

## Does Religiosity affect on Consumer's Socialization Agent and Shopping Orientation?

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**Abstract**— This study discusses consumer's socialization agent and shopping orientation that are affected by the religiosity. The MANOVA and ANOVA analysis was used for verifying a difference of information source usage by the level of religiosity and a different shopping orientation depending on each religious value. The result shows that overall high religious consumers have high tendency to use information source and depend on them. It also indicates that Buddhism manifest a greater tendency toward the Utilitarian approach, Catholicism manifest a greater tendency toward the Social/Hedonic approach and Protestantism manifest a greater tendency toward Overpowered approach. This study allows readers to see the need for approach with different marketing strategy according to the level of consumer's religious activity and types of religion in marketing strategy.

**Keywords**-religiosity; socialization agent; shopping orientation

### I. INTRODUCTION

Religion has been documented heavily influencing the beliefs, attitudes and values of individuals, groups and organizations in society (Inglehart and Baker 2000). In the U.S, almost 80% of people are Christians, around 72% Americans pray once a week and almost 50% of Americans attend church at least once a month (Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion 2006). These statistics indicate that a religion's doctrines, value systems and teachings can directly or indirectly influence various aspects of an individual's life and behaviors (Clark 2005; Mckee 2003). Religious belief system foster a socialization process in which religious members develop particular beliefs about their doctrine and certain behaviors through engaging in religious rituals and interactions between fellow group members (Weaver and Agle 2002). Religious socialization thus facilitates the adoption of certain value priorities that support religious doctrines and acceptance of values endorsed by an

individual's religious group (Roccas 2005). Religiosity is defined as the degree to which the individual holds his/her specific religious beliefs and values (Schwartz and Huismoms 1995). Therefore, when an individual is committed to his/her religion, the individual acquires a religious identity (Coşgel and Minkler 2004), whereby that religion becomes a central point of his/her self-identity. Because religiosity reflects the individual's beliefs, behaviors and value systems in social life, it in turn provides marketers a basis of selecting target markets and marketing strategies (Delender 1990, 1994). Individual religiosity is stable over a fairly long time and is observable, thus becomes a pragmatically valuable opportunity for marketers to examine consumer behavior (McDaniel and Burnett 1990).

### II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

#### A. Religiosity and Consumer Behavior

Religiosity can have the most potential for affecting shopping predisposition because of its role as a determinant factor in the demand side. Sheth (1983) divides the personal determinant factor into personal values, social values and epistemic values. Personal values are comprised of 'such personal traits as sex, age, race, and religion' while the social values consists of family, friends, referent groups, etc. Affiliations with church, temple, and shrine can serve as a referent group and as a source of friends, allowing religion to comprise a significant portion of the social values factor as well as the personal values factor as noted by Sheth. The Shopping Preference Theory explains religiosity indirectly affects shopping predisposition along a path from personal determinants to shopping motives and to choice calculus then to shopping predisposition. And religiosity also can work more directly by affecting acceptable shopping options or alternatives (Siguaw and Simpson 1997).

Previous empirical evidence provides support for religiosity effects on some shopping and other consumer behaviors (McDaniel and Burnett 1990) and provides a basis for consumer segmentation (Delener 1990). It's been stated that it has long been acknowledged that peoples religious beliefs have a discernible effect on attitudes and on behavior (McDaniel and Burnett 1990), providing justifications for further study of religiosity to better understand its effects on consumer attitudes and on behavior. Sheth's Shopping Preference Theory, coupled with previous findings about religiosity effects on consumer and shopping behavior, provides strong support for the contention that religiosity may be an important variable in a retailing context (Sheth 1983). The empirical research indicates that religiosity affects various aspects of consumer and shopping behavior and the theory states that religion is likely to be an important personal trait that affects shopping motives. Religion typically provides its adherents with a set of norms, traditions and moral values that they can follow and maintain their identity in social life (Coşgel and Minkler 2004). Religion thus outlines guiding principles for individuals whereby they can coalesce and interact with each other on society (Schwartz 1994).

Thus religion and religiosity may affect the usage of socialization agents (i.e. family, friends or colleagues, mass media, impartial sources, salespeople) with which individuals seek information for their behavior in marketplace. Sheth's Shopping Preference Theory explains religiosity may be an important variable in a retailing context. And the empirical research also indicates religiosity's effects on consumer and shopping behavior (Sheth 1983). Thus religiosity is likely to be an important factor for the consumer's shopping orientation, which is explained to be the outcome of the socialization (Shim and Gehrt 1996).

### *B. Religiosity and Socialization Agents*

Religious consumer put more importance on the interest of their group members who are inside of their web of inner network such socialization agent as 'significant others' (family, close friends or colleagues) they frequently interact with than they put on others outside their group (Saroglou et al. 2005; Choi et al. 2009). The consumer socialization model hypothesizes that consumer behavior is acquired through interaction between an individual and various agents in specific social settings (Moschis 1987). Socialization agents such as parents, teachers, peers, and the media serve as a socializer. Previous research reported how ethnicity influences adolescent's shopping behavior (Shim and Gehrt 1997).

Likewise, religiosity plays a role in the socialization process with respect to the varying degree of exposure to various socialization agents. Thus religious people tend to be affected by various socialization agents. For instance, Protestantism believers who go to the church frequently tend to seek and accept and acquire opinions and knowledge from 'significant others' to make informed decision about consumption, social, cultural and political choices (Clark and Goldsmith 2005). Thus Religious people want to build and maintain strong psychological relationship with significant

others' by building "a cohesive 'us' attitude" (O'Guinn and Belk 1989; Saroglou et al. 2005). The above arguments lead to the following hypothesis.

**H1-1:** High religious consumers are more likely to use socialization agents as product information than the low and non-religious consumers.

**H1-2:** High religious consumers are more likely to use 'significant others' as a product information source than are the low religious consumers.

**H1-3:** High religious consumers are more likely to use the members of their same religious group as product information than the low and non-religious consumers.

### *C. Religiosity and Shopping Orientation*

Religious people's shopping behavior may reflect the religious belief and values. For instance, if the consumer may believe Hindu religion, he/she might have the willingness to behave in accordance with the norms of that caste. The specific caste indicates a certain fatalism of inability to change things. This fatalism and the importance of religious belief such as self-control, calm, detachment and compassion might indicate relatively passive purchasing behavior (Bailey and Sood 1993). The belief and value of Buddhism is very close to the norms of Hindu in that it emphasize many ways of reach God such as prayer, meditation of pilgrimage (Essoo and Dibb 2004). They suggest that information, to acquire new products, to request quality service of low prices. It is even possible that these beliefs could result the acceptance of poorer service and higher prices. These consumers purchasing behavior may be shared by devout Buddhists.

The belief and teaching of Catholicism are 'praise and adoration, thanksgiving, petition, forgiveness, instruction and education, commitment, and dedication' (Essoo and Dibb 2004). Catholic belief and teachings have considerable influence on this group's purchasing behavior (Bailey and Sood 1993). The authors suggest that devout Catholics tend to prefer products that are more popular and which are well-known brands. They also suggest that devout Catholics actively search for information and responsive to advertising. These norms, practices and origins are shared by the principles and theoretical backgrounds of Protestantism in that Protestantism is also based on Jesus Christ.

However the devout Protestants are more likely to be outgoing and enjoy shopping than the devout Catholics in Korea. And the climate and the pray of the believers on Sunday in the churches of Protestantism are more vivid and louder than in the Catholic churches. Sproles and Kendall's (1986) scale of eight shopping orientation was employed in this study. The eight orientations include: Brand-Conscious; Novelty/Fashion-Conscious; Recreational; Brand-Loyal; Impulsive; Confused by Over choice; Quality-Conscious; and Price-Conscious. These eight orientations can be conceptually classified into three fundamental approaches to shopping: (a) Social/Hedonistic (b) Overpowered, and (c) Utilitarian. Based on the above arguments, the following hypotheses were developed.

**H2-1:** Consumers who are high religiously committed with Buddhism manifest a greater tendency toward the Utilitarian approach to shopping (Quality and Price-Conscious) than will the devout Catholics and devout Protestants.

**H2-2:** Consumers who are high religiously committed with Catholicism will manifest a greater tendency toward the Social/Hedonic approach to shopping (Brand-Conscious, Novelty/Fashion Conscious, Recreational, and Brand-Loyal) than the devout Buddhists and devout Protestants.

**H2-3:** Consumers who are high religiously committed with Protestantism will manifest a greater tendency toward the Overpowered approach to shopping (Impulsive and confused by Over choice) than will the devout Catholics and devout Buddhists.

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### A. Operational Measures

The religiosity items measure to what extent each individual adopts religious belief in his/her life. Highly religious individuals view religion as a goal in itself and should be true believers in religious practice for its own sake (King and Crowther 2004). The measurements help determine whether religious beliefs are behind their whole approach to life, the extent to which they carry their religion over into their dealings in life, whether spending time in private religious thought, reading or meditation is important, whether their religious faith restricts their actions overall, whether their religious beliefs influence many aspects of their life and if they are important to them. Respondents answered the total six items using seven-point Likert scales anchored by (1) strongly disagree and (7) strongly agree.

In order to understand to what extent consumers use product information sources in order to purchase products, they were asked to rank six potential socialization agents for product information from most likely to use (=6) to least likely to use (=1). And also six statements were developed regarding the usage of socialization agents as an information source. Respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed with each statement on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree). The six socialization agents were significant others (family, close friends or colleagues), the same religious group members, media advertisements (Internet, TV, radio, newspaper or magazine), impartial sources such as consumer reports, salespeople, and consumer education. A total of 36 statements were adopted from a study by Sproles and Kendall (1986). The items consist of eight shopping orientation scales. (e.g: Brand-Conscious ‘The more expensive brands are usually my choices’ Impulsive: ‘impulsive when purchasing.’)

### IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The total of the respondents are 205 and consist of 118 males and 87 females. Respondents’ ages ranged from 20 to 59. The mean and median age was 28. Among respondents,

married people are 137. Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to verify 6 hypotheses. Table 1 and Table 2 present the results of MANOVA.

**Hypotheses 1-1.** Table 1 indicates that high religious consumers are more likely to use socialization agents as product information than the low and non-religious consumers. All mean value was high except for two. The exceptions were salespeople and consumer reports. Therefore, H1-1 is partially supported. **Hypotheses 1-2.** Hypothesis 1-2 expected that high religious consumers are more likely to use ‘significant others’ as a product information source. It was found that high religious consumers are more likely to use ‘significant others’ as a product information source and depend on those than other sources than are the low religious consumers. However, the results revealed that dependence on media or consumer reports were also high and therefore H1-2 is partially supported as well. **Hypotheses 1-3.** Hypothesis 1-3 that high religious consumers are more likely to use the members of their same religious group as product information than the low and non-religious consumers was supported. High religious consumers (M=3.20) exhibit high mean than the low (M=1.52) and non-religious consumers (M=1.72) and differed significantly in DUNCAN post hoc tests as well (F=28.339, p=.000, see Table 2).

TABLE I. TESTS OF HYPOTHESIS

Information Source	The Level of Religiosity	N	Mean	SD
Family	0 (Non)	86	4.51	1.509
	1 (Low)	65	4.17	1.557
	2 (High)	54	4.59	1.631
	Total	205	4.42	1.559
Friends	0	86	4.98	1.227
	1	65	5.11	1.288
	2	54	5.15	1.035
	Total	205	5.06	1.197
Colleagues	0	86	4.77	1.224
	1	65	4.66	1.338
	2	54	5.13	.870
	Total	205	4.83	1.190
Same religious group	0	86	1.72	1.221
	1	65	1.52	.986
	2	54	3.20	1.763
	Total	205	2.05	1.419
Media	0	86	5.86	1.276
	1	65	5.80	1.078
	2	54	6.02	.981
	Total	205	5.88	1.140
Consumer reports	0	86	4.63	1.389
	1	65	4.80	1.289
	2	54	4.76	1.273
	Total	205	4.72	1.324
Salespeople	0	86	4.09	1.334
	1	65	4.34	1.290
	2	54	4.13	1.117
	Total	205	4.18	1.265
Education	0	86	3.78	1.305
	1	65	3.65	1.363
	2	54	4.46	1.284
	Total	205	3.92	1.353

TABLE II. DUNCAN PAST TEST AND SIGNIFICANT RESULTS OF HYPOTHESES 1 (P<.1)

Information Source	The Level of Religiosity		Sig.
Colleagues	1	2	.082
Same religious group	0	2	.000
	1	2	.000
Education	0	2	.009
	1	2	.003

MANOVA was conducted to verify Hypothesis 2 and the result of MANOVA is shown in Table 3 and Table 4.

Hypotheses 2-1. After verifying Hypothesis 2-1 that consumers who are high religiously committed with Buddhism manifest a greater tendency toward the utilitarian approach to shopping (Quality and Price-Conscious), it was found that Buddhism in 'quality conscious' and 'price conscious' with regard to 'utilitarian' approach exhibit highest mean value. The result was not differed significantly in 'quality conscious' but exhibit high in mean value and was statistically differed in 'price conscious (F=3.863, p<.05). Therefore H2-1 is partially supported.

Hypotheses 2-2. In the result of Hypothesis 2-2 that consumers who are high religiously committed with Catholicism will manifest a greater tendency toward the 'social/hedonic' approach to shopping (Brand-Conscious, Novelty/Fashion Conscious, Recreational, and Brand-Loyal), mean value of Catholicism in 'brand-conscious, novelty/fashion conscious, recreational, brand-loyal' exhibit highest score. However, as the result was not statistically differed, H2-2 is not supported.

Hypotheses 2-3. After verifying that consumers who are high religiously committed with Protestantism will manifest a greater tendency toward the 'overpowered' approach to shopping (Impulsive and confused by Over choice), this result of mean value exhibit the highest score and statistically differed. In 'impulsive', Devout Protestantism (M=4.33) revealed higher score than Devout Catholics (M=4.32), Devout Buddhists (M=3.83) (F=2.339, p=0.99) and Protestantism (M=4.69) in 'confused by overchoice' also revealed highly than Devout Catholics (M=4.19), Devout Buddhists (M=4.36) (F=2.339, p=0.99). Therefore H2-3 is supported.

TABLE III. MANOVA AND ANOVA

Shopping Orientation		Mean				F-value
		1 Devout Protestants (n=4)	2 Devout Catholics (n=7)	3 Devout Buddhists (n=50)	Total	
Social/ Hedonistic	Brand-Conscious	475	482	472	477	.712
	Novelty/ Fashion Conscious	467	503	483	483	1235
	Recreational	497	533	487	507	1962
	Brand-Loyal	444	475	463	459	1.583
Over powered	Impulsive	433	432	383	421	2.339*
	Confused by Overchoice	469	419	436	444	2.554*
Utilitarian	Quality Conscious	6.19	6.08	6.19	6.15	.261
	Price Conscious	4.05	3.61	4.28	3.95	3.863**

\*p<0.1, \*\*p<0.05

TABLE IV. DUNCAN PAST TEST AND SIGNIFICANT RESULTS OF HYPOTHESES 2 (P<.1)

Shopping Orientation		Religious belief and values		Sig.
Overpowered	Impulsive	1	2	.053
		1	3	.053
		2	3	.053
	Confused by Overchoice	1	2	.058
		1	3	.058
		2	3	.058
Utilitarian	Price Conscious	2	3	.690

## V. CONCLUSION

This study started from the point that shopping value can be decided by belief and value on religiosity. Hypothesis 1 investigated difference of information source usage by the level of religiosity. The result of analysis revealed that overall high religious consumers have high tendency to use information source and depend on them. Particularly, in the result of hypothesis that high religious consumers use more significant others, the mean value of significant others usage scored higher than other groups and percentage of depending on same religious group scored highest.

In Hypothesis 2, it analyzed consumers would show different shopping orientation depending on each religious value. In the Hypothesis 2 that Buddhism manifest a greater tendency toward the Utilitarian approach, Catholicism manifest a greater tendency toward the Social/Hedonic approach and Protestantism manifest a greater tendency toward Overpowered approach, all mean value exhibit significant difference. That is, Buddhism has shopping orientation where major consideration is quality and value, Catholicism shows shopping orientation where major consideration is pleasure dimension of shopping and Protestantism has shopping orientation of somewhat impulse or confusion.

The point that information source usage and shopping orientation show difference by religious belief implicates the importance of study which was not highly covered religion and shopping behavior in marketing before. Furthermore, this study point up the need for approach with different marketing strategy according to the level of consumer's religious activity and types of religion in marketing strategy.

Future research might attempt to conduct in-depth study of difference of shopping behavior by more specific religious activity and belief. Especially difference of shopping behavior by type, frequency, duration and period of religious activity can be specified how religion unconsciously effects on shopping behavior. Moreover, the study of interaction effect where country and cultural difference affects on shopping tendency with religion would provide meaningful implications.

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