

DEMOGRAPHICS EFFECTS ON RELIGIOUS PATRONAGE AND PURCHASES

Paul T Mburu*

Abstract

The importance religion in purchases and patronage behaviour differs by demographics, religious affiliation and religiosity, in transmission of values which eventually affects choice of product purchase and store patronage. This paper attempts to highlight how demographics impacts on consumer purchasing behaviours of a religious product or store choices. The paper offers an alternative perspective on viewing religious as influence and could perform as a guide to formulating strategies to be used on religious influenced marketing.

Keywords: *Religion, demographics, social culture, Consumers, Purchasing Behavior, store patronage.*



* **University of Botswana**

Religiosity and Decision Behaviour Patterns

Religion as an important cultural influence in the marketplace needs to be recognized and researched in marketing area (Mittelstaedt, 2002), so that most practitioners can begin to utilize religious teachings and events in marketing their products and services (Story, 2007). However there is no uniformity in the degree of religiosity. As such the use of religion alone may not serve the segmentation objectives and may need to tweak with demographics. Social Cultural constructs have become increasingly central to consumer behavior literature in a dynamic and increasingly globalized market (Khraim, 2010). According to (Muhamad, 2010) recent trends show that scholars and marketing practitioners have embraced religion as a significant cultural influence in modern day's consumer behaviors. Also according to Muhamad understanding and measuring the influence of religion on consumers' can be challenging tasks for both. Furthermore although religion has always been a cultural element in consumer behavior framework, religion as well as its influences has long been perceived to be a taboo subject matter for investigation in marketing areas (Hirschman, 1983). The Religious importance in influencing of consumer choice of products and shopping outlets negates any constraint on its discussion

Hirschman (1983), Harrell (1986), and Wilkes et al. (1986) consider the implications of religion in consumer behaviour. They noted that religion has two major effects on buying behaviour. It has a direct influence on individual choice through the rules of conduct that it proclaims and it have an indirect effect because it contributes to the formation of attitudes and values, including those related to economic life. They noted that religions of the world have deeply influenced consumer behaviour because of their effects on attitudes toward consumption and consumption choices. Religious affiliation and religiosity transmit values which eventually affects choice and/or choice behaviour. Mokhlis, (2009), noted that there is a significant difference in shopping orientation among consumers with different levels of religiosity.

While Wilkes, et al, (1986) suggest that religiosity is a viable consumer behaviour construct in that it correlate with the life-style variables and contributed directly to the model along with sex, age, and income. Copen and Silverstein (2007) noted religious ideology is strong motivator in buying behaviour, and the conservative religious ideology weakened as the generation changed due to education. The more the educated the generation was, the open they became liberal in their religiosity. At the same time, Gutierrez, and Park (2015) and Arnett (2007) noted that although religious identity remains stable in the Emerging adults' and the belief in God was least

likely to change, the emerging adults' religious behaviours, such as prayer and church attendance, among others fall over time and then increase as the age. This significantly alters the shopping behaviour across individual life cycle.

Objective

The objective of this paper is to investigate the effect of demographics in religious purchasing and patronage behaviors. The paper aims to find out if there is difference in consumer purchasing behaviors across religions, and to determine if demographics attributes affect religious purchasing behaviors of consumer on religious products and retail store patronage.

Religion and buying behaviour

Recent trends show that scholars and marketing practitioners have embraced religion as a significant cultural influence in modern day's consumer behaviors (Muhamad, 2010). Religion is stressed as an important cultural influence in the marketplace that needs to be recognized and researched in marketing area (Mittelstaedt, 2002), while practitioners begin to utilize religious teachings and events in marketing their products and services (Story, 2007). Religion is a system of beliefs and practices by which a group of people interprets and responds to what they feel is supernatural and sacred (Johnstone, 1975). Religion constitutes a fundamental element of society in most culture and is inevitably linked to many aspects of our life and behavior. In fact, it has been argued that religion plays an important role on how we live and experience life and that it continues to be a key force in individual behavior (La Barbera, 1987).

The influence of religion on consumer behavior appears to be underestimated in our secular society. As (Delener, 1994) noted that although religion has been a significant force in the lives of many individuals, its role in consumer choice can be characterized as unclear or fuzzy. Some researchers contend that a person's extent of religious commitment can affect significantly his/her buying behavior across a broad range of products and services (Delener, 1990, Esso, 2004). The effects of religious belief on behavior emanate from two main sources. First, there are taboos and obligations which people who belong to and follow a certain religion have to practice (Delener, 1990). For example, Islamic teachings forbid its followers from drinking of liquor or eating pork while the reverence of the cow among the Hindus prohibits them from consuming beef (Esso N, 2004). These prohibitions lead to conscious and unconscious choice of shopping outlets and products. The second way behavior is affected is associated with the fact that religion

contributes to the formation of culture, norms, attitudes and values in society (Al Habshi, 1994) with regards to dressing, food, literature, holidays/vacations products among others.

Importance of Religion and buying and patronage behaviour

Mokhlis, (2009), suggested that religiosity should be included as a possible determinant of shopping orientations in consumer behaviour models. Both dimensions of religiosity (intrapersonal and interpersonal) are significant in predicting certain aspects of shopping orientation. The differences between consumer behaviour in general are much more overt for religiosity than merely for religious affiliation. This implies that religiosity more than just religious affiliation serves as a potentially powerful predictor and determinant of consumer behaviour. Religion is an important cultural influence in the marketplace needs to be recognized and researched in marketing area (Mittelstaedt, 2002), so that most practitioners can begin to utilize religious teachings and events in marketing their products and services (Story, 2007). Social Cultural constructs have become increasingly central to consumer behavior literature in a dynamic and increasingly globalized market (Khraim, 2010). According to (Muhamad, 2010), recent trends show that scholars and marketing practitioners have embraced religion as a significant cultural influence in modern day's consumer behaviors. An understanding and measuring of the influence of religion on consumer's behaviors can be challenging tasks both academics and marketers due to the variety of religious believers and the degree of religiosity among individual consumers.

As an aspect of culture, religion has considerable influence on people's values, habits and attitudes it greatly influences lifestyle which in turn affects consumer decision behaviour (Delener, 1990). Previous studies in the marketing literature argue that religion is often a significant element of culture which greatly influences behaviour, which in turn tends to affect purchasing decisions (Delener, 1990). However religion transcends cultures and for a unique behavioural norms, unifying different cultures. According to (Mokhlis, 2010) less obvious is the impact of religion on the purchasing and consumption of goods and services that are indirectly restricted by religious laws. Religious values impact on consumer purchasing behaviour by influencing the consumer's personality structure, his or her beliefs, values and behavioural tendencies (Mokhlis, 2010). Moreover according to (Mokhlis, 2010) it is widely acknowledged that religion has a strong impact on people's belief, personal identity as well as value systems, all of which have consumption implications. Religion provides people with a structured set of

beliefs and values that serve as a code of conduct or guide to behavior (Delener, 1994). Religious traditions may directly influence various aspects of the choice behavior of its followers by the rules and taboos it inspire (Mokhlis, 2010). Some of the obvious examples are the importance of fasting and feasting patterns, types of foods and outlets for purchasing food, belief in taboos on choice of clothing styles and activities of women, practices of personal hygiene, issues related to purchases of toiletries and cosmetics and influences on housing and entertainment patterns (Mokhlis, 2010). Less obvious is the influence of religion on the consumption of goods and services that are not directly restricted by religious laws (Mokhlis, 2010), but nevertheless are influenced by the religiosity of an individual. A good example would be choice between halal shop and non halal shop on grocery purchases. Delener (1990) mentioned that religiosity which is the degree to which individuals are committed to a particular religious faith is one of the most important cultural forces as well as a key influence in consumer purchasing behaviour. This is due to the fact that the purchasing decision can be categorised according to how much consumers adhere to a particular faith (Delener, 1990). According to (Delener, 1990) this implies that marketing practitioners should consider utilizing consumers' religiosity as a legitimate segmentation variable for marketing their products and services.

Religiosity and shopping behavior

Religious affiliation concerns the specific type of religious community into which an individual is integrated (Ellison, 1989). It provides ties that bind people together and make one group different from another (Mokhlis, 2010). According to (Mokhlis, 2010) it is suggested that one is born into a religious tradition and through the action of its institutional influences develops a religious identity or affiliation. Religious affiliations therefore can be depicted as “cognitive systems” of the society. That is, believers of the same religious affiliation are viewed as sharing a common cognitive system of beliefs, values, expectations and behaviors. (Hirschman, 1983)

A review of consumer behavior texts suggests two generalizations concerning the role of religion in consumer choice (Hirschman, 1983, Terpstra, 1991, Mokhlis, 2010). First, religion functions as a macro-level transmitter of cultural values according to (Mokhlis, 2010). From this perspective, religion assists in the socialization process by mediating the effects of other institutions and by encouraging consumers to embrace certain values and precepts (Terpstra, 1991). Second, religious affiliations may influence various aspects of the choice behavior of its members by the rules and taboos it inspires (Mokhlis, 2010).

Shopping Preference Theory provides a useful framework in understanding the influence of religion on shopping behavior (Sheth, 1983). Sheth suggests that religion has the most likely effects on shopping predisposition through the demand side determinant on personal characteristics. Sheth, (1983) notes that religious variables interposed with personal determinants such as personality, social and epistemic values, shape an individual's shopping motives. The personal values reflect the consumer's personality and are indicative of the influence of values on consumer behavior (Mokhlis, 2010). He predicted that personal values might be related directly and indirectly to religion and religiosity. According to (Sheth, 1983), an individual's personal values and beliefs about what to look for when Shopping for various products and services reflect that shopper's personality and may be determined by such personal traits as sex, age, race and religion.

Additionally, Sheth's speculates the possibility of effects of personal values (e.g. religion) on consumers' general predisposition towards the act of shopping such as products and outlet to shop as well as shopping styles. In some ways, personal determinants are manifested in a customer's shopping style which be that an economic shopper, personalizing shopper, ethical shopper or apathetic shopper (Stone, 1954). Customers can be convenience shoppers, bargain shoppers, compulsive shoppers or store loyal shoppers (Stephenson and Willet, 1969).

The study indicates that religious affiliation has the potential to be valuable predictor of consumer behavior (Mokhlis, 2010). Hirschman (Hirschman, 1981) (Hirschman, 1983) (Hirschman, 1982) was one of the earlier consumer behavior researchers to investigate the relationship between a consumer's religious affiliation and a number of consumption related variables. In the first study, (Hirschman, 1981) found Jews to be more innovative than non-Jews and to be potentially less store and brand loyal. In the second study, (Hirschman, 1983) demonstrated the presence of distinct differences between Catholic, Jewish and Protestant consumers in their self-perceptions regarding inherent novelty seeking and information transfer.

Finally, (Hirschman, 1983) concluded that few other variables exhibited the range and depth of explanatory power offered by religious affiliation.

(Bailey, 1993) examined the effects of religious affiliation on consumer behavior of six religious groups, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Catholic and Protestant. They found that Muslim consumers were relatively more impetuous shoppers but less likely to be informed or risky shoppers (Mokhlis, 2010). Hindus were found to be a rational shopper group while Catholics

were less likely to be informed shoppers and Buddhists religious tended to indicate consumer behavior similar to the societal norms.

Esso (2004) conducted a similar study in Mauritius with a national sample of respondents from three different religions: Hinduism, Islam and Catholicism. The results confirmed that there were marked differences between Hindus and Muslims for all seven types of shopper: the demanding, practical, trendy, traditional, economic, thoughtful and innovative shopper (Mokhlis, 2010).

Ellison, (1981), Hirschman, (1982), Hirschman, (1983), Hirschman, (1983), (1989) Hirschman Sheth, (1983), Terpstra, (1991), Bailey, (1993), and Vassilikopoulou, (2006) examined micro-cultural differences in the consumers' perceptions, attitudes and purchasing behavior of electrical and home appliances in Greece. They found that micro-culture develops different patterns of behavior for Christian and Muslim consumers, based on their religious preferences and social class. Differences were also found between Christian and Muslim consumers in their perceptions of the ideal store, as well as in their buying selection criteria according to (Mokhlis, 2010). While this gives a clear indication of the importance of religion in consumer segmentation, it assumes that religions uniformity within the diverse religious groups as well as among the demographics, which may not necessarily be factual.

Religious commitment, often termed as religiosity, is defined by (Johnson, 2001) as "the extent to which an individual's committed to the religion he or she professes and its teachings, such as the individual's attitudes and behaviors reflect this commitment". Religiosity is important, as it is capable of influencing an individual cognitively and behaviorally (Khraim, 2010). Religious persons have value systems that differ from those of the less religious and the non-religious (Hirschman, 1983). By Implication, a highly religious people will evaluate the world through religious schemas and thus will integrate ones religion into much of his or her life (Mokhlis, 2006), thus what might be right product to one become offensive to another. On the other hand, if their belief in religious tenet is weak; they might feel free to behave in other ways. Hence, how strongly consumers are committed with their religion should be considered in understanding the nature of consumer behavior (Al Habshi, 1994, Johnson, 2001; Mokhlis , 2006).

Demographic and, Religiosity

The change among emerging adults is common, and emerging adults' beliefs are evolving. The changes along the lifecycle bring about difference in religiosity and thus to some extent,

consuming behaviour. Demographic variables such as gender, age, and income and education attainment are frequently used for market segmentation purposes, primarily because these data are the most readily available and easy to measure among individual consumers (Pol 1991). In a study of consumer information acquisition, Schaninger and Sciglimpaglia (1981) found that older consumers and lower education consumers process less information and examine fewer attributes and alternatives. Kinley, Conrad and Brown (2000) found that younger male consumers rely more on personal information sources than do older adult male consumers. The gender differences play a role not only in the religiosity of individual but also in the decision making. Pro-religious individuals are likely to be more dogmatic, more conservative, and more authoritarian than are the non-religious individual. The authoritarian's tendency to rigid, exaggerated sex-role stereotypes stress clearly defined roles of dominance and submission in husband/wife and general male/female relationships which manifest in the buying roles and behaviour. The dichotomous sex-role conceptions within the authoritarian family emphasize exaggerated masculine and feminine characteristics. As authoritarianism is positively correlated with religiosity, it is therefore predicted that individuals with pro-religious orientations are more likely to make autonomous decisions. (McDaniel, and Burnett, 1990, Delener, 1994). The demographics have a direct effect of the religiosity of an individual which in turn affects the then buying behaviour making the religiosity and demographics an important factor in consumer segmentation.

There is not much known about the influence of religion on consumer and buyer decision-making and marketplace behaviors in marketing areas (Muhamad, 2010). In fact, there is little common understanding among previous marketing studies in measuring the effects of religion. Earlier religious psychology studies tended to focus on one's commitment to his or her religion as the main indicator for a religion's influence. Almost all factors related to religion are aggregated to form a religious commitment concept, thus complicating efforts to unravel the components of religion's influences (Himmelfarb, 1975). The fact that studies found independent variables to religious commitment factors suggests that religious influences can be measured not only through religious commitment but several other dimensions (Muhamad, 2010).

Religion is an important cultural factor to study because it is one of the most universal and influential social institutions that have significant influence on people's attitudes, values and behaviors at both the individual and societal levels (Mokhlis S., 2009). Its effect on people's life

is so great that it will even affect the consuming motives and choices (Chang, 2005). Although religion has influence over personal and social behavior of human beings but there is a dearth of research in this area. (Kotler, 2000) mentioned that the buying decisions are influenced by religion but did not highlight the degree to which religion could influence.

2.2 Religious influences Conceptual framework

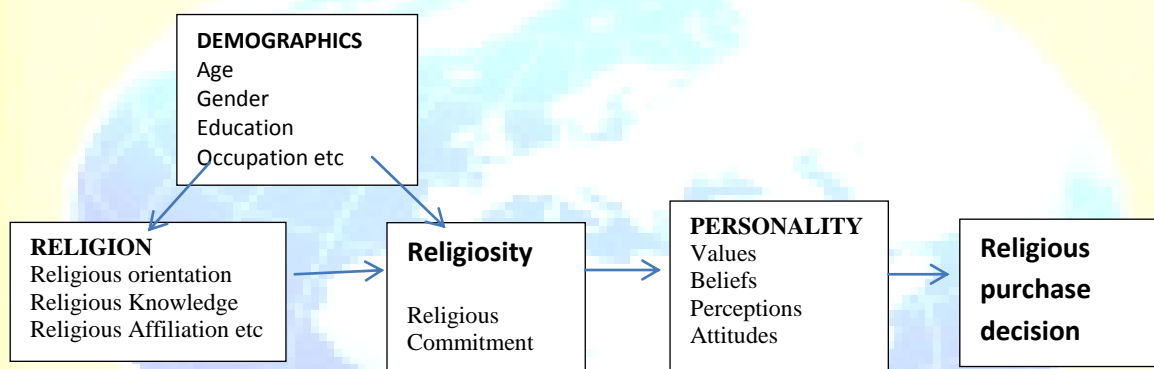
Based on religious psychology literatures and marketing studies, the influence of religion on consumer behavior of religious products and shopping outlets is found to be mediated through five factors; including an individual's religious affiliation, the commitment to religious beliefs (religiosity) and practices, the extent of his or her religious knowledge in his or her views and perceptions on societal issues, and his or her motivation in following his or her religion (Muhamad 2010). Religious affiliation and commitment are the two most used constructs in marketing to explain religion influences in the marketplace (Muhamad, 2010). Different type of religious affiliation either Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity affect the purchasing behavior differently, (Mokhlis, 2010; Hirschman, 1981, 1982, 1983). At the same time, within different religions, there arises diverse degree of religiosity or Religious commitment, (Johnson, 2001) which affect the purchase decisions.

Religious motivation appears to be the most credible factor in describing religious influences on consumer behaviours in the market-place. In fact, the religious motivation factor is the most established construct and measure of religious influences on human behaviours (Donahue, 1985). In contrast with measures of religious commitment, the universality of motivation constructs may tend to present fewer complications in application of the measure across world religions. Recent findings suggest that religious motivation constructs manage to differentiate consumers' cognitive processing of performing behaviours that are subjected to religious rulings (Muhamad, 2008). Although consumers may identify themselves as followers of a particular religion such as Islam, Christianity it does not reflect their understanding of the concept of being a Muslim or Christian. It is thus crucial to look at consumer's exposure to the knowledge, the source information, as well as the motivations behind the religious purchase.

The demographic factors of a consumer such as levels of education, gender, age, among others, play a big role in the magnitude of religious purchase decision due to the information processing

(Kinley, et al, 2000) the sourced and extent of information, role play or stereotypes among others, that affect consumer's decision making process.

Religions as reflected in the demographic lenses is capable of influencing an individual cognitively and behaviourally (Khraim, 2010), and values. As noted, a highly religious person processes the information through religious schemas and thus will integrate religion into life values (Mokhlis, 2006). This therefore indicates that, a person's decision in religious purchase, either of a consumer product or patronage would have been affected by the individuals religion, and the degree of religiosity. This is also impacted by the demographics, and the values as modeled by region.



The model theoretically provides the conceptual ground to develop a greater knowledge and investigate based on religious psychology literatures and marketing studies. The influence of religion on consumer behaviour is found to be mediated through four factors; including an individual's religious affiliation, knowledge and orientation, his or her commitment to religious beliefs and practices, which affect the personality. The religion orientation and knowledge as well as the commitment are dictated by demographics. The values beliefs and perceptions on societal issues, including the motivation constitute personality which in turns affect the purchases or none thereof a religious products, as well as patronage of religious inclined stores. Thus a purchase decision of religious affiliated product or patronage to store for due religious factors is directed by a combination of all the above factors

Conclusion

Over the time, religion has been grouped together with culture as a determinant of product choice

or patronage. However the religion and religiosity differ in its effect on buying choice. At the same time the demographics factors, affect the religiosity. The religious effects are not uniform across gender, age, habitation, among others. In this regards, differentiated targeting strategies are necessary. This paper attempts to fill the knowledge gap in marketing areas on how religion impacts on consumer and buyer purchasing behaviours of a religious product or store. It offers an alternative perspective on viewing religious influence that could be exploited as a guide to selecting measures of religious influences. Religion may influence consumer and buyer behaviour through many ways that can be grouped into four factors of religious affiliation, religious commitment, and personality as modelled by religion.

The universality and importance of the motivational element in social science studies has proved to be a useful indicator in describing religious influences in consumer behaviours. Given the poor utilization of this construct in marketing areas, future marketing studies may want to test the utility of this factor in investigating the role of religion in consumer and buyer behaviours. Empirical studies testing the efficacy of each of the religious influence factors on market-place behaviours across religious groups would also be beneficial.

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