

# Segment **051: Digital Dependents**

Mix of Generation Y and X singles who live digital-driven, urban lives

Resource: Mosaic by Experian.

## Religious Experience in a Nutshell

Religious perspective: *Looking for Heroes of Faith*

Common Spiritual Issues: *Feelings of guilt, anxieties about abuse and shame*

## Potential Influence

Lifestyle Compatibility	Family Group O Singles and Starters	Frequent Neighbors
B10 Cosmopolitan Achievers	O50 Full Steam Ahead	C14 Boomers and Boomerangs
G24 Status Seeking Singles	O51 Digital Dependents	F22 Fast Track Couples
G25 Urban Edge	O52 Urban Ambition	H26 Progressive Potpourri
K37 Wired for Success	O53 Colleges and Cafes	K40 Bohemian Groove
	O54 Striving Single Scene	
	O55 Family Troopers	

## General Comments

*Digital Dependents* have progressive attitudes and liberal values. Personally, they want to get more *life* out of life. *Experian* suggests that “they have Champaign tastes on six-pack budgets”. They want better careers, the latest fashions, and the newest gaming consoles and other electronics. They tend to obsess about their appearance (fitness and fashion). Unfortunately, they can't afford it ... yet.

Religious organizations have difficulty connecting with *Digital Dependents*. Churches probably won't connect with them through traditional evangelism, Sunday worship, or Christian education. The church, even in some of its most creative forms, is just not relevant. These creative multi-taskers spend more time in the virtual world than the real one. They do not consider simultaneous video streams and text messages a distraction for lectures or reading, but an exponential enhancement to understanding. This is one reason why they find traditional church worship boring, and often struggle in traditional educational settings. They are more likely to sleep in on Sunday morning.

They may connect through sophisticated, interactive websites. Make no mistake. It *is* possible to have intimate friendships and profound conversations through the internet. They may watch a podcast of a religious performance, or a presentation by a credible spiritual leader or panel about religion and culture. Small groups are a real possibility built around affinities for relationships, gaming, fantasy, and liberal social causes ... but groups will meet in cyberspace or occasionally in an internet cafe. Small or large gatherings are opportunities to seek or build intimate relationships or find a mate. *Digital Dependents* are immersed in dating and mating rituals (on-line and real-time simultaneously). If there is time left over, they are ready to join a short-term social service team for a good cause.

## **General Comments**

***Note: See the list of definitions at the end of this report to explain key terminology.***

**Discussion Questions:**

***How do I, as a leader, perceive the spiritual expectations of people in our community?***

***How can we, as a board, research and understand our community better?***

***How can we, as a church, build closer relationships with this lifestyle segment?***

## Color Key

High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority
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## Leadership Preferences

Resource: *Spiritual Leadership* by Thomas Bandy (Abingdon Press)

THE CONSTANT LEADERS		THE ORGANIC LEADERS		THE EXTREME LEADERS	
	Caregiver		Discipler		Visionary
x	Enabler	x	Guru	x	Mentor
	CEO			x	Pilgrim

*Digital Dependents* struggle to connect with traditional church clergy. They are looking for “spiritual heroes” who have made significant sacrifices for their beliefs, and who risk life and lifestyle for a better world. These leaders often have very disciplined spiritual practices that are influenced by non-western cultures. They often have peripatetic lives that are not tied down by institutional commitments. *Digital Dependents* may have a hard time distinguishing between pop culture gurus and authentic spiritual leaders.

Such leaders are idealistic with a big (possibly utopian) vision of the future. They are committed to liberal causes and demonstrate remarkable courage to achieve success. Spiritual insight and flexibility to synthesize wisdom from many religious traditions is crucial. They rarely speak to large audiences, but are more than willing to mentor individuals anywhere, anytime. Spiritual leaders incorporate 24/7 digital relationships into their lifestyles, but also interact personally with individuals in clubs, pubs, cafes, and any environment that is “image rich”, “high volume”, and “crazy active”. The ability to communicate on-line is more than a skill, but a sign of integrity. It indicates a spirit of adventure, a radically inclusive attitude, and the self-confidence that engages rapid-fire exchanges of ideas.

*Note: See the list of definitions at the end of this report to explain key terminology.*

**Discussion Questions:**

*How would you describe your pastor now?*

*How might your pastor adapt to be more empathic in the future?*

*How can you equip, train, and/or support your pastor in any transition?*

# Hospitality Preferences

Resource: *Worship Ways* by Thomas Bandy and Lucinda Holmes (Abingdon Press)

TRADITIONAL		MODERN		POSTMODERN	
	<b>The Basics</b>	x	<b>Multiple Choices</b>	x	<b>Take-Out</b>
			<b>Healthy Choices</b>		

*Digital Dependents* are unlikely to worship on a Sunday morning and may struggle to comprehend why “worship” might be important. They may show up at a concert or special event sponsored by a church, especially if it raises awareness of important social concerns. They are more likely to show up at night in a bar, cafe, or social event. They are impressed by appearances, and like to stand out in a crowd with current fashions and edgy accessories. The spiritual leaders must stand out as well, and be extroverted enough to greet strangers. Don't be manipulative. Be sincerely generous and accepting. Let people know who you are. Let them decide for themselves whether to talk with you.

Be prepared for rejection ... but be persistently cheerful, confident, and friendly. It may take many encounters to generate the first, tentative conversations. Be prepared for criticism and occasional antagonism. These outspoken people won't mince words, and they will test your character and commitment. Remember that your real core values and beliefs are best revealed through spontaneity and/or behavior under stress.

*Note: See the list of definitions at the end of this report to explain key terminology.*

### Discussion Questions:

*How would you describe your hospitality ministries now?*

*How should hospitality ministries change to be more relevant to this lifestyle segment?*

*What additional training do greeters, ushers, and servers need to be more empathic?*

# Worship Preferences

Resource: *Worship Ways* by Thomas Bandy and Lucinda Holmes (Abingdon Press)

TRADITIONAL		MODERN		POSTMODERN	
	Care-giving Worship		Inspirational Worship	x	Mission-Connectional Worship
	Educational Worship		Transformational Worship	x	Coaching Worship
	Healing Worship				

*Digital Dependents* may participate in virtual worship. It will most likely be through podcast and blog, as these fit it into their busy lives, gaming activities, and social calendars. The podcast emphasizes edgy, contemporary or multicultural music and music video. The message by the spiritual leader usually includes images and clips, links to other sites, and interacts with a panel or one or two questioners. It's directly linked to a chat forum or blog, and the leader and his or her disciples are posting and tweeting before the live message is even finished.

The message is always aligned to the big, idealistic, vision. It may focus on practical coaching to live a better life (advance a career, find and sustain intimate relationships, explore new products or edgy ideas). Alternatively, the message focuses on a mission project, outreach ministry, or liberal cause for social, economic, or political change, and explains the moral or spiritual rationale for self-sacrificial support. The virtual worship service is a success when participants follow up through a blog or forum; understand the rationale and goal of mission; memorize the mantra that unites and motivates the movement; and when participants take action, individually or collectively, to advocate or support the mission.

*Note: See the list of definitions at the end of this report to explain key terminology.*

## Discussion Questions:

*How would you describe your worship service(s) now?*

*How should you customize one or more worship services to be relevant to this segment?*

*What additional training do preachers, musicians, readers need to meet expectations?*

## Education Preferences

Resource: See, Know, and Serve by Thomas Bandy (Abingdon Press)

FORM		CONTENT		GROUPING	
	Curricular		Biblical		Generational
x	Experiential	x	Topical	x	Peer Group

*Digital Dependents* gather around a topic or mission of interest. These, and the ability to use digital communication, are the only criteria for participation. All other demographic markers (like age, education, stage of life, etc.) are irrelevant. Education is primarily supported by a sophisticated and interactive website that provides downloadable resources, links, blogs, and forums ... and which is usually linked to other social media.

Education unfolds through virtual experiences: blogs, forums, instant messaging, with “likes!” and tweets spreading out through social media. Occasionally, people may even meet face to face in a cafe or other social setting and talk about it. Advanced education is often through registration in special webinars led by the spiritual leader, their disciples, and other experts and mission partners. A menu of upcoming webinars is constantly updated on the website, and there may be podcasts or digital resources that anyone can access after the webinar.

*Note: See the list of definitions at the end of this report to explain key terminology.*

Discussion Questions:

*How would you describe children, youth, and adult education in your church now?*

*How would education strategies need to change to be relevant to this lifestyle segment?*

*What changes in leadership selection and training would make education more effective?*

## Small Group Preferences

Resource: See, Know, and Serve by Thomas Bandy (Abingdon Press)

LEADERSHIP		CONTENT	
x	Trained Leaders		Curriculum Study
	Rotated Leaders	x	Shared Affinity

Most small groups assume long distance participation in the global village, but occasionally a few *Digital Dependents* in the nearby vicinity may gather for face-to-face conversations. Whatever the affinity might be, the underlying priority is to build or deepen intimate relationships. Individual participants may communicate on the side and develop deeper friendship for mutual support, or even covenants for prayer, meditation, and mission action.

Virtual small groups tend to be forums on specific topics or shared enthusiasms. Forums are always coordinated by a designated leader, who may also monitor participation to hold participants accountable to core values that are defined on the website as people register. For example, the coordinator has the power to block access if a participant denigrates others, makes racial slurs, offensive sexual innuendos, etc. This filter also states clearly the boundaries of Christian values or beliefs that shape the identity of the community.

Discussion is very free flowing, and may be stimulated by guest experts, excerpts from various sources, and contributions by the spiritual leader and their disciples. Energy and interaction may be fast paced or slow motion, and the forum is discontinued when the conversation fades away or becomes repetitive and stagnant. Forums may last an hour, a month, or without end. People will often participate in more than one forum, and groups may merge or divide as the discussion warrants, usually through direct intervention by the coordinator.

*Note: See the list of definitions at the end of this report to explain key terminology.*

Discussion Questions:

*How would you describe the Small Group strategy in your church now?*

*How would Small Group strategies need to change to be relevant to this lifestyle segment?*

*What changes in leadership and content would make Small Groups more effective?*

## Outreach Preferences

Resource: Strategic Thinking by Thomas Bandy (Abingdon Press)

	PERSONAL NEED	READINESS TO VOLUNTEER
Basic Survival		X
Health and Wellness		
Quality of Life		X
Addiction Intervention		
Interpersonal Relationships	X	X
Human Potential	X	X
Salvation and Human Destiny		

**Digital Dependents** are interested in any form of outreach that helps them discover their hidden potential, expand their imaginations, and build intimate relationships. This may include discernment of spiritual gifts and personality types, or alternative career possibilities and new life skills. Despite the appearance of self-confidence and their generally optimistic attitudes, these people are often feeling insecure and worried about the future. They are still getting to know themselves and want to build self-esteem.

They are also personally interested in any outreach ministry that will help them build or deepen interpersonal relationships. These unattached singles are constantly involved in “dating and mating” rituals. They like to stand out in a crowd and share their feelings. Close friendships are now more important than family relationships, and many have the romantic conviction that just the “right soul mate” is just around the corner ... if they keep looking.

When they look beyond themselves, people in this segment can be very passionate about any number of issues. They are particularly concerned about human rights and social justice. They tend to view the world divided between good and evil, and life as a very complex and subtle struggle in which freedom and fate are intertwined. They tend to be more involved in the big picture, seeking key leverage points for social change that will move closer to a utopian vision, and less involved in the day-to-day struggle for survival. The challenge to discern purpose and meaning, in the midst of daily the experience of accident and routine, is a constant theme.

**Note:** See the list of definitions at the end of this report to explain key terminology.

**Discussion Questions:**

***What outreach categories does your church emphasize now?***

***What outreach categories would be more relevant to this lifestyle segment?***

***What outreach priorities and tactics should change for the church to bless this segment?***



## Facility Preferences

Resource: See, Know, and Serve by Thomas Bandy (Abingdon Press)

PROPERTY		TECHNOLOGY		SYMBOLISM	
	Ecclesiastical		Modern		Classic Christendom
x	Utilitarian	x	Postmodern	x	Contemporary Post–Christendom

*Digital Dependents* do not find any property or technology particularly sacred. They are mainly concerned by its usefulness or effectiveness, and not in its architectural significance. They are most likely to connect with a church that rents space ... perhaps in a community center, store front, or (more creatively) a coffee shop, cafe, or even a wine bar. If, in order to be mission effective, a church does own property, they prefer it to be utilitarian.

Physical space should provide comfortable seating, but the walls, ceiling, floor, and general environment should be as plain as possible. Computer generated imaging will be used to transform any space into any environment imaginable. Any culture and any location, in the real world or the world of imagination, can be created to engage all five senses. Religious symbols often synthesize those of various religions.

Digital technology is by far the most important communication method. Hardware and software must be absolutely up-to-date and state-of-the-art. Moreover, the staff leaders that use technology must be well trained and proficient. There must be a seamless interface between the digital and real world. These people want to access church resources and interact with church leaders instantly and continuously.

*Note: See the list of definitions at the end of this report to explain key terminology.*

Discussion Questions:

*What renovations and/or upgrades need to be made in our church facility?*

*What symbols of faith would be most relevant to this lifestyle segment?*

*If we started another site of ministry for this segment, how should we design it?*

## Financial Preferences

Resource: See, Know, and Serve by Thomas Bandy (Abingdon Press)

GIVING TARGET		GIVING METHOD	
x	Unified Budgets and General Funds		Informed Philanthropy & Pledging
	Designated Programs & Mission Projects	x	Lifestyle Coaching & Family Financial Planning

**Digital Dependents** do not want to pay for the overhead of property, personnel, or programs in any traditional sense. They are already paying of education debts, and their financial priorities are to upgrade digital technology, follow the latest fashion trends, and create virtual realities and gaming consoles. They don't want to “waste” money preserving heritage buildings, paying for professional staff that they don't really need or respect, or maintaining redundant programs. However, they may be motivated to give money to a good cause, support a religious movement, and develop an adaptive digital resource. *When in doubt, upgrade!*

**Digital Dependents** can be more generous with their volunteer time, expertise, and energy than with their money. Charity needs to be motivated by a big, bold vision, and sustained by visible, measurable results. They are not likely to participate in stewardship campaigns that invite them to pledge, and more likely to give a large sum on impulse. If they trust the spiritual leader, they are not very interested in budgets and financial reports. They may support a capital campaign with one-time gifts, but only if all the money goes to the mission target and there is no professional fee or bureaucratic cost for management. Many have no credit history ... or a history of bad credit ... and they will only give cash. Ideally, a church would motivate them with a big vision, and then provide a bank of ATM machines in the vestibule from which they could withdraw cash for the advancing offering plate.

**Digital Dependents** often feel financial insecure, and do not have much experience in managing money or planning a financial future. They will respond to a church that offers solid financial advice to develop an overall personal financial plan that includes Christian values and gifts to selected charities, but which also helps them get out of debt, develop some investments, and establish good credit.

**Note:** See the list of definitions at the end of this report to explain key terminology.

**Discussion Questions:**

*What options in giving methods and giving targets do we offer now?*

*How do we design our annual stewardship campaign(s) now?*

*How should we revise our financial strategy to be more relevant to this segment?*

# Communication

Resource: Mosaic E–Handbook by Experian

CONTEMPORARY PUBLIC COMMUNICATION					TRADITIONAL CHURCH COMMUNICATION						
	Direct Mail Receptive	x	Mobile Telephone	x	Online Computer		Newspaper		Corded Telephone		Verbal Announcements
	Email Receptive		Broadcast Cable TV	x	Internet Radio		Print		AM/FM Radio		Personal Visits

*Experian* suggests that *Digital Dependents* have neither time nor interest in traditional media. Their interest in hard copy print is limited to gaming magazines and textbooks that are unavailable in digital form. Their interest in television is limited to Reality TV (pertaining to dating and relationships). They don't want any posted mail, and have joined “no call lists” to eliminate telephone marketing. When that fails they let every call go directly to voice mail and choose which ones deserve a response. They are rarely home *physically*, although they are always at home *virtually*. The communication goal is to share quickly, but not perfectly. Then you can update, clarify, correct, and if necessary apologize as you go.

The internet is their chief source of entertainment, communication, banking, socializing, shopping, and almost anything else. They are connected to it 24/7 through social media and web surfing; using computers, laptops, tablets, and Smartphones; texting, tweeting, downloading, surfing, viewing, and multi-tasking. They are often carrying on several conversations, research, shopping or bidding all at the same time.

The church must provide a sophisticated, custom designed, interactive website and update it daily and weekly. Church leaders must regularly contribute to blogs, forums, and chat rooms and constantly text, tweet, and maintain a running dialogue with members, adherents, friends of friends, and complete strangers. Upcoming events, news flashes, prayer concerns, and any item big or small pertaining to their particular Christian movement passes quickly from person to person.

*Note: See the list of definitions at the end of this report to explain key terminology.*

Discussion Questions:

*How do we communicate among church participants now?*

*How do we communicate beyond our church to the community now?*

*How should we adapt communication strategies to be more effective for this segment?*

## IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS

### POTENTIAL INFLUENCE

<b>Lifestyle Compatibility</b>	Daily behavioral habits overlap with common activities and similar priorities
<b>Family Group</b>	Grouping by key demographic factors like age, income, culture, family status, etc.
<b>Frequent Neighbors</b>	Often live near each other with shared recreational, health, or emergency services

### LEADERSHIP

<b>Constant Leaders</b>	Traditional clergy focused on sustaining ministries & increasing members
<b>Organic Leaders</b>	Innovative leaders focused on church growth, new starts & multiplying followers
<b>Extreme Leaders</b>	Non-Institutional leaders focused on spiritual disciplines, high accountability, and pursuing perfection
<b>Caregiver</b>	Focus on visitation, counseling, pastoral prayer
<b>Enabler</b>	Focus on facilitating meetings, lay empowerment, mediation, liturgy
<b>CEO</b>	Focus on staff development, administration, fund raising, expository preaching
<b>Discipler</b>	Focus on seeker sensitivity, adult faith formation, guidance for Christian living
<b>Guru</b>	Focus on religious insight, holistic personal growth, spirituality, enlightenment
<b>Visionary</b>	Focus on big picture, major social change, motivational speaking
<b>Mentor</b>	Focus on self-awareness, individual meaning and purpose, vocational clarity
<b>Pilgrim</b>	Focus on cross-cultural sensitivity, inter-religious dialogue, strict spiritual discipline

### HOSPITALITY

<b>The Basics</b>	Friendly untrained greeters, basic coffee and creamer, packaged food or sugary snacks
<b>Multiple Choices</b>	Trained greeters, multiple serving stations, great coffee, varieties of food
<b>Healthy Choices</b>	Trained greeters mirroring lifestyle diversity, healthy food options, allergen alerts
<b>Take-Out</b>	Coffee-to-go, bagged food, exit door hospitality, text message and social media

### EDUCATION

<b>Curricular</b>	Printed books or study guides. Passive, intellectual, classroom. Maturity measured by acquired knowledge
<b>Experiential</b>	Activities. More music, images, movement, interaction. Maturity measured by behavior patterns, attitudes.
<b>Biblical</b>	Focuses on the Old and New Testaments. Maturity means Biblical literacy
<b>Topical</b>	Focuses on contemporary issues. Maturity means ethical integrity and enlightened behavior
<b>Generational</b>	Gathers people by age or grade in separate classrooms with age-appropriate resources.
<b>Peer Group</b>	Gathers people sharing affinities or common interests regardless of age.

### SMALL GROUPS

<b>Rotated Leaders</b>	Participants take turns hosting and leading the group. Requires limited expertise and training.
<b>Designated Leaders</b>	Single leader guides the group from start to finish. Requires significant maturity and training.
<b>Curriculum</b>	Focus on a book, workbook, or structured program to guide structured discussion
<b>Affinity</b>	Focus on shared interest, enthusiasm, or activity to inspire informal discussion.

## IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS (cont.)

### WORSHIP

<b>Educational</b>	Consistent liturgy, expository preaching, focus on doctrine, ethics, and history
<b>Inspirational</b>	Uplifting music, motivational speaking, focus on joy, optimism, and encouragement
<b>Transformational</b>	Spontaneous, expectant, personal transformations, Higher Power interventions
<b>Coaching</b>	Informal, dialogical, topical, practical coaching on how to live better & faithfully
<b>Caregiving</b>	Slow, meditative, family–feel with pastoral prayer, children’s time, senior celebrations
<b>Healing</b>	Quiet, prayerful, expectant of physical, mental, relational healing and hope
<b>Mission–Connectional</b>	Unity of action/reflection, all about outreach, volunteer empowerment

### OUTREACH

<b>Survival</b>	Basic needs for food, shelter, clothing, jobs, basic health care
<b>Recovery</b>	Addiction intervention, 12 step support, and counseling services
<b>Health</b>	Mental and physical fitness, disease prevention, rehabilitation, therapy
<b>Quality of Life</b>	Social wellbeing, neighborhood safety, environment, immigration, peacemaking
<b>Human Potential</b>	Personal/vocational fulfillment, education, career help, human rights advocacy
<b>Interpersonal</b>	Intimacy, sexuality, family & marriage counseling, healthy friendships
<b>Human Destiny</b>	Repentance, conversion, witnessing, alignment with God’s purposes

### FACILITIES

<b>Ecclesiastical</b>	Facility must “look like a church” with traditional architecture and furnishings
<b>Utilitarian</b>	Facility must be “user–friendly” and multi–purpose for public use
<b>Christendom</b>	Indoor/outdoor symbols associated with church history or denominational identity
<b>Contemporary</b>	Indoor/outdoor symbols from nature, indigenous cultures, alternative spiritualities
<b>Modern</b>	Technology primarily enhances print and oral communication
<b>Postmodern</b>	Technology primarily enhances multi–sensory interaction, internet, social media

### FINANCES

<b>Unified Budgets</b>	Stability first. Give to a single general fund to pay staff and manage overhead costs
<b>Designated Giving</b>	Effectiveness first. Give to specific funds or causes by personal preference
<b>Informed Philanthropy</b>	Informed, independent, confidential financial commitments for a tax benefit
<b>Lifestyle Coaching</b>	Individual & household coaching for Christian family financial management

### COMMUNICATION

<b>Direct Mail Receptive</b>	Pay attention to mass mailings to postal addresses.
<b>Email Receptive</b>	Pay attention to information delivered digitally to personal email addresses.
<b>Mobile Telephone</b>	Regularly rely on cell phones and smart phones for calling, texting, surfing, banking etc.
<b>Broadcast Cable TV</b>	Regularly rely on cable television for news, advertising, and entertainment.
<b>Online Computer</b>	Regularly go online by personal computer to surf websites, shop, bank, and use other services.
<b>Internet Radio</b>	Regularly subscribe to internet services for music, sports, and topical discussions.
<b>Newspaper</b>	Pay attention to printed newspapers for updates about church news or local, national, global events.
<b>Print</b>	Pay attention to printed church newsletters, bulletin inserts, brochures, and other handouts.
<b>Corded Telephone</b>	Regularly use ordinary telephones to communicate from home.
<b>AM/FM Radio</b>	Regularly use traditional radio to listen to music, commercials, and talk.
<b>Verbal Announcements</b>	Always rely on verbal announcements from the pulpit about church events or items of interest.
<b>Personal Visits</b>	Always expect personal visits at home by a representative of the church to share information.