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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Faith study: half of Belgians are religious**

*50% would consider purchasing a commercial service from the Church*

**Brandhome has carried out a study into religious belief and affinity with the Catholic Church in Belgium. Some 1,000 Belgians shared their opinions on faith and church attendance. The respondents were also asked to express their opinion on the 'Church brand', the values represented by that brand and the kind of commercial services it might offer. The results of the study are striking: half of all Belgians are religious; 61% of them feel an affinity with the Roman Catholic Church; 35% believe in life after death and no less than 50% of Belgians would consider purchasing a commercial service from the Church.**

#### ***Faith in Belgium***

Levels of religious belief are highest in the province of Flemish Brabant and lowest in the province of Luxembourg. Most Belgians feel an affinity with the Roman Catholic faith. Other belief systems, such as Islam, Buddhism and Humanism, play a very modest role in Belgium. Half of Belgians are religious, although only 40% say they believe in God. Belgians do not consider it necessary to attend church. As many as 50% never do so or go just once a year. When Belgians do go to church, it is generally to attend a funeral.

#### ***Young people and the Church***

The Catholic Church's popularity has declined sharply among young people: fewer and fewer of them report marrying in church or wishing to do so. The same goes for baptising children. These developments match the widely held impression that church attendance will decline further in the years ahead.

#### ***The Church is a strong brand***

As many as 30% of Belgians agree that the Church is a brand. They base that view on the fact that everyone knows the Church, that it has existed for centuries and has strong traditions. 50% of people would consider purchasing a (commercial) service from the Church, such as health care, travel, education or telecommunication. The best things for the Church to offer would be health care, home care and books, with telecoms, real estate and insurance lower down the list. Substantial demand also exists for the organisation of masses at home.



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***Church is not a brand but 'une griffe' (a "designer's label")***

It was noteworthy that the Church as a brand enjoys a kind of super-status. This is apparent, for instance, in the fact that adherents view the Church less as a brand than non-adherents do. Despite that, adherents showed greater trust in the Church in terms of willingness to purchase services. That is known as a brand paradox. Brand strategists refer to a brand like this as 'une griffe'.

***Value of the brand***

Brandhome took the results of the study to calculate the potential proceeds of using the Church brand commercially in Belgium. Since ownership of the Church brand cannot be sold in the strict sense of the word, we are talking here about the 'licensing value' for commercial use of the Church brand for five years in Belgium. The calculation is based on customer willingness to purchase services marketed under the Church brand. The value for the Belgian market would, in that case, be between 300 and 500 million Euros. The amount depends on variables such as purchase intention, potential supply and brand margin. It makes the Church brand one of the most valuable in Belgium.

***Details of the study***

The study was carried out in November and December 2008 among some 600 Flemings and 400 Walloons. The research was performed on behalf of Brandhome.

Brandhome is a communication agency that works according to a unique and effective brand-building methodology, the Brandhome method®. The agency's key goals include constantly increasing brand knowledge. Brandhome is headquartered in Antwerp, Belgium.

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*Note for editors, not for publication:*

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