

THE MOTIVATIONAL APPROACH OF RELIGION: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF RELIGIOUS ORIENTATION ON CUSTOMER BEHAVIOUR

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Abstract

Most marketing studies used religious affiliation, religious commitment, and religiosity in measuring the influence of religion on customers' attitudes and behaviors. This study sheds light on the religious orientation as another religious factor that researchers should examine its influence to provide further understanding in the existing research models on customers' behaviors. The present study concludes that the religious orientation construct and its scale (ROS) should be used independently from other religious factors, such as, religious affiliation and religious commitment (religiosity).

Keywords: religion, religious orientation, religiosity, religious commitment, customer behavior

INTRODUCTION

Despite globalization and liberalization, religion still has an influence on customers (Al-Hyari, Alnsour, Al-Weshah, & Haffar, 2012). “The global and local social and political development has pushed for greater religious involvement in everyday life”(Hashim, Hussin, & Zainal, 2014, p. 119). Religion serves as a general guideline in understanding consumers’ attitudes and behaviors (Al-Hyari *et al.*, 2012; Minton, Kahle, & Kim, 2015). Religion also plays an important role in forming individuals’ belief system, social values, and knowledge (Swimberghe, Flurry, & Parker, 2011). Although religion cannot fully explain individuals’ attitudes and behaviors, recognizing its significance can provide a holistic and valuable understanding towards consumer behavior issues (Minton *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, the significance of religion cannot be separated from individuals’ life (Whitley, 2012). Religion consists of five dimensions (Figure 1): 1) religious affiliation (RA), 2) religious commitment (RC), 3) religious orientation (RO), 4) religious knowledge (RK), and 5) social consequences (SC). More specifically, religious commitment reflects individual’s adherence towards specific religious beliefs, values, and practices (Worthington *et al.*, 2003). Religious affiliation reflects a specific religion membership (Essoo & Dibb, 2004), while religious orientation reflects individuals’ intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in following their religion (Karami, Olfati, & Dubinsky, 2014; Muhamad & Mizerski, 2010). In other words, religious commitment reflects individuals’ religious adherence, while religious orientation reflects their religious motivation.

Investigating the influence of religious dimensions on consumers’ behaviors of different religious beliefs is essential (Muhamad & Mizerski, 2010). It is vital for researchers to identify which religious dimension that can better explain customers’ attitudes and behaviors (Souiden & Jabeur, 2015). There is also a need to recognize the influence of religious dimensions on customer’s behaviors through appropriate research frameworks due to the limited marketing understanding of the religious significance (Muhamad & Mizerski, 2010). A review of the literature illustrates that previous marketing studies mainly used religious affiliation and religious commitment (religiosity) to measure the religious influences on customers’ attitudes and behaviors. Marketing researchers did not allocate much attention on other religious dimensions, such as, religious orientation, religious knowledge, and societal consequences (Muhamad & Mizerski, 2010). The literature review also shows that limited studies on the influence of religious orientation on customer’s attitudes and behaviors use the scale of Allport and Ross (1967). Thus, researchers are recommended to examine customer’s religious orientation (e.g. Alam *et al.*, 2012; Karamiet *al.*, 2014; Kashif *etal.*, 2015; Minton *et al.*, 2015). According to Weinberger-litman, Rabin, and Fogel (2016), recognizing individuals’ religious orientation is considered an important research in order to realize the real influence of religion. This study

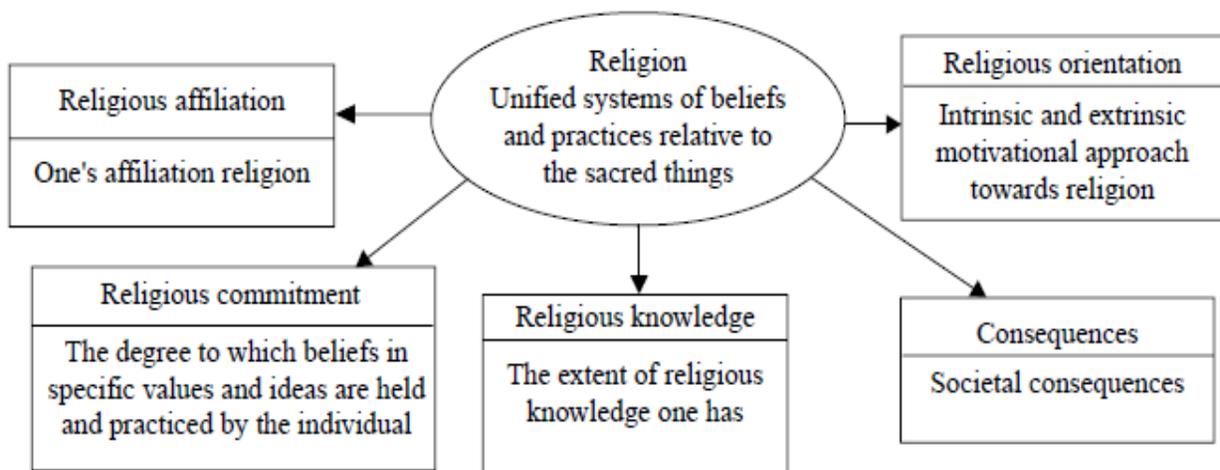
argues that religious orientation or the motivation approach of religion can be used effectively in examining customer's attitudes and behavior.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Religion

Researchers have presented different definitions of religion based on various perspectives (Mokhlis, 2009; Wilkes, Burnett, & Howell, 1986). Religion reflects individuals' religious convictions accompanied with their commitment to follow specific religious beliefs (McDaniel & Burnett, 1990). Religion is also defined as "*unified systems of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things*" (Muhamad & Mizerski, 2010, p.125). "*It relates specifically to a person's relationship with a supreme being and how an individual expresses that relationship in society*" (Mokhlis, 2008, p. 123). According to Jafari (2012), using a universal definition of religion may distract researchers from understanding the nature and influence of different religious convictions. A review of the literature shows inconsistencies underlying the perception and understanding of the religion definition (Mokhlis, 2009). McDaniel and Burnett (1990) are of the opinion that religion should be defined based on the research setting. Definitions for religion have also changed over time as a result of digressive processes (Jafari, 2012). Previous discussions imply that providing a definition for religion is considered a challenging task (Laher, 2007). Moreover, "Religion is a significant part of human life and influences many aspects of people's beliefs, attitudes and behaviour, which all have consumption implications". (Hashim et al., 2014, p. 120) Muhamad and Mizerski (2010) opined that religion affects customers' behavior through five independent religious factors, as illustrated in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: The Components of Religious Influences (Religion)



Source: Muhamad & Mizerski (2010)

Religious Orientation

Religious orientation (Allport & Ross, 1967) represents individuals' intrinsic and extrinsic motivations towards their religion (Muhamad & Mizerski, 2010). Religious orientation consists of two dimensions: 1) intrinsic religious orientation (IRO) and 2) extrinsic religious orientation (ERO) (Allport & Ross, 1967; Meagher, 2015; Noble, Galbraith, Singh, & Stiles, 2007). Allport and Ross (1967) conceptualized religious orientation scale (ROS) to measure individuals' religious orientation in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic measures. ROS assists researchers to identify whether persons are intrinsically motivated to live their religion or extrinsically motivated to use their religion (Laher, 2007).

ROS has been argued to have a consistent construct validity (Delener, 1994). Intrinsic and extrinsic orientations are popular and reliable religious scales (Allport & Ross, 1967; King & Crowther, 2004; Laher, 2007; Mansori, Sambasivan, & Md-Sidin, 2015; Noble et al., 2007). A review of The literature shows that researchers from psychology, sociology and marketing fields have successfully used ROS in measuring the religious influences (e.g. Delener, 1990; Essoo & Dibb, 2004; Lin, Yeh, Wu, & Lee, 2015; Masters, Hill, Kircher, Lensegrav Benson, & Fallon, 2004; Moltafet, Mazidi, & Sadati, 2010; Steffen, Clayton, & Swinyard, 2015; Tahmasbipour & Taheri, 2011). ROS consists of twenty items to identify the nature of individuals' religious orientations (Laher, 2007). There are eleven items on extrinsic perspective and nine items on intrinsic perspective (Allport & Ross, 1967; Essoo & Dibb, 2004). The ROS of Allport and Ross (1967) was originally developed for Judaism and Christianity (Mokhlis, 2009). In this regard, Yousaf and Malik (2013) are of the opinion that counting the religious attendance of Muslim females in ROS is not appropriate in measuring their religiosity, and it has been advised that researchers modify this scale to suit other religious contexts.

Allport and Ross (1967) presented the most popular framework to understand the religious life of individuals (Meagher, 2015). Religious orientation is a well-known approach to study the religion influences through two religious categories of emotions (IRO and ERO) (Meagher, 2015). However, Batson (1976) suggested "quest orientation" as a third component for the construct of religious orientation, and it represents an individual's motivation or openness to the religious developments (Meagher, 2015). More specifically, intrinsic individuals practice religion as a way of life, whilst extrinsic individuals practice religion to attain specific advantages (Allport & Ross, 1967; King & Crowther, 2004). Additionally, quest orientation leads individuals to accept doubts, questions, and uncertainty with the belief that religious dogmas keep growing and changing over time (Meagher, 2015). In relation to this, Lavric and Flere (2011) argued that intrinsic orientation and perceived religious rewards is composed of only one construct where intrinsic believers tend to have strong expectations in getting certain rewards

from supernatural-agents, indicating that intrinsic orientation is not free from instrumental motivations (extrinsic-motivation).

Based on intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, people can be categorized into four main categories. The first category is known as the “non-religious group”. This refers to people with low intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. The second category is known as the “intrinsic group”. This refers to people with high intrinsic-motivation and low extrinsic-motivation. The third category is known as “extrinsic group”. The group refers to people with high extrinsic-motivation and low intrinsic-motivation. The last category is the “indiscriminate group”. These are people with high intrinsic and extrinsic motivations (Day & Hudson, 2011).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As illustrated in Figure 1, religion construct consists of five independent religious components. Souiden and Rani (2015) stated that using religiosity to refer to religion has become popular in recent studies (e.g. Swinyard, Kau, & Phua, 2001). Several researchers from business, psychological, and sociological backgrounds have also used religiosity and religious orientation interchangeably (e.g. Amrai, Zalani, Arfai, & Sharifian, 2011; Błazek & Besta, 2012; Delener, 1990, 1994; Felix & Braunsberger, 2016; Flere, 2007; Laufer & Solomon, 2011; Steffen, Clayton, & Swinyard, 2015). This approach might explain why researchers have used the ROS to measure both individual's religiosity (religion) and religious orientation. For instance, Felix and Braunsberger (2016) have used religiosity (religion) and religious orientation interchangeably. As a result, the ROS has been used as a convenient religious measurement.

On the other hand, several studies viewed religiosity, either as a religious-motivation (religious orientation), or as a religious-commitment (religious adherence) (Felix & Braunsberger, 2016). This conceptualization reflects confusion about understanding and using both religious-commitment (RC) and religious-orientation (RO) since these concepts are different as clarified earlier. In addition to this, researchers from different fields have used religiosity and religious-commitment (religious adherence) interchangeably (e.g. Ellison, Gay, & Glass, 1989; Essoo & Dibb, 2004; Jamal & Sharifuddin, 2015; Martin & Bateman, 2014; Mokhlis, 2008, 2009a; Noble et al., 2007; Siala, 2013; Swimberghe, Sharma, & Flurry, 2009). RC is often termed as religiosity (Essoo & Dibb, 2004; Mokhlis, 2009). Thus, using the ROS or the motivational approach of religion to measure religious commitment or religiosity can be considered as an inconsistent procedure.

Researchers such as Essoo and Dibb (2004); Noble et al. (2007); Francis and Crea (2015); and Karaosmanoglu and Isiksal (2016) have used ‘religiosity’ and ‘religious orientation’ interchangeably specifically in describing the dimensions or types of religious orientation

(intrinsic-religiosity and extrinsic-religiosity). A review of the literature shows that: Amrai *et al.* (2011) used 'religiosity', 'religious inclination', and 'religious orientation' interchangeably; Tahmasbipour and Taheri (2011) used 'religious orientation' and 'religious attitude' interchangeably; Delener (1990; 1994) used 'religiosity', 'religious involvement', and 'religious orientation' interchangeably; and Masters *et al.* (2004) used 'religiousness' and 'religiosity' interchangeably. In this regard, Laher (2007) stated that 'religious commitment', 'religiosity', 'religion', 'religiousness', 'religious beliefs', and 'faiths' are sometimes used interchangeably. This inconsistency might explain why researchers mixed the usage of religiosity and religious orientation. However, other researchers such as Ahmadi, Davoudi, Mardani, Ghazaei, & ZareZadegan (2013) distinguished between the concepts and scales of religious orientation and religiosity. This discussion reveals that previous studies operationalized the religious factors based on different views and understandings. This inconsistent approach has led other researchers to be confounded and inconsistent in defining and employing different religious factors and scales.

A review of the literature demonstrates inconsistency in measuring the religious influences using the ROS. Several studies have used it to measure a gamut of dimensions, such as, the influence of religion, religiosity, religious commitment, and religious orientation on customers' attitudes and behaviors. According to King and Crowther (2004); Mansori *et al.* (2015); and Mokhlis (2009), ROS is one of the various scales used to study the influence of religiosity. In relation to this, marketing researchers have mostly used two religious scales to measure customers' religiosity: 1) religious commitment inventory (RCI-10) and 2) religious orientation scale (ROS-20) (Yousaf & Malik, 2013). Additionally, business researchers such as Essoo and Dibb (2004) measured religiosity (religious commitment) using ROS, while Jamal and Sharifuddin (2015) and Swimberghe *et al.* (2009) used RCI-10 to measure customer's religiosity (religious commitment). On the other hand, sociological and psychological scholars have largely used ROS to measure individuals' religious orientation (e.g. Ahmadi *et al.*, 2013; Manshaee & Amini, 2013; Masters *et al.*, 2005; Masters *et al.*, 2004; Moltafet *et al.*, 2010; Rodriguez & Henderson, 2010).

The literature review shows that earlier studies have not measured individuals' religious orientation using the ROS in any Arab-Islamic context. Most previous studies have investigated religious orientation in relation to western and non-Arab samples. This point out that the findings of these studies apply only to their contexts and samples (Laher, 2007). In addition, Souiden and Rani (2015) stated that most religion or religiosity scales including the ROS were originally developed for Christian contexts, and using these scales to measure Muslims' religiosity (religion) might provide inaccurate findings. Consequently, researchers from different religious

contexts are encouraged to modify these scales or even create new relevant scales to effectively understand religiosity effects. Besides the research settings, several studies have not considered careful attention to the sample distribution by mainly relying on student samples in measuring the influence of religious orientation. This procedure can provide unreliable results since ordinary people differ from students in terms of demographic factors (Meagher, 2015).

Despite the popularity of the ROS in measuring religious orientation, some researchers have modified this scale either by increasing or decreasing its items (e.g. Swinyard *et al.*, 2001; Ramlee *et al.*, 2016; Meagher, 2015). On the other hand, other researchers have used different scales for measuring religious orientation construct (e.g. Francis & Crea, 2015; Karaosmanoglu & Isiksal, 2016; Merrill, Steffen, & Hunter, 2012). This indicates that the use of specific religious scale depends mainly on the research objective and nature.

Without realizing individuals' religious orientation or what religiously motivate them, the religious influences on various issues could be unnoticeable (Weinberger-Litman *et al.*, 2016). Researchers have been asked to investigate the religious orientation of various religions since it is expected that the perceptions of intrinsic and extrinsic orientations might differ across different religious groups (Laher, 2007). Day and Hudson (2011) also stated that researchers should examine the influence of religious orientation from various directions and contexts to have a better understanding of religious values. Minton *et al.* (2015) advised business researchers to study individuals' religious orientation based on the ROS to understand their intrinsic and extrinsic personalities.

Due to the modest use of religious orientation in the marketing literature, Muhamad and Mizerski (2010) have advised researchers to examine its effectiveness in studying religious influences on customers' behaviors. This study argued that religious orientation has been insufficiently recognized and examined by marketing researchers. As most studies have focused on religious commitment and religious affiliation (Essoo & Dibb, 2004; Karami *et al.*, 2014; Muhamad & Mizerski, 2010). Marketers are advocated to examine customers' religious orientations in various settings due to its significance (Kashif, Awang, Walsh, & Altaf (2015). Alam *et al.* (2012) have also stated that religious orientation must be integrated into the models of product's credibility and customers' loyalty.

The universality of religious orientation offers less complications in examining the religious influences of different religions on customers' behaviors compared to the measurement of religious-commitment (Muhamad & Mizerski, 2010). According to Donahue (1985), both intrinsic and extrinsic measures are powerful explanatory tools. Religious orientation is also a convenient approach to describe the religious influences on customers' behaviors due to its significance (Delener, 1994; Muhamad & Mizerski, 2010). This study concludes that researchers

should use religious orientation and its scale (ROS) independently from other religious factors (e.g. religious commitment or religiosity) in measuring the religious influences on customers' attitudes and behaviors. A review of the literature reveals that limited studies investigated the influence of religion (e.g. religious orientation) on important marketing factors such as trust, perceived image, perceived quality, attitudes, satisfaction, purchasing intentions, and customer's loyalty. Thus, future researchers are advised to consider these gaps to shed more light on how religion impacts consumers' attitudes and behaviors. Examining the influence of religion through other religious dimensions is also recommended. Taking additional religious factors into consideration can provide a better understanding of consumption behaviors, due to the interactions between the religion factors (Muhamad & Mizerski, 2010). Future research attempts might also examine the religious influences on business buying situations (McDaniel & Burnett, 1990). This kind of research can add important contribution to the body of literature since limited studies investigated the influence of religion on industrial buying situations. Moreover, marketing researchers are advised to explore further the significance of Halal products and situations (e.g. Hussin, Hashim, Yusof, & Alias, 2013; Osman, Hussin, Yusof, Hashim, Yuhanis, & Nezakati, 2015; Yusoff, Yusof, & Hussin, 2015; Yusof, 2013).

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