



Research Review

The effects of religion on consumer behavior: A conceptual framework and research agenda

Daniele Mathras<sup>a,\*</sup>, Adam B. Cohen<sup>b</sup>, Naomi Mandel<sup>c</sup>, David Glen Mick<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup> D'Amore-McKim School of Business, Northeastern University, 360 Huntington Ave, 202D Hayden Hall, Boston, MA 02115, USA

<sup>b</sup> Arizona State University, Department of Psychology, P. O. Box 871104, 950 S. McAllister Ave., Tempe, AZ 85287-1104, USA

<sup>c</sup> Arizona State University, W. P. Carey School of Business, Department of Marketing, P. O. Box 874106, Tempe, AZ 85287-4106, USA

<sup>d</sup> University of Virginia, McIntire School of Commerce, Department of Marketing, P. O. Box 400173, Charlottesville, VA 22904, USA

Accepted by Cornelia Pechmann and Amna Kirmani, Editors; Associate Editor, Siegfried DeWitte

Received 29 January 2014; received in revised form 25 June 2015; accepted 6 August 2015

Available online 13 August 2015

Abstract

This article provides a conceptual framework for studying the effects of religion on consumer behavior, with the goal of stimulating future research at the intersection of these two topics. We delineate religion as a multidimensional construct and propose that religion affects consumer psychology and behavior through four dimensions—beliefs, rituals, values, and community. For each dimension of religion, we offer definitions and measures, integrate previous findings from research in the psychology, consumer behavior, marketing, and religion literatures, and propose testable future research directions. With this conceptual framework and research agenda, we challenge consumer researchers to ask deeper questions about why religious affiliation and level of religiosity may be driving previously established differences in consumer behavior, and to uncover the psychological mechanisms underlying the effects. This framework complements and extends previous literature and provides a new delineated framework for considering research on the effects of religion on consumer behavior.

© 2015 Society for Consumer Psychology. Published by Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Religion; Beliefs; Rituals; Values; Community; Conceptual framework

Contents

Introduction . . . . . 299
Conceptual framework: Dimensions of religion . . . . . 300
Beliefs. . . . . 300
Definitions and measures . . . . . 300
Religious beliefs about the afterlife. . . . . 301
Religious beliefs about external sources of control . . . . . 301
Rituals . . . . . 302
Definitions and measures . . . . . 302
Religious cleansing rituals . . . . . 302
Religious rituals and time orientation. . . . . 303
Values. . . . . 303
Definitions and measures . . . . . 303
Religious values and self-control . . . . . 304
Religious values and forgiveness . . . . . 304

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: d.mathras@neu.edu (D. Mathras), adamcohen@asu.edu (A.B. Cohen), naomi.mandel@asu.edu (N. Mandel), dmick@virginia.edu (D.G. Mick).

Community . . . . .	305
Definitions and measures . . . . .	305
Religious community and the need to belong . . . . .	305
Religious community and cultural dimensions . . . . .	306
Discussion . . . . .	306
Religion versus culture and personality . . . . .	306
Religiously unaffiliated consumers . . . . .	307
Challenges and opportunities for conducting religion research . . . . .	308
Limitations and future directions . . . . .	308
Concluding remarks . . . . .	308
References . . . . .	308

## Introduction

Religion is an important part of life for most individuals, with 80% of people worldwide affiliating with a religion (Pew Forum, 2012) and over 70% of Americans reporting that their religious beliefs affect their daily behaviors (Pew Forum, 2008). Religion influences a variety of consumer behaviors, such as information seeking and product innovativeness (Hirschman, 1981). Studying the effects of religion on consumer behavior is important, among other reasons, because consumers communicate their religious identities to others and express the intensity of their beliefs through consumption choices (Minkler & Coşgel, 2004). Consumer researchers have become increasingly interested in the topic of religion. To quantify this trend, we identified every article in the *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *Journal of Consumer Research*, *Journal of Marketing Research*, *Journal of Marketing*, and *Marketing Science* that mentioned “religion” in its text from 1992 to 2014 ( $N = 180$  articles). Between 1992 and 2006, an average of five articles mentioning religion was published per year in these journals. This figure has grown to an average of over 13 articles per year since 2007. However, while mentions of religion are on the rise, still only a small percentage of articles feature religion as a main theoretical element.

Prominent psychologists have long noted the crucial importance of studying religion to better understand human nature and functioning in daily life (e.g., Allport, 1950; Durkheim, 1912/1995; James, 1902). In “The Varieties of Religious Experience,” William James (1902) suggested that studying religious experience offers the potential for breakthroughs in understanding fundamental human psychology. However, few mainstream psychology researchers have taken up this suggestion (Cohen, 2015). Some consumer psychologists have noted the importance of religion in consumer behavior, but to date, most have only focused on the role of religiosity (the intensity to which an individual affiliates, participates, and believes in any religion; see Bjarnason, 2007; Vitell, 2009) or the general notion of what constitutes the sacred in contemporary consumer life (e.g., Belk, Wallendorf, & Sherry, 1989). Fewer scholars have addressed the effects of specific religious beliefs, rituals, values or community structures on consumer behavior, which is the central purpose of our review and research agenda.

To date, the study of religion in consumer research has been largely qualitative and situated within the paradigmatic arena of Consumer Culture Theory (CCT). CCT researchers have investigated the religious-like aspects of consumer culture (e.g., Cult of Macintosh, Belk & Tumbat, 2005), the sacralization of consumption (Belk et al., 1989), and the socializing role of religion in one’s consumer identity development (McAlexander, DuFault, Martin, & Schouten, 2014). In marketing research, the study of religion has largely focused on the topic of segmentation, which involves dividing the market into segments based on religious affiliation or level of religiosity and serving those segments differently (e.g., Minton & Kahle, 2013). Examples of religious segmentation include avoiding marketing pork products to Jews or Muslims due to *kosher* and *halal* religious laws (e.g., Ahmad, Rustam, & Dent, 2011; Alserhan, 2010). However, studies of the effects of religion on consumer psychology and behavior are scattered and have yet to be systematized, and much more remains to be discovered and explained. Additional theory development and quantitative work are needed to enhance our understanding of how religion influences consumption.

In this paper, we present a new conceptual framework for conducting research on the effects of religion on consumer behavior, following the general goals of conceptual frameworks and propositional inventories that delineate a conceptual entity (MacInnis, 2011). While religion is often studied as religious affiliation or level of religiosity, we discuss how religion affects consumer psychology and behavior through four dimensions. We identify these dimensions of religion—beliefs, rituals, values, and community (building on Saroglou, 2011)—by conducting a review of religion research in consumer behavior, marketing, psychology, and religious studies. We integrate findings from these diverse streams to illustrate how each religious dimension differentially affects consumer behavior outcomes, such as brand relationships, compensatory consumption, product choice, and pro-social behaviors. We take both a backward-looking (i.e., reviewing past literature) and forward-looking (i.e., developing propositions for future research) approach to delineate the multidimensional construct of religion and provide a roadmap for future research.

Our main premise is that religion affects consumer behavior through four dimensions (beliefs, rituals, values, community) and often interacts with various consumer states and conditions to affect consumption. As such, religion may disrupt or enhance (i.e., moderate) established relationships between consumer

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/881991>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/881991>

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