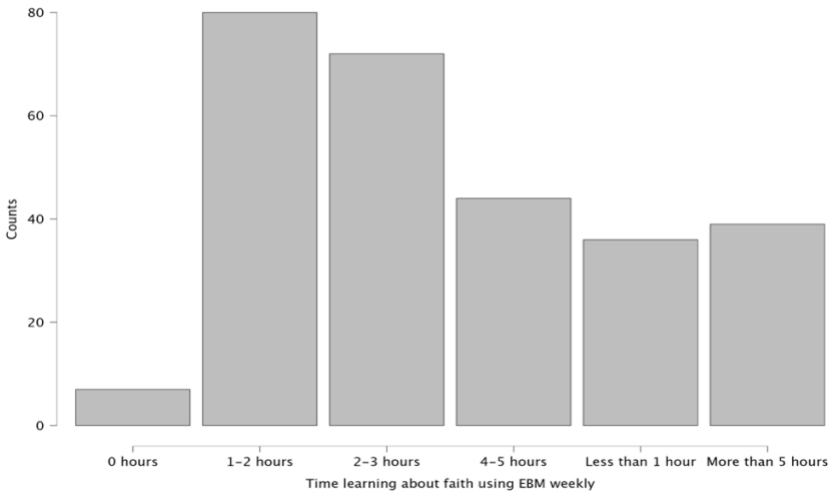
Figure 4.15

Frequencies for Gen Z Time Learning About Faith Using EBMs Weekly

Time	*f*	%
0 hours	7	2.518
1-2 hours	80	28.777
2-3 hours	72	25.899
4-5 hours	44	15.827
Less than 1 hour	36	12.950
More than 5 hours	39	14.029
Missing	0	0.000
Total	278	100.000

Figure 4.16

Gen Z Time Learning About Faith Using EBMs Weekly



Time Spent with Each EBM Weekly

The respondents then reported the specific number of hours per week (HPW) spent using each of the individual EBMs listed (Figure 4.17). The datum shows the descriptives for each of the EBMs. The mean HPW for each EBM falls under an hour, except for worship/Christian music, which falls at a mean of 3.8 HPW. That is significantly larger than the averages for every

other EBM. Another significant finding in the descriptive statistics for HPW with each EBM is the maximum time spent. The top two EBMs with the highest maximums are worship/Christian music at 100 HPW, and social media videos at 35 HPW. The rest of the EBMs fall in the averages and vary per individual person. However, for almost every respondent, worship/Christian music is the EBM that has the highest HPW.

Figure 4.17

Descriptive Statistics (Hours) Gen Z Time Spent Using Each EBM Per Week

	Podcasts	**Christian Books**	**Worship/Christian music**	**Social media videos**	**Streamed Sermons**	**Television broadcasts**
n	278	278	278	278	278	278
Mode	0.000	0.000	1.000	1.000	0.000	0.000
M	0.000	0.500	2.000	1.000	0.000	0.000
Mdn	0.728	0.810	3.782	1.603	0.564	0.026
SD	1.149	1.112	7.094	2.910	0.850	0.179
Range	10.000	7.000	100.000	35.000	6.000	2.000
Min	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Max	10.000	7.000	100.000	35.000	6.000	2.000

	Radio broadcasts	**Blogs**	**Commentaries**	**Devotionals**	**Other EBM**
n	278	278	278	278	97
Mode	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Mdn	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.500	0.000
M	0.112	0.073	0.414	0.911	0.082
SD	0.729	0.263	1.289	1.484	0.571
Range	10.000	2.000	14.000	10.000	4.000
Min	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Max	10.000	2.000	14.000	10.000	4.000

Time Spent Consuming EBMs in General

The next category of time reported by the respondents is the number of hours per week (HPW) spent consuming EBMs *in general*. Gen Z (n=278) reported this on a scale from 0 hours to more than 5 HPW. The top scale reported by Gen Z was 2-3 HPW, at 25.2%, and a frequency of 70. At a close second with a frequency of 66, was more than 5 HPW at 23.7%. Interestingly, the lowest scale reported was 0 HPW, which is a frequency of 5 at 1.8% of the Gen Z sample. The middle three scales fell in the average range in distribution ranging between 18-60% of the respondents (Figure 4.18, Figure 4.19).

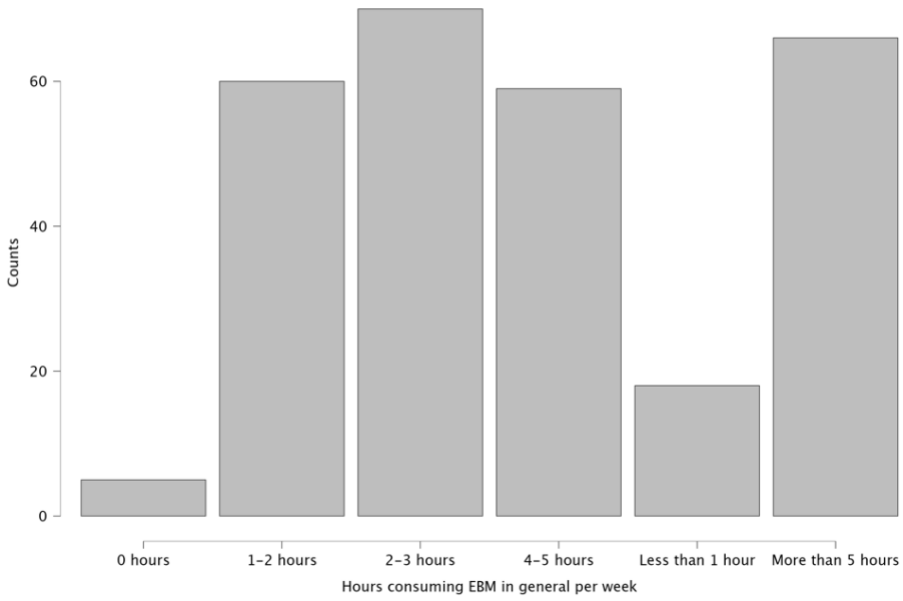
Figure 4.18

Frequencies for Gen Z HPW Consuming EBM in General

Time	*f*	%
0 hours	5	1.799
1-2 hours	60	21.583
2-3 hours	70	25.180
4-5 hours	59	21.223
Less than 1 hour	18	6.475
More than 5 hours	66	23.741
Missing	0	0.000
Total	278	100.000

Figure 4.19

Gen Z HPW Consuming EBM in General



Gen Z Favorite EBM

Finally, the Gen Z sample, n=278, reported their favorite EBM, not to be confused with most used EBM, but their favorite in general. The trend in popularity continues with worship/Christian music being the top reported favorite EBM with a frequency of 139, at exactly 50%. The next favorite EBM is podcasts at a frequency of 41, at 14.7%. The rest of the EBMs fall in the middle of the rankings with percentages from 7-15%. The “other category” includes commentaries, streamed church services/sermons, radio broadcasts, blogs, television broadcasts, none, and other write-ins (Figure 4.20, 4.21).

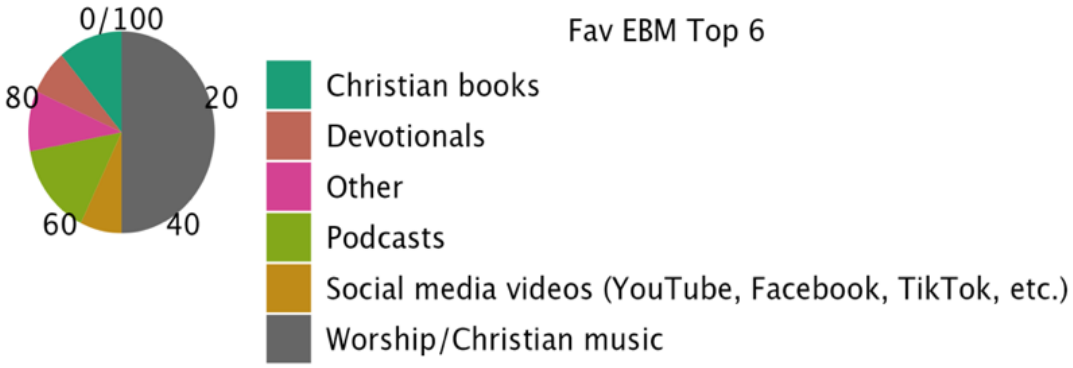
Figure 4.20

Frequencies for Gen Z Favorite EBM

EBM	*f*	%
Christian books	31	11.151
Devotionals	20	7.194
Other	27	9.712
Podcasts	41	14.748
Social media videos (YouTube, Facebook, TikTok, etc.)	20	7.194
Worship/Christian music	139	50.000
Missing	0	0.000
Total	278	100.000

Figure 4.21

Gen Z Favorite EBM



Gen Z EBM vs. Non-Gen Z EBM

It is of interest to note the difference in Gen Z and non-Gen Z habits in relation to the extent to which they use EBMs. There are clear differences in exposure to, and growing up around, media, as previously stated in Chapter II. This study sought to understand if these differences were displayed in the habits of utilizing EBM across all the generational cohorts included in this study. Gen Z is known to be the media-saturated generation; however, this datum

describes the habits of both non-Gen Z and Gen Z in their consumption of media surrounding their Christian faith.

Non-Gen Z EBMs Used

Non-Gen Z members reported the same questions as Gen Z regarding EBM use. First, the EBMs most used by the non-Gen Z sample, n=322 only slightly differed from Gen Z's responses. The top used EBM for non-Gen Z is also worship/Christian music at a frequency of 151 and a valid percent of 46.9%. However, the other top EBMs differ from Gen Z slightly reporting social media at a frequency of 40 at 12,4%, Christian books at a frequency of 25 at 7.8%, devotionals at a frequency of 24 at 7.4%, streamed sermons at a frequency of 28 at 8.7%, and other at a frequency of 54 at 16.8% (Figure 4.22, Figure 4.23). The other category for non-Gen Z includes podcasts, radio broadcasts, blogs, commentaries, television broadcasts, write-ins, and none.

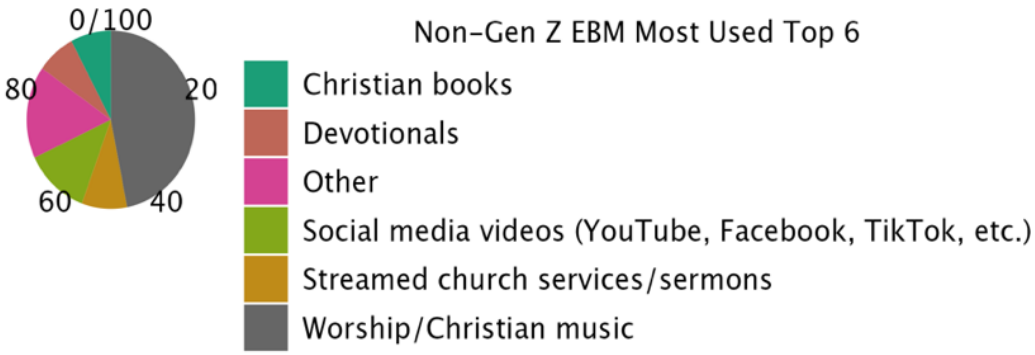
Figure 4.22

Frequencies for Non-Gen Z EBM Most Used

Non-Gen Z EBM Most Used	*f*	%
Christian books	25	7.764
Devotionals	24	7.453
Other	54	16.770
Social media videos (YouTube, Facebook, TikTok, etc.)	40	12.422
Streamed church services/sermons	28	8.696
Worship/Christian music	151	46.894
Missing	0	0.000
Total	322	100.000

Figure 4.23

Non-Gen Z EBM Most Used



Non-Gen Z Time Spent with Each EBM Weekly

The respondents then reported the specific number of hours per week (HPW) spent using each of the individual EBMs listed (Figure 4.24). The datum shows the descriptives for each of the EBMs. The mean for the HPWs for each EBM falls under an hour, except for worship/Christian music, social media videos, and devotionals. Worship/Christian music falls at an average of 4.2 HPW, social media videos average 1.3 HPW, and devotionals average 1.0 HPW. That is significantly larger than the averages for every other EBM. Another significant finding in the descriptive statistics for HPW with each EBM is the maximum time spent. The top two EBMs with the highest maximums are worship/Christian music at 84 HPW, and radio broadcasts at 40 HPW. The rest of the EBMs fall in the averages and vary per individual person. However, for many of the respondents, worship/Christian music is the EBM that has the highest HPW. It is significant to note that devotionals have a higher HPW for non-Gen Z than for Gen Z.

Figure 4.24

Descriptive Statistics (Hours) Non-Gen Z Time Spent Using Each EBM Per Week

	Podcast- HPW	Christian Books- HPW	Worship/ Christian music- HPW	Social media videos- HPW	Streamed Sermons- HPW	Television broadcasts- HPW
n	322	322	322	322	322	322
Mode	0.000	0.000	1.000	1.000	0.000	0.000
Mdn	0.000	0.125	2.000	1.000	1.000	0.000
M	0.710	0.951	4.182	1.270	0.734	0.090
SD	1.271	1.579	7.516	1.737	0.831	0.552
Min	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Max	7.000	12.000	84.000	14.000	4.000	9.000

	Radio broadcasts- HPW	Blogs- HPW	Commentaries- HPW	Devos- HPW	Other EBM- HPW
n	322	322	322	322	165
Mode	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Mdn	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.875	0.000
M	0.572	0.147	0.272	1.048	0.198
SD	2.551	0.364	0.844	1.678	0.815
Min	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Max	40.000	2.000	7.000	14.000	7.000

Research Question 2

The second research question deals with the consumption of EBM versus biblical media (BM). The research question states: Are Gen Z Christians more likely to consume extra-biblical media than the Bible? To answer this research question, descriptive statistics were used to identify the habits of consuming BM and the preference of EBM versus BM. The hypotheses for RQ2 are as follows:

H_1 The proportion of EBM consumed by Gen Z Christians per week is larger than the proportion of biblical media.

H_0 The proportion of EBM consumed by Gen Z Christians per week is not larger than the proportion of biblical media.

Gen Z Consumption of BM

The Gen Z respondents (n=278) reported their consumption habits of BM by checking the BM they have used before, their most used BM, BMs used in the last week, and choosing their favorite BM. The BMs listed in the survey are the print Bible, a Bible phone app, a computer bible (software/website), and an audio Bible. All the BMs listed are direct ways to read Scripture. When checking the BM used before, only one respondent checked none. Every other Gen Z Christian chose at least one or more of the BMs as used before (Figure 4.25). A frequency of 4 respondents indicated they had only used a Bible phone app before. Three respondents indicated they have used a Bible phone app and an audio Bible before. One respondent recorded used a Bible phone app and a computer Bible. Nine respondents reported only ever using a print Bible. A frequency of 90 respondents reported using the print Bible and a Bible phone app. The rest of the sample reported having used all four BMs.

Figure 4.25

Gen Z BM Used Before

BM Used Before	***f***
The print Bible	268
A Bible phone app	266
Computer Bible (software/website)	141
Audio Bible	113
None	1

Gen Z Most Used BM

Then, the Gen Z sample reported their most used BM. The most used BM is the print Bible at a frequency of 188 and a percentage of 67.6% of the respondents. The second highest most used BM is a Bible phone app, at a frequency of 74 at 26.6% of the sample. The audio Bible, computer Bible, and “none” option all fall very low with the Gen Z Christians at

frequencies of 4-7 respondents and ranging between 1.4-2.5% of the sample. It is clear that the most used BM for the sample on average is the print Bible (Figure 4.26, Figure 4.27).

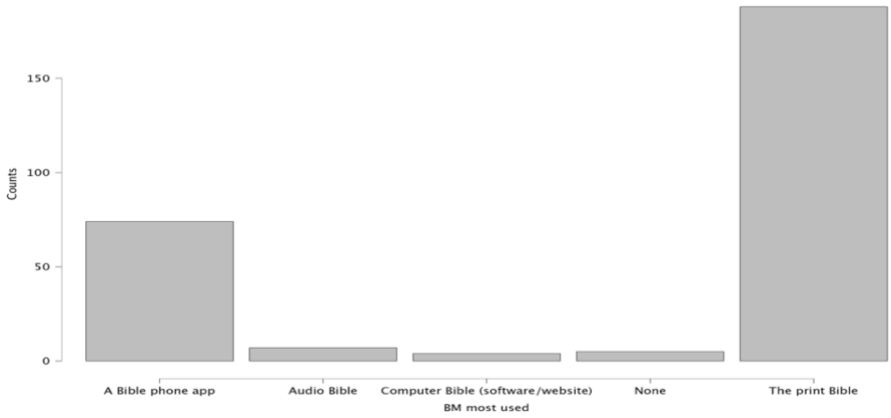
Figure 4.26

Frequencies for BM Most Used

BM most used	*f*	%
A Bible phone app	74	26.619
Audio Bible	7	2.518
Computer Bible (software/website)	4	1.439
None	5	1.799
The print Bible	188	67.626
Missing	0	0.000
Total	278	100.000

Figure 4.27

Chart of Gen Z BM Most Used



Gen Z BM Used in the Last Week

Next, the Gen Z respondents reported the BMs they have used in the last week. The largest proportion of respondents reported that they have used the print Bible and a Bible phone app in the last week. The next highest report is the print Bible alone, and the third most reported is the print Bible, a Bible phone app, and a computer Bible software. The figure below shows the

frequency at which each BM was selected by the Gen Z sample. A frequency of 21 out of the 278 respondents reported "none" as the BM used in the last week (Figure 4.28). The percentage of Gen Z Christians reporting BM use in the last week was 92.8%. The percentage of Gen Z Christians who did not use BMs in the last week was 7.2%. This displays that this sample of Gen Z Christians is consistently using at least one, or a combination of biblical media.

Figure 4.28

Gen Z BM Used in the Last Week

BM Used in the Last Week	***f***
The print Bible	220
A Bible phone app	208
Computer Bible (software/website)	55
Audio Bible	20
None	21

Gen Z Favorite BM

Next, the Gen Z respondents reported their favorite BM. Out of the 278 Gen Z respondents, 266 of them reported the print Bible as their favorite BM, which makes up a valid percentage of 81.3%. The second highest BM reported as their favorite is a Bible phone app with a frequency of 44, at 15.8%. The audio Bible, computer Bible, and "none" option made up a total of 8 respondents total, ranging from 0.4-1.4%. The overall majority chose the print Bible as their favorite BM, which matches Gen Z's most used BM being the print Bible as well (Figure 4.29, Figure 4.30).

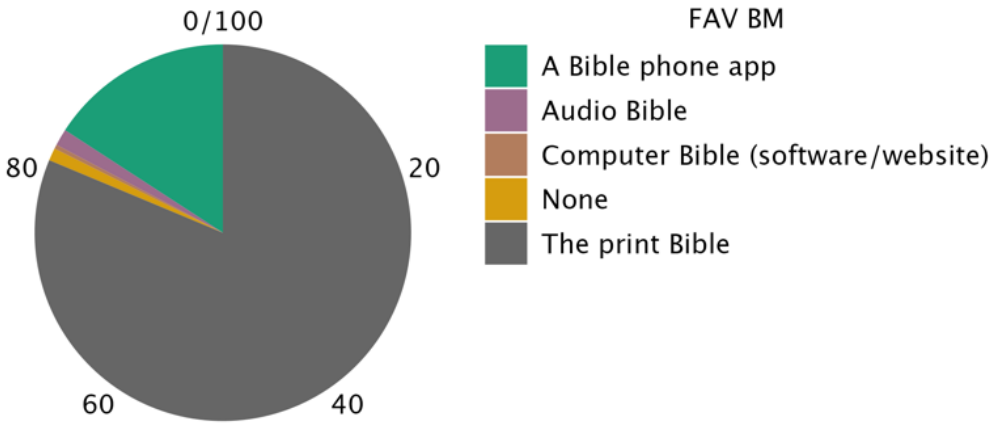
Figure 4.29

Frequencies for Gen Z Favorite BM

Favorite BM	*f*	%
A Bible phone app	44	15.827
Audio Bible	4	1.439
Computer Bible (software/website)	1	0.360
None	3	1.079
The print Bible	226	81.295
Missing	0	0.000
Total	278	100.000

Figure 4.30

Gen Z Favorite BM



Gen Z Time spent using BM

The Gen Z Christians reported their habits regarding the amount of time spent using BM. They reported how many hours per week (HPW) they spent using BM to learn about faith specifically, how many HPW spent with each individual BM, and how many HPW spent consuming BM in general.

Gen Z HPW Using BM to Learn About Faith

First, the Gen Z sample (n=278) reported the HPW spent using BM to *specifically learn about faith* on a scale from 0 hours to more than 5 hours. The top HPW reported by Gen Z was 1-2 HPW, at 27%, and a frequency of 75. The second most reported time scale is 2-3 HPW with a frequency of 59 at 21.2%. Interestingly, the lowest scale reported was 0 HPW, which is a frequency of 14 at 5% of the Gen Z sample. The other three HPW options were more evenly distributed, ranging between 12.5-17.6% of the respondents. The report for less than 1 HPW had a frequency of 46 at 16.5%, averaging around 20-30 mins per week (Figure 4.31, Figure 4.32). This is a report of the time spent with BM for the purpose of learning about faith.

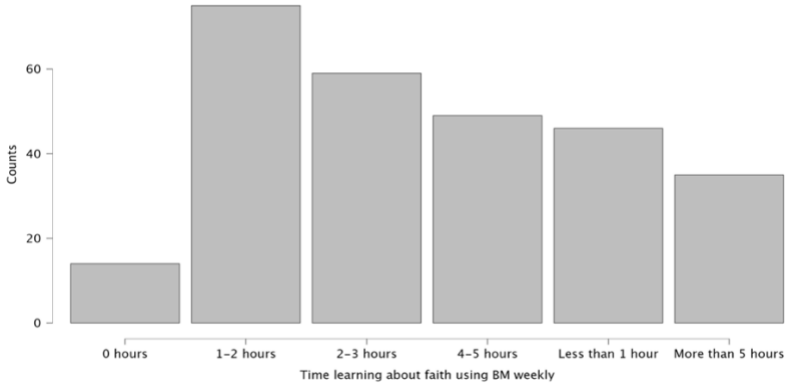
Figure 4.31

Frequencies for Time Learning About Faith Using BM Weekly

Time learning about faith using BM weekly	***f***	**%**
0 hours	14	5.036
1-2 hours	75	26.978
2-3 hours	59	21.223
4-5 hours	49	17.626
Less than 1 hour	46	16.547
More than 5 hours	35	12.590
Missing	0	0.000
Total	278	100.000

Figure 4.32

Time Learning About Faith Using BM Weekly



Gen Z HPW With Each BM

Next, the Gen Z respondents (n=278) reported the specific HPW spent using each of the BMs (Figure 4.33). The datum show the descriptives for each of the BMs. The mean for the HPWs for each BM falls under an hour, except for the print Bible, which falls at a mean of 2.5 HPW, and a Bible phone app, which falls at a mean of 1.2 HPW. That is significantly larger than the averages for every other BMs. Another important finding in the descriptive statistics for HPW with each BM is the maximum time spent. The top two BMs with the highest maximums are the print Bible at 14 HPW, and the Bible phone app at 15 HPW. The rest of the BMs fall in the averages and vary per individual. However, for almost every respondent, the print Bible and the Bible app are almost tied for the BM with the highest HPW. It is interesting to note that the maximum HPW spent on EBMs was 100 HPW, whereas the maximum for any category of BM is 15 HPW (Figure 4.17).

Figure 4.33

Descriptive Statistics Gen Z HPW With Each BM

	Print Bible-HPW	Bible phone app-HPW	Computer Bible-HPW	Audio Bible-HPW	Other BM-HPW
n	278	278	278	278	96
Mode	1.000	1.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Mdn	2.000	1.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
M	2.535	1.169	0.234	0.210	0.013
SD	2.341	1.594	0.677	0.850	0.105
Range	14.000	15.000	7.000	8.000	1.000
Min	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Max	14.000	15.000	7.000	8.000	1.000

Gen Z HPW Using BM in General

Finally, the Gen Z respondents reported the amount of HPW spent consuming BM *in general*, for any purpose not specifically to learn about their faith from 0 hours to more than 5 hours. The highest frequency of HPW spent consuming BM in general is 1-2 hours at a frequency of 70 at 25.2%. The next highest proportion is 2-3 hours at a frequency of 62 at 22.3%. Interestingly, the lowest frequency reported is 0 hours, at a frequency of 11 at 4%. This is similar to the report of people who spend 0 HPW learning about faith each week, assuming that about 4% of the Gen Z population does not consume BM per week at all (Figure 4.34, Figure 4.35).

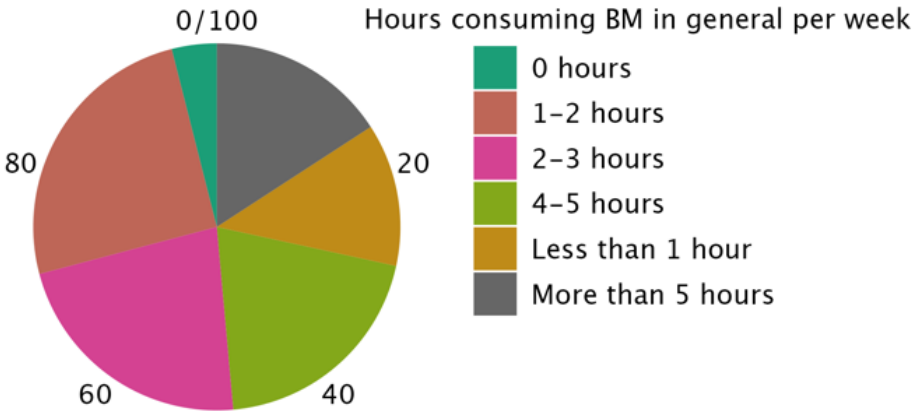
Figure 4.34

*Frequencies for G*en Z *Hours Consuming BM in General Per Week*

Hours consuming BM in general per week	*f*	%
0 hours	11	3.957
1-2 hours	70	25.180
2-3 hours	62	22.302
4-5 hours	56	20.144
Less than 1 hour	35	12.590
More than 5 hours	44	15.827
Total	278	100.000

Figure 4.35

Gen Z Hours Consuming BM in General Per Week



Non-Gen Z BM Most Used

It is interesting to note the habits of the non-Gen Z respondents their habits using each individual BM per week. The BM most used as reported by the non-Gen Z sample (n=322) reported is similar to what was reported by Gen Z. The Non-Gen Z reported the print Bible being their most used BM at frequency of 154 at 47.8%, and a Bible app being their second highest at a frequency of 136 at 42.2% (Figure 4.36). A comparison for the responses of both generational cohort groups are displayed in the table below (Figure 4.37).

Figure 4.36

Frequencies for Non-Gen Z BM Most Used

BM most used	*f*	%
A Bible phone app	136	42.236
Audio Bible	8	2.484
Computer Bible (software/website)	11	3.416
None	13	4.037
The print Bible	154	47.826
Missing	0	0.000
Total	322	100.000

Figure 4.37

	Gen Z	**Non-Gen Z**
Most Used BM	Print Bible- 67.6%	Print Bible – 47.8%
Second Most Used BM	Bible phone app- 26.6%	Bible phone app- 42.2%

Non-Gen Z Time Spent Using BM

Non-Gen Z also reported the amount of time spent using each BM. On average, non-Gen Z reported spending around 1 HPW with BM, which is similar to Gen Z. However, the maximum values for the non-Gen Z greatly varied from Gen Z. For the non-Gen Z, the maximum time spent with BM is 42 hours with the Bible app, 40 hours with the audio Bible, and 10 hours with the print Bible. This is due to a few outliers of Boomers in the datum reporting such high HPW. It would be more expected to see Gen Z using the digital Bibles more than non-Gen Z each week due to Gen Z growing up surrounded by media (Karim, 2019). However, Gen Z reported a higher maximum for the print Bible at 14 HPW and seem to favor the print Bible on average similar to the non-Gen Z (Figure 4.38).

Figure 4.38

Descriptive Statistics Non-Gen Z HPW BM

	Print Bible-HPW	**Bible phone app-HPW**	**Computer Bible-HPW**	**Audio Bible-HPW**	**Other BM-HPW**
n	322	322	322	322	133
M	1.508	1.366	0.165	0.382	0.019
SD	1.963	2.812	0.618	2.379	0.178
Min	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Max	10.000	42.000	8.000	40.000	2.000

Non-Gen Z Favorite BM

The non-Gen Z respondents reported their favorite BM. Out of the 322 non-Gen Z respondents, 181 of them reported the print Bible as their favorite BM, which makes up a valid percentage of 56.2%. The second highest BM reported as their favorite is a Bible phone app with a frequency of 116, at 36.0%. The audio Bible, computer Bible, and "none" option made up a total of 25 respondents total, ranging from 2.5-2.8%. The overall majority chose the print Bible as their favorite BM, which matches Gen Z's favorite BM being the print Bible as well (Figure 4.39).

Figure 4.39

Frequencies for Non-Gen Z Favorite Biblical Media

Favorite Biblical Media	*f*	%
A Bible phone app	116	36.025
Audio Bible	8	2.484
Computer Bible (software/website)	9	2.795
None	8	2.484
The print Bible	181	56.211
Missing	0	0.000
Total	322	100.000

Research Question 3

The third research question deals with the preference for consuming EBM or BM. The research question states: Are Gen Z Christians more likely to prefer EBM than the Bible? To answer this research question, descriptive statistics were used to identify the extent to which the respondents find each media helpful, necessary, or trustworthy, as well as the preferences for consuming BM and EBM. Following this, a Chi-Square Test of Independence was run twice to comparatively analyze the statistical significance of the relationship between generational cohort

and preferred media, and generational cohort and which media they spend more HPW using. The hypotheses for RQ3 are as follows:

H_1 Gen Z Christians will prefer BM over EBM.

H_0 Gen Z Christians will not prefer BM over EBM.

Helpful/Necessary/Trust

The first area of data analysis regards whether the respondents find EBM and BM helpful in their faith, necessary in their faith, and trustworthy in their faith.

Gen Z EBM Helpful/Necessary/Trust

Regarding whether Gen Z (n=278) finds EBM helpful, necessary, and trustworthy in their faith, 69.4% of Gen Z reported EBM always being helpful. 28.4% of Gen Z reported it is occasionally helpful, and less than 2% of Gen Z reported rarely or never helpful (Figure 4.40). When reporting on the necessity of EBM in their faith, 52.1% reported it is occasionally necessary, 31.3% reported it is always necessary, and less than 17% stated it is rarely or never necessary (Figure 4.41). When reporting on whether they trust EBM, 86.3% of Gen Z stated they occasionally trust EBM, 10.4% stated they always trust EBM, 3% stated they rarely trust EBM, and 0% stated they never trust EBM (Figure 4.42).

Figure 4.40

Frequencies for Gen Z Find EBM Helpful In Their Faith

Find it helpful EBM	*f*	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Always	193	69.424	69.424	69.424
Never	1	0.360	0.360	69.784
Occasionally	79	28.417	28.417	98.201
Rarely	5	1.799	1.799	100.000
Missing	0	0.000		
Total	278	100.000		

Figure 4.41

Frequencies for Gen Z Find EBM Necessary In Their Faith

Find it necessary EBM	*f*	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Always	87	31.295	31.295	31.295
Never	13	4.676	4.676	35.971
Occasionally	145	52.158	52.158	88.129
Rarely	33	11.871	11.871	100.000
Missing	0	0.000		
Total	278	100.000		

Figure 4.42

Frequencies for Gen Z Trust EBM

Trust EBM	*f*	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Always	29	10.432	10.432	10.432
Occasionally	240	86.331	86.331	96.763
Rarely	9	3.237	3.237	100.000
Missing	0	0.000		
Total	278	100.000		

Non-Gen Z EBM Helpful/Necessary/Trust

When reporting whether non-Gen Z (n=322) finds EBM helpful, necessary, and trustworthy in their faith, 59.3% of non-Gen Z reported EBM always being helpful. 33.9% of non-Gen Z reported it is occasionally helpful, and less than 8% of non-Gen Z reported rarely or never helpful (Figure 4.43). When reporting on the necessity of EBM in their faith, 39.8% reported it is occasionally necessary, 36.6% reported it is always necessary, and less than 24% stated it is rarely or never necessary (Figure 4.44). When reporting on whether they trust EBM, 72.7% of non-Gen Z stated they occasionally trust EBM, 21.1% stated they always trust EBM, less than 7% stated they rarely or never trust EBM (Figure 4.45). These results are very similar, and almost directly mirror the results of Gen Z.

Figure 4.43

Frequencies for Non-Gen Z Find EBM Helpful in Their Faith

Find it helpful EBM	*f*	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Always	191	59.317	59.317	59.317
Never	8	2.484	2.484	61.801
Occasionally	109	33.851	33.851	95.652
Rarely	14	4.348	4.348	100.000
Missing	0	0.000		
Total	322	100.000		

Figure 4.44

Frequencies for Non-Gen Z Find EBM Necessary in Their Faith

Find it necessary EBM	*f*	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Always	118	36.646	36.646	36.646
Never	33	10.248	10.248	46.894
Occasionally	128	39.752	39.752	86.646
Rarely	43	13.354	13.354	100.000
Missing	0	0.000		
Total	322	100.000		

Figure 4.45

Frequencies for Non-Gen Z Trust EBM

Trust EBM	*f*	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Always	68	21.118	21.118	21.118
Occasionally	234	72.671	72.671	93.789
Rarely	13	4.037	4.037	97.826
Never	7	2.174	2.174	100.000
Missing	0	0.000		
Total	322	100.000		

Gen Z BM Helpful/Necessary/Trust

When reporting whether Gen Z (n=278) finds BM helpful, necessary, and trustworthy in their faith, 87.1% of Gen Z reported BM always being helpful. 10.4% of Gen Z reported it is occasionally helpful, and less than 2% of Gen Z reported rarely or never helpful (Figure 4.46).

When reporting on the necessity of BM in their faith, 82% reported it is always necessary, 13.7% reported it is occasionally necessary, and less than 4% stated it is rarely or never necessary (Figure 4.47). When reporting on whether they trust BM, 78.4% of Gen Z stated they always trust BM, 20.5% stated they occasionally trust BM, 1% stated they rarely trust BM, and 0% stated they never trust BM (Figure 4.48).

Figure 4.46

Frequencies for Gen Z Find BM Helpful in Their Faith

Find it helpful BM	*f*	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Always	242	87.050	87.050	87.050
Never	3	1.079	1.079	88.129
Occasionally	29	10.432	10.432	98.561
Rarely	4	1.439	1.439	100.000
Missing	0	0.000		
Total	278	100.000		

Figure 4.47

Frequencies for Gen Z Find BM Helpful in Their Faith

Find it helpful BM	*f*	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Always	242	87.050	87.050	87.050
Never	3	1.079	1.079	88.129
Occasionally	29	10.432	10.432	98.561
Rarely	4	1.439	1.439	100.000
Missing	0	0.000		
Total	278	100.000		

Figure 4.48

Frequencies for Gen Z Trust BM

Trust BM	*f*	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Always	218	78.417	78.417	78.417
Occasionally	57	20.504	20.504	98.921
Rarely	3	1.079	1.079	100.000
Missing	0	0.000		
Total	278	100.000		

Non-Gen Z BM Helpful/Necessary/Trust

When reporting whether the non-Gen Z (n=322) finds BM helpful, necessary, and trustworthy in their faith, 72.7% of non-Gen Z reported BM always being helpful. 18.3% of non-Gen Z reported it is occasionally helpful, and less than 9% of non-Gen Z reported rarely or never helpful (Figure 4.49). When reporting on the necessity of BM in their faith, 65.5% reported it is always necessary, 22.7% reported it is occasionally necessary, and less than 12% stated it is rarely or never necessary (Figure 4.50). When reporting on whether they trust BM, 73.9% of non-Gen Z stated they always trust BM, 22.4% stated they occasionally trust BM, 4% stated they rarely or never trust BM (Figure 4.51). These results show that non-Gen Z reported being slightly less certain in all three categories yet still mirroring similar responses to Gen Z.

Figure 4.49

Frequencies for Non-Gen Z Find BM Helpful in Their Faith

Find it helpful BM	*f*	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Always	234	72.671	72.671	72.671
Never	8	2.484	2.484	75.155
Occasionally	59	18.323	18.323	93.478
Rarely	21	6.522	6.522	100.000
Missing	0	0.000		
Total	322	100.000		

Figure 4.50

Frequencies for Non-Gen Z Find BM Necessary in Their Faith

Find it necessary BM	*f*	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Always	211	65.528	65.528	65.528
Never	14	4.348	4.348	69.876
Occasionally	73	22.671	22.671	92.547
Rarely	24	7.453	7.453	100.000
Missing	0	0.000		
Total	322	100.000		

Figure 4.51

Frequencies for Non-Gen Z Trust BM

Trust BM	*f*	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Always	238	73.913	73.913	73.913
Occasionally	72	22.360	22.360	96.273
Rarely	6	1.863	1.863	98.137
Never	6	1.863	1.863	100.000
Missing	0	0.000		
Total	322	100.000		

Prefer Vs. Easier To Consume

Both Gen Z and non-Gen Z samples reported which is easier to consume and which they prefer to consume, EBM, BM, or no preference.

Gen Z

Gen Z (n=278) reported that biblical media (BM) is the media they prefer to consume most at a frequency of 194 at 69.8%. Only 18% of Gen Z reported that they prefer to consume EBM the most (Figure 4.52). Gen Z also reported that extra-biblical media is easier to consume at a frequency of 196 at 70.5%. Only 22.3% of Gen Z reported that BM is easier for them to consume in general (Figure 4.53).

Figure 4.52

Frequencies for Gen Z Prefer to Consume

Prefer to consume	***f***	**%**
Biblical media	194	69.784
Extra-biblical media	50	17.986
No preference	34	12.230
Missing	0	0.000
Total	278	100.000

Figure 4.53

Frequencies for Gen Z Easier to Consume

Easier to consume	***f***	**%**
Biblical media	62	22.302
Extra-biblical media	196	70.504
No preference	20	7.194
Missing	0	0.000
Total	278	100.000

Non-Gen Z

Non-Gen Z (n=322) also reported biblical media (BM) is the media they prefer to consume most at a frequency of 164 at 50.9%. Only 22.7% of non-Gen Z reported that they prefer to consume EBM the most (Figure 4.54). The non-Gen Z also reported that extra-biblical media is easier to consume at a frequency of 184 at 57.1%. Only 24.2% of non-Gen Z reported that BM is easier for them to consume in general (Figure 4.55).

Figure 4.54

Frequencies for Non-Gen Z Prefer to Consume

Prefer to consume	*f*	%
Biblical media	164	50.932
Extra-biblical media	73	22.671
No preference	85	26.398
Missing	0	0.000
Total	322	100.000

Figure 4.55

Frequencies for Non-Gen Z Easier to Consume

Easier to consume	*f*	%
Biblical media	78	24.224
Extra-biblical media	184	57.143
No preference	60	18.634
Missing	0	0.000
Total	322	100.000

Chi-Square Test of Independence

After running the descriptive statistics on RQ2, and RQ3, a Chi-Square Test of Independence is used to determine the relationship between variables for post-hoc testing. Two Chi-Square Tests were run. The two variables in the first test are generational cohort (Gen Z and non-Gen Z) and preference for media consumption. The variables in the second test are generational cohort (Gen Z and non-Gen Z) and which media they actually spend more time on (EBM or BM). The significance level used for the chi-square tests is a p value of $< .005$. A significance level of $< .05$ (5%) indicates a willingness to accept a 5% chance of making a Type I error (rejecting a true null hypothesis); whereas, $< .005$ is only a 0.5% chance. Phi and Cramer's V test is also used within the chi-square to interpret the effect size. The Phi Coefficient does not apply due to the fact that each variable has more than 2 groups within, however Cramer's V is shown to understand the level of association.

Chi-Square Test 1

The first Chi-Square Test of Independence was run to test the relationship between the variables of generational cohort and preference for media consumption. For the generational cohort, this includes Gen Z and non-Gen Z. For the preference for media consumption, this includes EBM, BM, and no preference. This test relates to H_1 of RQ3 which states Gen Z Christians will prefer BM over EBM. The standard to reject H_0 is to get a *p* value < .005. The test was run showing that $*p < 0.001$, rejecting H_0 and accepted RQ3 H_1 (Figure 4.56, Figure 4.57). The Cramer's V test shows that the level of association between generational cohort and preference of consumption is 0.210, which is on the lower side of the scale from 0 (no association) to 1 (perfect association) of the variables (Figure 4.58).

Figure 4.56

Contingency Tables

	Prefer to consume			
Generational Cohort	**EBM**	**BM**	**No Preference**	**Total**
Gen Z	50	194	34	278
Non-Gen Z	73	164	85	322
Total	123	358	119	600

Figure 4.57

X^2

	Value	**df**	**p**
X^2	25.583	2	*< .001
N	600		

Figure 4.58

Nominal

	Value[a]
Phi-coefficient	NaN
Cramer's V	0.210

[a] Phi coefficient is only available for 2 by 2 contingency Tables

Chi-Square Test 2

The second Chi-Square Test of Independence was run to test the relationship between the variables of generational cohort and which media the respondents actually consume more of based on their report of hours spent on each listed media for both EBM and BM. For the generational cohort, this includes Gen Z and non-Gen Z. For the most used media, this includes EBM, BM, equal number of hours on both. This test relates to H_1 of RQ2 which states the proportion of EBM consumed by Gen Z Christians per week is larger than the proportion of biblical media. To glean this information about most used media, for every respondent, the sum of their reported HPW for every individual EBM and BM was calculated, and from that number it was determined if that respondent spends more hours on EBM, BM, or equal HPW for both. The standard to reject H_0 is to get a p value < 0.005. The test was run showing that $*p = 0.003$, also rejecting H_0 and accepting RQ2 H_1(Figure 4.58, Figure 4.59). The Cramer's V test shows that the level of association between generational cohort and preference of consumption is 0.141, which is also on the lower side of the scale from 0 (no association) to 1 (perfect association) of the variables (Figure 4.61).

Figure 4.59

Contingency Tables

	Most Used Media			
Generational Cohort	**EBM**	**BM**	**Equal Time**	**Total**
Gen Z	229	34	15	278
Non-Gen Z	283	15	24	322
Total	512	49	39	600

Figure 4.60
X²

	Value	df	p
X²	11.977	2	**p=0.003*
N	600		

Figure 4.61

Nominal

	Value[a]
Phi-coefficient	NaN
Cramer's V	0.141

[a] Phi coefficient is only available for 2 by 2 contingency Tables

Results of Chi-Square Tests for Independence

The conclusion of each Chi-Square Test for Independence resulted in *p* values less than .005, which shows that both tests are statistically significant. It is interesting to note the preferences versus the reality of media consumption. Gen Z and non-Gen Z all prefer to consume BM over EBM, which confirms H_1 of RQ3. However, the second test displays the HPW spent consuming EBM for both Gen Z and non-Gen Z is much higher than BM. This answers H_1 of RQ2 by showing that Gen Z is more likely to consume extra-biblical media than the Bible because the proportion of EBM consumed by Gen Z is higher than the proportion of BM. The level of association between the variables is on the lower side of the Cramer's V range, however, there still is an association between each set of variables. The conclusions will be further explored in Chapter V.

Chapter V: Discussion

Chapter V will discuss and conclude the results of the quantitative study discussed in Chapters I, II, and III and reported in Chapter IV. After collecting and recording the survey data, the results are discussed to answer the RQs and explore theoretical implications. The study tested the media dependency of Gen Z Christians and to what extent they rely on communication from extrabiblical media rather than the Bible itself. Chapter V discusses the conclusions reported in Chapter IV.

Discussion of RQ1

The Gen Z participants (n=278) reported their habits and preferences as they related to extra-biblical media (EBM). The research question states: To what extent do Gen Z Christians consume extra-biblical faith-based media? The Gen Z Christians reported the types of EBMs they used based on the given list and the "write-in" category. The sample reported an even distribution of usage by selecting all the EBM options as media they have used before. There were no Gen Z respondents who indicated that they had never used an EBM. This is not surprising in a media-emersed culture. Along with this, only 16 of the Gen Z respondents reported using EBMs for less than 2 hours a week. The other 262 Gen Z spend anywhere from 2 to 108 hours a week total with EBMs based on the hourly breakdowns.

The EBM most used amongst Gen Z was worship/Christian music, which made up 54.7% of the most used reports. In relation to the other EBMs, the mean for the hours per week (HPW) for each EBM falls under an hour, except for worship/Christian music, which falls at a mean of 3.8 HPW. Worship/Christian music is available on radio stations, music streaming apps, on the internet such as YouTube, and in almost every protestant church service which makes it an easily accessible EBM for Christians. The sample also reported often using social media videos,

podcasts, and Christian books, just underneath the frequency of worship/Christian music. Social media videos and podcasts are another form of EBM that is widely accessible daily through online resources that are highly saturated by the Gen Z market already.

Besides the frequently used EBMs, Gen Z Christians use EBMs specifically to learn about faith on average between 1-3 hours per week. Gen Z is not only utilizing EBMs for leisurely consumption, but they are also using it as a means to learn about their Christian faith. This could be because 70.5% of Gen Z find EBM easier to consume than BM (Figure 4.49). From this data, it seems as if Gen Z seeks EBM as a means to learn about faith before they seek to use BM to learn about faith because they find it easier to consume.

Gen Z Christians further break down the HPW that they utilize EBMs, reporting using every EBM an average of 30 minutes to an hour per week. They reported using social media videos an average of 2 hours a week, and Christian/worship music around 4 hours per week. Then when answering the usage of EBMs in general, the top range reported by Gen Z was 2-3 hours per week, at 25.2%. At a close second, with a frequency of 66, was more than 5 hours a week using EBMs. The lowest range reported was 0 hours a week, proving that Gen Z is at least utilizing EBMs, in some capacity, weekly.

This data answers the first research question indicating that Gen Z Christians are utilizing various types of EBMs weekly, having a favorite EBM, a most used EBM, and reporting the frequent use of these EBMs as multiple hours per week in their everyday lives as Christians. The question of the extent of their usage of EBMs is shown in the data, and at least the average Gen Z Christian is utilizing an EBM multiple times a week. EBMs are used by Gen Z Christians in various forms and have a large frequency for learning about faith and leisurely consumption.

Discussion of RQ2

RQ2 sought to understand the likelihood of Gen Z Christians to utilize EBM more than BM. The research question states: Are Gen Z Christians more likely to consume extra-biblical media than the Bible (BM)? Gen Z reported their consumption habits of BM, their favorite BM, most used BM, and time spent using BM.

First, Gen Z Christians reported if they had used BM before, and all but 1 respondent reported having used at least one of the four BMs listed. Only 1 out of 278 respondents reported having never used any BM, including the print Bible, and this respondent identified themselves as Catholic. This finding supports McGrath's dangerous idea in Chapter I, suggesting that the Catholic church does not emphasize personal reading of Scripture whereas the Protestant churches emerged with the idea that every Christian has the authority to read and interpret Scripture for themselves. It is interesting regarding McGrath's statement that the only respondent who does not use BM is Catholic. Then, the sample reported their most used BM, which was the print Bible, at a frequency of 188 at 67.6% followed closely by a Bible app. Also, 81% of Gen Z Christians reported the print Bible being their favorite form of biblical media, which was surprising in the data considering Gen Z's frequent loyalty to digital forms of media.

In relation to the research question, the time spent per week with BMs were reported. Gen Z uses BM on average 1-2 hours per week, at 27%, or 2-3 hours at 21.2% specifically to learn about faith. This averages to anywhere between 1-3 hours being spent per week on BM. It was stated in RQ1 that Gen Z was also spending 1-3 hours a week on EBM, making this about the same for both forms of media. Regarding hours per week, for Gen Z, the mean for the HPWs for each BM falls under an hour, except for the print Bible, which falls at a mean of 2.5 HPW, and a Bible phone app, which falls at a mean of 1.2 HPW. As stated before, Gen Z reported

spending almost 4 hours a week on the most used EBM, whereas they reported only spending 2.5 HPW on the most used BM. It is interesting to note that the maximum HPW spent on EBM was 100 HPW, whereas the maximum for any category of BM is 15 HPW, showing that Gen Z utilizes EBMs for more time than BMs based on their HPW consumption reports.

Discussion of RQ3

Next, Gen Z reported whether they find EBMs and BMs helpful to use, if they find them necessary in their faith, and if they trust them. The majority of the sample, around 70%, indicated that EBMs are always helpful. Less than half indicated that they are occasionally helpful, and less than 2% of Gen Z reported rarely or never helpful (Figure 4.36). When reporting on the necessity of EBM in their faith, over half reported it is occasionally necessary, and slightly less than half reported it is always necessary. Less than 20% stated it is rarely or never necessary (Figure 4.37). When reporting on whether they trust EBM, around 90% of Gen Z stated they occasionally trust EBM, less than 11% stated they always trust EBM, 3% stated they rarely trust EBM, and no one stated they never trust EBM (Figure 4.38). In relation to BM, around 90% of Gen Z reported BM always being helpful. Less than 11% of Gen Z reported it is occasionally helpful, and less than 2% of Gen Z reported rarely or never helpful (Figure 4.42). When reporting on the necessity of BM in their faith, the large majority, around 80% reported it is always necessary. Less than 20% reported it is occasionally or rarely, or never necessary (Figure 4.43). When reporting on whether they trust BM, the large majority of Gen Z stated they always trust BM, around 20% stated they occasionally trust BM, less than 1% stated they rarely trust BM, and no one stated they never trust BM (Figure 4.44).

To compare these reports, Gen Z seems to have more trust and reliance on BM in relation to its necessity, helpfulness, and authority to trust the information. However, EBMs are still

highly valued for their helpfulness in information regarding the Christian faith. Gen Z is more skeptical of EBMs necessity for faith and trustworthiness than they are of BM. It seems as if the consensus regarding EBM is that its reliability is questionable, but its helpfulness is always useful. The consensus regarding BM is that it is always trustworthy, always helpful, and always necessary for Christian life and information. This also indicates that Gen Z at least understands the necessity of learning the truth about their faith from the Bible itself rather than secondhand from resources or other people using EBMs. However, Gen Z Christians still utilize and rely on EBMs for spiritual information as a resource, maybe more than they rely on the Bible.

In relation to the preference for BM or EBM, Gen Z reported that biblical media (BM) is the media they prefer to consume most measuring around 70% of the respondents. Only 18% of Gen Z reported that they prefer to consume EBM the most (Figure 4.48). Gen Z also reported that extra-biblical media is easier to consume at around 70%. Also, 20% of Gen Z reported that BM is easier for them to consume in general (Figure 4.49). Speaking on the majority of the Gen Z respondents, they prefer to consume BM, however, EBM is easier to consume. It seems as if they have a higher view of the information from BM.

Chi-Square Test of Independence

The results of the Chi-Square Tests of Independence support the descriptive findings of the research questions. Gen Z reported in the descriptive data that they spend 1-3 HPW with EBMs and they also spend 1-3 HPW with BMs. This indicates that they are consuming information about their faith an equal amount from the Bible itself and outside resources through EBMs. However, after running the Chi-Square Tests for Independence on the total sample (n=600), the preferences versus the reality of media consumption do not align. Gen Z and non-Gen Z all prefer to consume BM over EBM. However, the second test displays that the hours per

week spent consuming EBM for both Gen Z and non-Gen Z is much higher than BM. It is shown in the second Chi-Square test that 82% of Gen Z actually utilize EBM more than BM in reality and the *p* value for that test is less than 0.05.

Hypothesis Results

To report the results of the hypothesis, as stated in Chapter IV, H_0 for RQ2 is rejected, and H_1 is accepted, which states the proportion of EBM consumed by Gen Z Christians per week is larger than the proportion of biblical media. H_0 for RQ3 is also rejected, and H_1 is accepted, which states Gen Z Christians will prefer BM over EBM.

The *p* value for both Chi-Square tests is less than 0.05, showing that the data is statistically significant. The descriptive data shows the preferences and habits of consumption which show that Gen Z are inclined to prefer BM over EBM, which supports the ideas that they value the trustworthiness, necessity, and helpfulness of BM. It is also concluded that the proportion of extra-biblical media consumed by Gen Z Christians per week is larger than the proportion of biblical media because the Chi-Square Test 2 showed that even though Gen Z prefers BM, they spend significantly more HPW using EBM. Based on the results of the Chi-Square tests and the descriptive conclusions from Chapter IV, Gen Z Christians are more likely to consume EBM over the Bible when consuming information about their faith regardless of their stated preference.

Implications For Theory

In consideration of the theoretical framework of this study, media system dependency theory (MSDT) can be used to understand more about the habits of Gen Z Christians. The purpose of this theory is to focus on how audience dependence of media information is key to understanding why media messages alter audience beliefs, feelings, or behavior (Ball-Rokeach &

DeFleur, 1976). This theory looks at media as an agent of influence on individuals, and how it becomes a dependence to understand the world, glean meaningful information, and as a means to escape from reality. In relation to this study, this data has parallels to MSDT. Gen Z Christians reported various ways they use EBMs and based on their report of using it to learn about faith, the frequency of use of EBMs, and their preference for EBMs, it is clear that there is somewhat of a dependency on this media. Gen Z Christians find it easier to consume EBMs than BM, and according to MSDT, the communication from EBMs can impact their beliefs, feelings, and behaviors.

In relation to the beliefs of Gen Z Christians, if they are reliant on EBMs to inform their perspective on biblical topics, they would rely on this media as their first form of media consumption. This may satisfy their need to understand information or be a part of a social group, being a Christian. MSDT states the greater the need, the stronger the dependency will be on that media. For example, if someone is in great need of a fast way to answer biblical questions, they may rely on EBM. But, if their need is understanding theological topics and studying the scriptures, they may rely on BM. The usage of media can apply to both BM and EBM the same because both forms of media can exist online and digital or print forms. These findings confirm the assertion of the theory because both media can be depended on for a variety of needs. People may use forms of media to learn specific types of information necessary to their needs, such as decreasing ambiguity about certain theological topics.

This theory also provides an explanation of the way mass media can impact a societal group, and to what extent their reliance on information impacts their need for it. This theory suggests that all people have a dependency on media in some way, and the media attracts individual use based on its ability to fulfill the needs of that individual. The sample studied,

which included Gen Z, and non-Gen Z, Christians are a part of a societal group, American Christians. Their dedication to that societal group can also impact the way they depend on the media that surrounds that group. If the respondents reported little to no HPW spent on either medium, it may be gleaned that they are not strong members of that group. However, the majority of Gen Z Christians seem to possess strong ties to it based on their reports of media dependency.

This theory also predicts certain kinds of effects on audience members. It states that societal systems and media systems with consideration to the audiences will produce cognitive, affective, and behavioral effects (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976). It would be beneficial for Gen Z Christians to rely on Christian media (EBM and BM) that rightly aligns with the teachings of the Bible because faith in Christ serves as a guide for morality and rightful living which is essential for Christians according to the Bible. If Gen Z is immersed in these media, then in turn, it may have cognitive effects such as positivity, hope, and security, and behavioral effects such as increased love, peace, and patience. These are all positive benefits of relying on media surrounding faith if applying the lens of MSDT. As it relates to the uses and gratification of repeated media dependency, Gen Z may become dependent on relying on communication from EBM for biblical knowledge because it satisfies their desire to know more about the Bible and is easier to consume than reading the Bible itself, as stated in Chapter I. However, it may also provide easily accessible ways to grow in their Christian faith at a moment's notice, which is a unique benefit of the digital age that can be used as a positive tool in the lives of Christians when used with discernment.

Implication of the Data

The implication of this data is that Gen Z Christians should be careful and take note of the information about their faith that they are gleaning from EBMs, because if they spend on average 3 hours a week using these EBMs to learn about their faith, then they should ensure that it is correct information. In consideration of the rationale of the study, media itself must be examined. Media, including EBMs, are a useful resource for the Christian faith. Yet, with any Christian resource, there is a level of subjectivity and opinion on biblical topics. The information gleaned from EBMs may be looking at biblical truth through the lens of someone else's worldview, experience, and opinions of God. These opinions may not necessarily contain accurate biblical information. While online supplemental Christian resources are intended to facilitate spiritual growth for Christians, this data says that Gen Z Christians rely solely or heavily on these materials for their biblical knowledge. The implications of the reliance on EBM from the data raises the question of how effective Gen Z Christians are at discerning truth. If it is a pillar of the Christian faith to believe that Scripture is inerrant and immutable, then BM should be the primary tool for learning about faith. If this is not the case, Gen Z Christians may be inclined to believe things inconsistent with the Bible if they are not studying it personally.

It is not necessarily the case that all EBM media contain biblically inaccurate information and messages. They are often helpful resources that expand on the understanding of biblical knowledge and are helpful in the faith of Christians. This data does not imply that EBMs should be avoided altogether, but quite the opposite. However, it is suggested from the data that Gen Z should be mindful of what information they are discerning as truth from EBMs if it is not also being held up in comparison to what the Bible says.

Future Directions

For future studies, researchers should continue to dive into media dependency as it relates to both the Gen Z age group and Christians. One limitation of this study is the fact that it was a descriptive study with correlation testing, but not qualitative to dig into the deeper individual reasoning behind the choices of the survey. Future researchers should seek to further understand the reason and driving factors behind the usage of EBMs and BMs in the Christian faith. The question in this present study regarding which media is easier to consume gave some insight into the future of this topic, however, it would be beneficial to understand why each person feels that way toward the media and how it satisfies their needs according to MSDT. This study focused on the extent to which media usage and dependency were occurring with Gen Z Christians, but to fully extend the findings, qualitative questions as to why they are using EBM or BM to satisfy their needs will be necessary outside of just their numerical reports of HPW.

Another limitation of the study is the distribution of participants concerning sex. Most of the respondents were female, which made up 81.3% of the participants. Also, the demographic information displayed in terms of its relation to the generational cohort showed the breakdown of female to male per generation (Figure 4.5). Gen Z displayed a split of 199 females to 79 males, which also showed the majority of male respondents were of the Gen Z generational cohort. It would be beneficial for the understanding of non-Gen Z Christians to see an equal distribution of sex to see a fuller picture. Future studies should seek to further their understanding of Gen Z and non-Gen Z Christian's media consumption habits with an even understanding of male and female patterns.

To gain an even fuller understanding of Christian media consumption habits, future researchers should consider diving deeper into the denominational theological traditions to

understand its impact on biblical consumption habits because many denominations of Christianity differ in their theological beliefs. As displayed in the lack of BM usage of the Catholic participant, it would be worthy of future study to seek the relationships between Scripture and Catholics and the relationship between Scripture and Protestants.

Another area of future research regarding this topic is to further dive into the impacts that media dependency of EBMs and BMs have on the biblical literacy of these Gen Z Christians. When talking about biblical literacy, which is outside the scope of this study, an informed assumption could be made that it is possible that the higher amount of HPW with BM would correlate with higher biblical literacy. It follows logically that Gen Z Christians who spend the majority of their media consumption with the Bible, or BMs, would have a higher understanding and knowledge of the meaning of biblical principles, which could be seen as more beneficial to their faith. Future research should explore this further.

Concluding Thoughts

In conclusion, this study is a crucial addition to the conversation on media dependency and the media usage of Gen Z and non-Gen Z Christians. At this current time, Gen Z is one of the least researched age groups because they are the newest generation to adulthood. This study is important because it provides one of the first academic insights into the generation that is the upcoming influential members of society and of the church. There are few like this study regarding media dependency, the Bible, and Gen Z Christians. This study displays that Christians are utilizing media and using it as a tool in their faith. This can change the way that Gen Z Christians choose to use media, it can impact the way non-Gen Z Christians use media, it can change the way churches choose to reach members of Gen Z, it can impact the way that Christians take care to discern information, and it can lead people to understand their Bibles

more. This study can be a jumping point for research on the media dependency of Christians to better understand the trajectory of Christianity in America. Gen Z Christians use and rely on media for many reasons, and through this study, it is evident that extra-biblical media is used more than biblical media in their faith, even though the biblical form is preferred. This shows that people exist in contradiction with their own desires, even concerning their media habits. This use of media is crucial to continue to study to properly understand the American Generation Z.

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Appendix A

Survey Questions

Please read this informed consent document before completing the survey.

1. By checking this box, I am indicating that I am 18 years or older.
2. By checking this box, I agree to be a part of this research.
3. What year were you born?
4. With which denomination of Christianity do you most closely identify?
5. What is your gender?
6. What is your marital status?
7. What is your highest level of education?
8. Which range best describes your annual household income?

This section deals with the term “extra-biblical media.” To clarify, extra-biblical media are any faith-based media that are NOT the Bible itself, such as Christian podcasts, books, music, social media videos (YouTube, Facebook, Tik Tok, etc.), streamed church services/sermons, television broadcasts, radio broadcasts, blogs, commentaries, and devotionals.

9. Check all the faith-based extra-biblical media that you have used before (not referring to the Bible itself)
10. Which extra-biblical media do you use the most?
11. Which extra-biblical media have you used in the last week? (Check all that apply)
12. How much time do you spend learning about faith using extra-biblical media(s) per week?
13. State approximately how many hours you spend with each extra-biblical media each week. Please add the number of hours to EVERY option. (If the answer is 0 hours, type 0)
14. How many hours per week do you spend consuming extra-biblical media in general?

15. What is your favorite extra-biblical media?
16. Do you find it helpful to use extra-biblical media when learning about Scripture?
17. Do you find it necessary to use extra-biblical media in your faith?
18. Do you trust extra-biblical media?

This section deals with the term "biblical media." To clarify, biblical media are any media that ARE the Bible itself. This could be a physical print Bible (in any translation), a digital Bible such as a Bible phone app, a Bible through computer (software/website), or an audio form of the Bible itself. Throughout the survey, you will be asked about your use of biblical media sources.

19. Check all the biblical media that you have used before.
20. Which biblical media do you use the most?
21. Which biblical media have you used in the last week? (Check all that apply)
22. How many hours per week do you spend learning about faith using biblical media?
23. State approximately how many hours you spend with each biblical media each week. Please add the number of hours to EVERY option. (If the answer is 0 hours, type 0)
24. How many hours per week do you spend consuming biblical media in general?
25. What is your favorite biblical media?
26. Do you find it helpful to use biblical media in your faith?
27. Do you find it necessary to use biblical media in your faith?
28. Do you trust biblical media?
29. Which do you prefer to consume?
30. Which is easier for you to consume?