



Religion as a field of transcultural practices in multicultural marketplaces

Angela Gracia B. Cruz^a, Yuri Seo^{b,*}, Margo Buchanan-Oliver^b

^a Department of Marketing, Monash Business School, Monash University, Australia

^b Department of Marketing, University of Auckland, New Zealand

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Religion
Transculturality
Multicultural marketplaces
Acculturation

ABSTRACT

This paper reframes the dominant marketing conceptualization of religion as a driver of consumer differences toward religion as a field of transcultural practices within multicultural marketplaces. Through depth interviews with 24 consumers from multiple religious backgrounds and multiple Southeast Asian nations living in New Zealand, we demonstrate how divergent religious communities facilitate five key transcultural consumption practices. Our paper makes two contributions to the literature on religion and marketing. First, we highlight the role that religion plays in facilitating entry into and mutual entanglement within multicultural marketplaces. Second, in addition to the present focus on how religion produces differences in marketplace behaviors, we underline the transcultural properties of religion which are shared across diverse religious traditions. This study demonstrates how religion can perform an important role in facilitating the transcultural character of contemporary multicultural marketplaces, offering novel implications about how managers should engage with consumers in these markets.

1. Introduction

Complex marketplace dynamics, which are emerging as a result of the modern accelerating forces of globalization (Appadurai, 1997), have become important considerations for marketing scholars and practitioners (Demangeot, Broderick, & Craig, 2015). Of particular interest is the emergence of multicultural marketplaces, where consumers hail from diverse backgrounds which may be based on ethnicity, nationality, location of residence, or religion (Kipnis, Broderick, & Demangeot, 2014). In this context, taken-for-granted marketing concepts such as consumer identity and consumer-brand relationships (Kipnis et al., 2013) are undergoing reframing and redefinition. In this context of intensified multiculturalism, the role of religion in shaping marketplace dynamics warrants further exploration.

In recent years, scholarly interest in the role of religion within the marketplace has increased, as evidenced by three recent special issues which have called for more research on the relationship between religion, consumption and marketing (Benton, 2014; Engelland, 2014; Mottner & Ford, 2010). These inquiries are particularly pertinent given the recognized role of religion in shaping, to various degrees, either implicitly or explicitly, cultures and marketplaces as we know them (Delener, 1994). Specifically, in a “religion as culture” perspective (Williams, 1996) in the broader social sciences, religion has been conceived as a particular cultural system which constitutes and justifies the

social and moral order of a given society and constitutes the phenomenological worldview of its members. This view has permeated the emerging research on the role of religion within the marketplace. In particular, previous studies have largely explored religious dynamics in the context of, or with the predominant assumption of, self-contained consumer cultures, whereby religion and its marketplace implications have been examined at the level of content and meaning (e.g., norms and values) of individual religious traditions. Therefore, in conceptualizing these intersections between religion, marketing and consumption, religion has been largely conceptualized as belief systems which generate differences in the practices of consumers and marketers within or across cultures (e.g. Minton, Kahle, & Kim, 2015). In short, religion has been lensed through a view of consumer culture as homogenous, ordered, singular, and bounded.

In light of multicultural realities within contemporary marketplaces, what is less developed is an account of the role of religious practices with respect to cultural diversity in the broader societies in which religious groupings are embedded. This prompts us to consider, in the context of increasing globalization and the emergence of multicultural marketplaces (Demangeot et al., 2015), how are we to reframe the role of religion? Specifically, given that within multicultural marketplaces, where multiple cultural forces converge at one point of concurrent interaction, while also being connected to multiple cultures in other localities (Kipnis et al., 2013), it appears that marketers should pay more

* Corresponding author at: Department of Marketing, Business School, The University of Auckland, Owen G Glenn Building, 12 Grafton Road, Auckland Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142, New Zealand.

E-mail address: y.seo@auckland.ac.nz (Y. Seo).

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.07.022>

Received 22 September 2016; Received in revised form 28 July 2017; Accepted 29 July 2017

0148-2963/ © 2017 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

attention to the broader transcultural properties (Welsch, 1999) of religion that transcend specific religious traditions. In essence, we are yet to develop an understanding of the role of religion as a transcultural resource in the context of accelerated and complex cultural flows within multicultural marketplaces (Appadurai, 1997).

To redress these theoretical asymmetries, we shift our attention beyond religion as a belief system toward religion as a field of transcultural practices (Welsch, 1999). Specifically, through in-depth interviews with 24 Southeast Asians living in Auckland, New Zealand who represent a range of religious affiliations and countries of origin, we demonstrate how consumption practices within religious fields enable entry (i.e. assisting border crossing, enabling social capital accumulation) and facilitate mutual entanglement (i.e. fostering intercultural competency development, sharing of cultural consumption rituals, and enabling flows of material resources) within multicultural marketplaces. In doing so, this paper makes two contributions to the literature on religion and marketing. First, this paper sheds light on how religion enables entry into and intensifies mutual entanglement of consumption within multicultural marketplaces. Second, in addition to the present focus on how religion produces differences in marketplace behaviors, we underline the transcultural properties of religion which are shared across diverse religious traditions. Overall, these practices demonstrate how religion can perform an important role in facilitating the transcultural character of contemporary multicultural marketplaces.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. First, we provide a brief review of the emerging literature on religion, consumption and marketing, and then discuss how reframing religion through the concept of transculturality can provide novel insights into the roles that the shared practices of religious communities play in shaping multicultural marketplaces. Next, we discuss the methodology and present findings from our situated investigation of consumers acculturating to New Zealand, where we highlight the transcultural practices of religion within a multicultural marketplace. Finally, the paper concludes with a discussion of conceptual contributions, alongside implications for how managers and policymakers might reframe predominant approaches to religious communities.

2. Religion, consumption and marketing

In examining the intersections between religion, consumption and marketing, scholars have predominantly conceptualized religion as a worldview or belief system which influences the psychology and behavior of various marketplace actors. In a recent special issue of the *Journal of Business Research*, religion is defined as “a system of belief that recognizes a divine power (or powers) as the creator and ruler of the universe” (Engelland, 2014, p. 2). These religious beliefs are expressed through dictates and practices which mean that religious worldviews have the potential to structure and influence the practices of marketers and consumers.

In this vein, religious affiliation and religiosity (Wilkes, Burnett, & Howell, 1986) have been conceptualized as individual and group level variables which influence various aspects of consumer behavior and consumer responses to marketing actions (Hirschman, 1983). While religious affiliation is a categorical variable, religiosity is a continuous construct defined as “the degree to which beliefs in specific religious values and ideals are held and practiced by an individual” (Swinyard et al., 2001, p. 17). Religious affiliation and religiosity have been shown to influence shopping behavior (Essoo & Dibb, 2004), consumers' motivations to engage in relationships with marketers (Sheth & Parvatlyar, 1995), and family decision making (Delener, 1994). Recently, scholars have paid particular attention to how religiosity influences ethical or socially responsible marketplace behaviors (Engelland, 2014; Minton et al., 2015).

Scholars in the social sciences have further shown how individuals' religiosity influences their level of prejudice toward ethnic minority groups. Allport and Ross (1967) demonstrated that people with intrinsic

religious orientations, for whom their religious ‘quest’ provides a guiding master narrative, were less prejudiced than people with extrinsic religious orientations, for whom religious participation serves as a means to other ends, such as social status and belonging. This latter group was, in turn, found to be less prejudiced than people who were high in religious fundamentalism (Allport & Ross, 1967; Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992). In these ways, individual differences in religiosity suggest how religion might fuel or hinder cross-cultural interactions.

Thus, recent investigations of the intersections between religion and marketing consider religion to be a stable belief system which provides an explanatory force for diverse attitudes and behaviors within marketplaces. In other words, religion has been conceptualized as a “micro-culture” or a form of within-country heterogeneity (Steenkamp, 2001; see also Cleveland, Laroche, & Hallab, 2013). Another stream of research has also looked at cross-national differences in religiosity and its impact on consumer behavior (Lindridge, 2005; Minton et al., 2015). In particular, religiosity has been theorized as a driver of cultural values such as individualism and collectivism, materialism, and conspicuous consumption (Lindridge, 2005). While not synonymous with ethnicity, in the case of ethnic minority consumers, religious values and dominant cultural practices can be said to be co-constitutive and entangled (Jamal, 2003).

While these pioneering studies are informative, the current literature on religion and the marketplace warrants further development in two areas. First, there is scope to consider the role of religion in relation to the dynamics and complexities of multicultural contexts and marketplaces, in which “marketers and consumers of different backgrounds co-exist, interact and adapt to each other” (Jamal, 2003, p. 1599). In particular, given that religion is an important aspect of culture (Delener, 1994) and that multicultural complexities have been recognized as the new normal for contemporary markets, what role does religion then play in shaping these multicultural marketplaces? Second, by conceptualizing religion as a characteristic of individuals or groups, marketing scholars have largely treated religious affiliation and religiosity as a source of marketplace difference rather than as a source of marketplace convergence. However, given the transnational spread of religious ideologies, organizations, and practices, it is not inconceivable that, in the same way that transcultural characteristics may be held in common across national cultures (Steenkamp, 2001), religions can also have shared practices and social functions which are held in common and transcend the differences of specific belief systems. Beyond looking at religion as an individual or group characteristic and focusing on differences which arise at the level of norms and beliefs, might a view of religion through the lens of transculturality (Welsch, 1999) enable further insights about the role that religion plays with respect to multicultural marketplaces? To develop these inter-related strands further, in the next section we review recent discussions on transculturality and multicultural marketplaces.

3. Conceptual background

3.1. Cultural dynamics and transculturality

Complex cultural dynamics that are emerging through globalization (Appadurai, 1997) have become important considerations for marketing scholars and practitioners. As a result, various sociological concepts, such as ‘cross-cultural’ (e.g., Munson & McIntyre, 1979), ‘intercultural’ (Griffith & Harvey, 2001), and ‘multicultural’ (Craig & Douglas, 2006) have been used to conceptualize and describe how cultural dynamics impact consumer behavior and marketing practice. At first glance, these concepts may seem (and sometimes are used by marketing scholars) as interchangeable. However, in other social disciplines, such as anthropology (e.g., Brink, 1994; Welsch, 1999), they are viewed as distinctly different.

Specifically, the concepts describing cultural dynamics vary in terms

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7424816>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7424816>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)