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Lizhu Davis

California State University, Fresno, lidavis@csufresno.edu

Tun-Min Catherine Jai

Texas Tech University, catherine.jai@ttu.edu

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Religiosity, Faith Driven Consumption, and Apparel Shopping Orientation

Lizhu Davis, California State University, Fresno, USA
Tun-Min (Catherine) Jai, Texas Tech University, USA

Keywords: Religiosity, shopping orientation, faith, consumption

Background and purposes: Despite the important role that religion plays in human society, few researchers study its role in the marketplace. Also, among limited academic papers published in marketing and consumer behavior journals, a majority of studies use religiosity to measure the effect of religion on consumer behavior; however, findings are inconsistent. One reason is the validity of measurement scales. Religiosity alone may not be enough for similar studies. Constructs that directly measure the impact of religion and faith in the marketplace might be more effective. This study, therefore, attempted to probe a new concept, faith driven consumption (FDC), which has evolved among US Christian consumers (Faithnomics.com, 2012) by examining 1) relationship between religiosity and faith driven consumption, 2) influence of faith driven consumption and apparel shopping orientation.

Faith driven consumers refer to devout Christian consumers whose consumption and shopping behavior is strongly influenced by Christian values and worldviews (Faithnomics.com, 2012). This segment of consumers accounts for 17% of the US population, or 41 million people. By size, it is similar to the Hispanic segment of the market; however, with \$1.75 trillion, the annual spending power of this segment is 75% more than that of the Hispanic segment (Faithnomics.com, 2012). Strong moral and Christian values rather than simple consumer needs drive their purchase decisions in the marketplace. In this study, the authors define the consumption behavior based on the biblical views and teachings as faith driven consumption (FDC). Based on the literature review, six hypotheses were developed:

- FDC has a positive relationship with religiosity (H1), brand loyalty (H3), quality consciousness (H5), and fashion consciousness (H6).
- FDC has a negative relationship with brand consciousness (H2) and price consciousness (H4)

Methodology: An online survey was developed to measure consumers' religiosity, FDC, apparel shopping orientation, and demographic characteristics. The study used Religious Commitment Inventory (Worthington et al., 2003) for religiosity and adopted consumer style inventory (Sproles & Kendall, 1986) for apparel shopping orientation. The faith driven consumption is measured by a scale developed by the authors. Undergraduate students from a major state university in the southwestern United States recruited participants using social media such as Facebook over a two month period. A total of 668 respondents participated in the study, resulting in 333 usable responses of Christian respondents used for this study.

Analysis and results: A Confirmative Factor Analysis was first used to test the measurement model. Then the variance-covariance matrices were used to estimate the hypothesized path

model with Maximum Likelihood estimation. The results of the SEM model suggested a good model fit for hypotheses testing (Hu & Bentler, 1999), $\chi^2 (df=196) = 296.94, p < .001, CFI = .97, TLI = .96, SRMR = .05, RMSEA = .04$, with the 90% confidence interval $.03 \sim .05$. Thus, no modification indices were used to re-specify the model. The path model shows that H1 and H3 were supported. H4 was marginally supported ($p < .10$). Also, contrary to the hypothesis, FDC was found to have a positive relationship with brand loyalty.

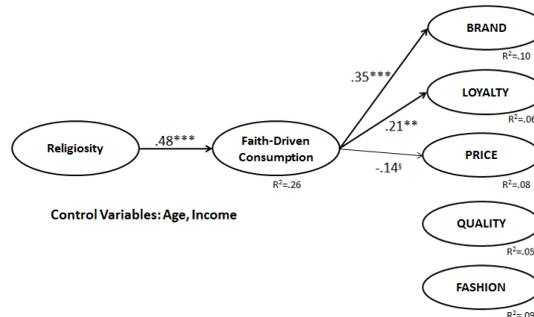
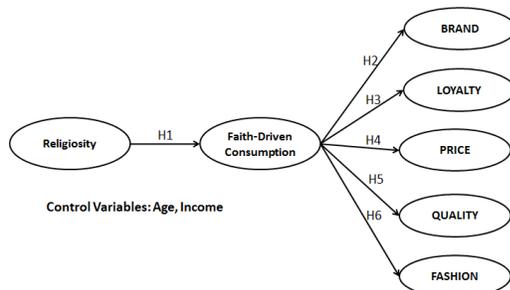


Figure 1: Proposed research model

Figure 2: Path model result

Findings and conclusions: The findings reveal that religiosity positively affect FDC, which means consumers with higher levels of religiosity were more likely to use biblical values to make purchase decisions. The findings also reveal that devout Christian US consumers whose consumption behavior is strongly influenced by Christian values were more likely to be brand conscious, brand loyal, but less price conscious. However, Davis and Jai (2014) find that consumers with higher levels of religiosity were more quality conscious, fashion conscious, and price conscious, but were neither brand conscious nor brand loyal. It appears that the FDC construct has mediating effects between religiosity and consumer behavior. Therefore, faith driven consumption may be an effective construct for investigating the relationship between religion and consumers' consumption behavior.

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