

Impact of Religiosity on consumer behavior: A Review Paper

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Abstract

India is an ancient land of religious pluralism and cultural diversity. People in India follow six major faiths (Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Christianity, Buddhism, and Jainism) and speak more than 1600 languages. Regional differences in languages, customs, social system, values, habits, caste system & religion make the social-cultural environment of India very complex.

Keywords: cultural diversity, caste system & religion, religious pluralism.

1. Introduction

India is an ancient land of religious pluralism and cultural diversity. In India, we have our own shared beliefs, values, customs which distinguish us from the rest of the world. People in India follow six major faiths (Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Christianity, Buddhism, and Jainism) and speak more than 1600 languages. Regional differences in languages, customs, social system, values, habits, caste system & religion make the social-cultural environment of India very complex. Over the past decade, the proportion of religious people has either declined or stagnated in most countries. India seems to have been an exception, according to data from the World Values Survey (WVS), the

largest global repository of data on attitudes and beliefs of individuals across the world, more than 90% of Indian respondents said religion was either 'very important' or 'rather important' in the latest round of the WVS (2010-14).

It is widely acknowledged that religion has a strong influence on people's belief, personal identity and value systems, all of which have consumption implications. Religion, being an aspect of culture, has considerable influence on people's values, habits and attitudes, and it greatly influences lifestyle, which in turn affects consumer decision behavior (Delener, N. 1994). Religion is an embodiment of the core values of the culture, and as such, plays a central role in the daily lives of the member of any particular cultural group (Mokhlis, S., & Sparks, L. 2007). Religiosity is a different thing from religion but within a particular religion, religiosity also influences the consumers' attitudes and behaviors, according to the values and laws of a particular religion (Mathras. D. et al., 2015).

Religiosity is a significant cultural force influencing various dimensions of consumer behaviors; despite the fact, its role in the literature on consumer durable goods remains unclear. The main purpose of this paper is to find the research

gap through collecting evidence from available set of research papers.

2. Review of Literature

Religion and religiosity are connected but different constructs. Religiosity is one of the central cultural forces and a key influence in buyer behavior (Al-Hyari, K., Alnsour, M., Al-Weshah, G., & Haffar, M. 2012). When individuals are more religious, they are more likely to accept the values and beliefs of their religion, making it more difficult for them to deviate from those religious norms and expectations. Whereas, highly religious consumers would be more likely stick to their current possessions and thus be less likely to search for new and unfamiliar things than would less-religious consumers (Choi, Y., Paulraj, A., & Shin, J. 2013). Hence, religiosity, not the religion consumers practice, is an important factor, or trigger, that significantly impacts consumers' behavior in the marketplace (Bailey, J. M., & Sood, J. 1993; Choi, Y., Paulraj, A., & Shin, J. 2013).

The role of religiousness as a variable in models of consumer behavior is not well-established. The results suggest that attitude toward purchasing and subjective norm were the two most significant determinants of respondents' purchase intention of the product (Aghaei, M., & Abdolmaleki, A. 2016). According to the study, there is a strong relationship between; religiosity and consumer purchasing decision (Al-Hyari, K., Alnsour, M., Al-Weshah, G., & Haffar, M. 2012). Moreover, consumers' religiosity plays an important role in influencing consumer ethical beliefs & religiosity

may discourage religious consumers from engaging in unethical behavior (Arli, D. 2017). Religiosity is a significant indirect determinate of consumer ethical beliefs (Vitell, S. J., & Paolillo, J. G. 2003) and within the context of ethics in consumer behaviour, religiosity works through first engendering feelings of guilt (Bakar, A., Lee, R., & Hashim, N. H. 2013). Person with the strong religious faith have a more sanguine view of the world (Jain, J., & Shukla, S. 2018). Religiosity is an instructive construct in predicting human behaviour and strongly suggest a possible relationship between religiosity and particular aspects of consumer behavior (Khayruzzaman. 2016). Highly religious individual are most likely to be concerned with price, look for quality in product when they shop, and less likely to make impulsive purchase decisions (Mokhlis, S., & Sparks, L. 2007). Religiosity is a viable consumer behavior construct in that, it did correlate with the selected life-style variables (Wilkes, R. E., Burnett, J. J., & Howell, R. D. 1986).

Researchers have studied the effects of religiosity on several aspects of consumer behavior, including luxury brand consumption and female consumers' religiosity (Alserhan, B. A., Bataineh, M. K., Halkias, D., & Komodromos, M. 2014), religiosity and retail store choices (Davis, L. 2016), influence of religiosity on Egyptian Muslim youths' attitude towards fashion (Farrag, D. A., & Hassan, M. 2015), impact of Religion Affiliation and Religiosity on Consumer Innovativeness; The Evidence of Malaysia (Mansori, S. 2012). Study of luxury brand consumption and female consumers' religiosity in the UAE revealed that,

religiosity is not related to luxury consumption in most age groups but demographic variables such as education, employment, marital status and income appear to have an effect on women's luxury consumption decisions more than religiosity (Alserhan, B. A., Bataineh, M. K., Halkias, D., & Komodromos, M. 2014). More committed U. S. Christians are more involved and demanding apparel consumers than less committed ones (Davis, L. 2016). Religious beliefs play an important role in shaping perceptions of Muslims youth towards fashion & ideological, ritual and experiential dimensions demonstrated a weaker negative relationship with the attitude towards fashion (Farrag, D. A., & Hassan, M. 2015). Religiosity has significant and negative effect on innovativeness of consumers. Moreover, the results revealed that, buddhism followers have lowest level of innovativeness, which is a significantly different from followers of Islam,

Christianity and Hinduism (Mansori, S. 2012). The study conducted over the topic of the role of religiosity on the relationship between materialism and fashion clothing consumption among malaysian generation y consumers revealed that, religiosity significantly moderates the relationship between materialism and fashion clothing involvement as well as materialism and fashion clothing purchase involvement (Rahman, M., Albaity, M., & Maruf, B. 2017). Under the title of religiosity, attitude, and the demand for socially responsible products, it is found that, religiosity encourages a positive attitude towards SR products, both directly and indirectly through subjective norm (Graafland, J. 2017).

After a careful review of existing literature relevant to proposed area, it is identified that, religiosity is an important element of culture which influence consumer purchase behavior.

3. Research Gaps

Consumers are influenced by different factors when trying to decide on whether or not to acquire a goods. Although many of these factors like demographic variables, psychographic variables etc. have been thoroughly studied, but in the Indian Context, religiosity as an influential factor in consumers lives, remains largely neglected.

To investigate the relationship between religiosity and consumer purchase behavior, religiosity will treated as the independent variable while consumer purchase behavior will be treated as the dependent variable.

4. Conclusion

Although religiosity is an important element, it is the most unexplored area of the research in the Indian context. In order to fill this existing research gap , research might be conducted in this area.

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