

Effects Of Intrinsic And Extrinsic Religiosity On Attitudes Toward Products: Empirical Evidence Of Value-Expressive And Social-Adjustive Functions

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ABSTRACT

Religiosity affects various aspects of consumer behavior. This research distinguishes two dimensions: Intrinsic religiosity is lived per se, as a personal and intimate value; extrinsic religiosity is an instrument to attain personal goals by connecting with other people. Intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity likely affect the functions of consumers' attitudes toward products, both value-expressive (e.g., to express the individual self) and social-adjustive (e.g., to be accepted by social groups). Intrinsically religious consumers have an inner self defined by their religiosity, so they do not seek social approval. They should have less need for products to express their inner selves or manifest social ties, compared with extrinsically religious consumers. In contrast, extrinsic religiosity may increase both value-expressive and social-adjustive functions of products. Study 1 supports these hypotheses; intrinsic religiosity decreases the value-expressive and social-adjustive functions of consumer attitudes, whereas extrinsic religiosity increases both attitude functions. Study 2 applies these findings to an advertising context and reveals that the purchase intentions of intrinsically religious consumers increase when they view a value-expressive instead of a social-adjustive advertisement. Purchase intentions among extrinsically religious consumers are higher than those of intrinsically religious consumers when they view a social-adjustive advertisement.

Keywords: Consumer Behavior; Intrinsic/Extrinsic Religiosity; Marketing; Social-Adjustive Attitude; Value-Expressive Attitude

INTRODUCTION

Religiosity can be lived at a personal and intimate level, as a core value of the self (intrinsic religiosity), or it can be a source of social connection and personal benefit (extrinsic religiosity). Understanding the distinct effects of intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity remains part of a long-standing debate in religious studies; the difference also might be employed to advance consumer behavior studies. To expand this understanding this study assesses the effects of each dimension of religiosity (intrinsic and extrinsic), rather than religiosity as single variable, while also moving beyond ethics and brands as the preferred targets of religiosity effects. That is, intrinsic/extrinsic religiosity may affect not only consumer ethics or brand attitudes but also consumer attitudes toward products in general. Therefore, this research investigates the effects of intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity on the value-expressive and social-adjustive functions (Wilcox et al., 2009) that consumer attitudes toward products can serve.

Intrinsically religious persons likely define their inner selves by their religiosity, so products cannot add much in terms of fulfilling their personal, value-expressive needs. Their tendency to live their values as intimate principles also may prevent intrinsically religious people from using products to adapt to social situations (i.e., social-adjustive function). Therefore, they should refer less to products as means to satisfy their value-expressive and social-adjustive needs. In contrast, extrinsically religious people do not live religiosity as a source of personal identity or self-expression, so they need products to better define and express their identities. Their emphasis on

social ties also may lead them to use products as social-adjustment tools. Such extrinsically religious people likely attach higher value-expressive and social-adjustive functions to products.

To address these predictions, this article begins with a summary of studies of the effects of religiosity and consumer behavior, as well as an exploration of the differences between intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity. The next section outlines the functional theory of attitudes and presents the research hypotheses regarding the effects of intrinsic/extrinsic religiosity on product attitude functions. The empirical research consists of two studies: Study 1 shows how intrinsic (extrinsic) religiosity reduces (increases) the value-expressive and social-adjustive functions of consumer product attitudes, and then Study 2 applies these results to an advertising context to clarify the effects of different claims (value-expressive vs. social-adjustive claims) on the purchase intentions of intrinsically versus extrinsically religious consumers. This article concludes with some implications for theory and practice.

INTRINSIC/EXTRINSIC RELIGIOSITY AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Religion and religiosity are connected but different constructs. As a recent international survey revealed, “[i]dentifying with a faith tradition did not always equal religiosity. Of the 51,927 people surveyed, 97 percent of the Buddhists, 83 percent of Protestants, 80 percent of Hindus, and 81 percent of Catholics described themselves as religious. The average dropped to 74 percent among Muslims and only 38 percent among Jews” (Reuters, 2012). That is, religiosity and religion can be separate, and being a religious person does not necessarily imply a religious affiliation. Affiliation with a specific religion and the level of the religious intensity (i.e., religiosity) in turn affect consumer behavior through related but different paths (Wilkes et al., 1986). For example, religious beliefs and religious commitment affect consumer ethical judgments and activism consistently but through empirically distinct pathways (Swimberghe et al., 2011a). Religiosity also may have a more dominant role than religion, such that “it appears that religious commitment (rather than affiliation per se) is more relevant for marketers” (Swimberghe et al., 2011b, p. 584). Whereas early studies focused on religion as a powerful predictor of consumer behavior (Hirschman, 1983), more recent studies suggest that specific doctrinal tenets affect consumer attitudes and that the type of religious community moderates the effects of religiosity on consumer ethics (Schneider et al., 2011). Other studies even indicate that religious affiliation does not affect consumers’ evaluations of various retail department store attributes (McDaniel & Burnett, 1990) or that the effects of religious affiliation on consumer ethical idealism and relativism are only partially supported (Cornwell et al., 2005). The resultant focus on religiosity as a more relevant driver of consumer behavior (Vitell, 2009) indicates that these effects may be mediated by consumer ethics (Hunt & Vitell, 1986, 1993), such that religiosity increases idealism and decreases relativism (Vitell & Paolillo, 2003).

Religiosity comprises two main dimensions: intrinsic and extrinsic (Allport, 1950; Allport & Ross, 1967; Donahue, 1985). According to Allport and Ross (1967, p. 434), an “extrinsically motivated person *uses* his religion, whereas the intrinsically motivated *lives* his religion.” That is, for the former, religion is an instrumental value, whereas for the latter, religion is a terminal value. People with an extrinsic motivation use religion for their own ends, whether those ends are hedonic (e.g., social contacts, distraction) or utilitarian (e.g., personal status, business interest), to serve their self-interest rather than acknowledging religious values. People with intrinsic motivations instead regard religious tenets according to their inner value, such that they do not adjust their religious beliefs to their personal interests. Rather, they live the core spirituality of religion and believe in people’s intrinsic worth.

In prior research, “many business/consumer ethics studies have used an extrinsic/intrinsic scale” (Vitell, 2009, p. 159), usually to address the unique impacts on various facets of consumer ethics. In this approach, religiosity is a key source of consumers’ moral reasoning and moral identity. Intrinsic religiosity positively affects people’s willingness to become more moral (Kurpis et al., 2008) and increases their negative evaluations of questionable consumption practices (Patwardhan et al., 2012), such that it has direct effects on consumer ethics (with the exception of the “no harm/no foul” dimension; Vitell et al., 2005, 2006). Extrinsic religiosity does not affect consumer ethics (Patwardhan et al., 2012; Vitell et al., 2005) but does influence the “doing good/recycling dimension” of the consumer ethics scale (Vitell et al., 2007), because of the social acceptability of this behavior. Therefore, intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity exert different effects on consumer behavior and various consumer variables. In general, “while intrinsic religiosity seems to have a determining impact on ethical judgments, extrinsic religiosity has only a very limited impact, or no impact at all” (Vitell, 2009, p. 164). Intrinsic and extrinsic

religiosity even might work in opposite directions, such that one dimension counterbalances the effects of the other, as is likely the case with regard to the internalization of moral identity (Vitell et al., 2009).

Although extensive research addresses the impact of religiosity on consumer ethics, its impacts on other consumer attitudes are less clear, particularly attitudes toward brands (Moschis & Ong, 2011; Rindfleisch et al., 2010). Shachar and colleagues (2011) show that brand reliance (i.e., the relevance that consumers assign to brands) and religiosity are opposing concepts; higher religiosity implies lower brand reliance. They argue the presence of “a compensatory mechanism such that when an individual expresses her self-worth via one medium (be it brands or religion), she needs the other medium less. Thus, brands and religion function as substitutes in expressing self-worth” (Shachar et al., 2011, p. 93). In addition, religion and brands might both foster individual self-expression, such that they serve as substitute routes for satisfying the desire for self-expression. Coherent with their argument, Shachar et al. confirm this effect for product categories in which brands have an expressive role (e.g., clothes, apparel) but not for functional product categories (e.g., batteries).

RELIGIOSITY AND FUNCTIONAL ATTITUDES TOWARD PRODUCTS

According to consumer behavior literature, people build, express, and confirm their identities—and thus their beliefs and core values—through brand consumption (Aaker, 1997; Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Fournier, 1998). Self-expression can be directed toward others or the self. Self-expression toward others is manifested in conspicuous consumption, to signal wealth, social status, personal taste, culture, and belonging to a reference group. Self-expression toward the self instead serves the subjective need to assemble and reaffirm an identity (Fournier, 1998), without necessarily aiming to be accepted by others. Shachar et al. (2011) affirm that religiosity and brands compete as sources of self-expression, such that religiosity can satiate the need for self-expression. More generally, Chernev et al. (2010, p. 67) extend the notion of self-satiation to show that self-expression can be satisfied by multiple “nonbrand means of self-expression, including relevant affiliations, hobbies, and social interactions.” These contributions consistently regard the competition between religiosity and consumption at the brand level; the present study seeks to advance this theory by showing that religiosity also can compete with products, not just brands. That is, religiosity can partly satiate self-expressive needs and compete with product consumption, before consumers even consider brands. In addition, this effect is not as direct as previous literature implies, in that complex religiosity, comprising both intrinsic and extrinsic forms, affects self-expression in various ways.

To understand the effects of religiosity on product consumption, we refer to a functional theory of attitude (Katz, 1960), according to which people hold attitudes because those attitudes perform some functions that benefit them. In a consumption setting, attitudes serve four main functions (Grewal et al., 2004; Katz, 1960; Wilcox et al., 2009): knowledge, or easing the decision-making process and simplifying the choice among complex alternatives; utilitarian or instrumental, such that it helps consumers draw maximum value from products; value-expressive, a function that satisfies the need to express inner values and core identity through products; and social-adjustive helps the person fit in with a social group and comply with the expectations of others. Consumers’ attitudes toward products also determine their preferences.

This study focuses on the value-expressive and social-adjustive functions of products. A person holding value-expressive attitudes prefers a product that effectively represents her or his core values, such that she or he is “motivated to consume it as a form of self-expression” (Wilcox et al., 2009, p. 248). A consumer with social-adjustive attitudes prefers a conspicuous product, to gain acceptance into a reference group or “approval in social situations” (Wilcox et al., 2009, p. 248). Companies can exploit these attitudes and preferences to position their products in markets. A handbag marketed as a long-lasting good made of fine leather elicits the self-esteem of its owner and appeals to consumers with value-expressive attitudes. Another handbag positioned as a good that grants distinctive status to its owner and a sense of belonging to a relevant group of others instead would be more attractive to consumers whose attitudes serve social-adjustive functions.

In summary, consumers’ attitudes toward products depend on the functions expressed in their attitudes. The functions of consumers’ attitudes in turn may depend on their intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity. Intrinsic religiosity should invoke a lower degree of value-expressive and social-adjustive attitudes, because these people already meet their need for self-expression through their religiosity, which they use to express their core values and identity. In

turn, products play a minor role in terms of satisfying the self. Furthermore, they are less interested in the judgments of others, because they live their religiosity more intimately. This approach should affect their attitudes toward products; they do not need products to adjust themselves to fit in with others. It is possible to synthesize these reflections in the following hypotheses.

H1: Higher individual intrinsic religiosity implies a lower (a) value-expressive function and (b) social-adjustive function of consumers' attitudes toward products.

In contrast, extrinsic religiosity implies higher value-expressive and social-adjustive attitudes toward products. Extrinsically religious people live their religious values to connect with others, not to form their inner identity. This approach affects their attitude toward products, which are important for building their identity and relevant for their self-expression. Extrinsic religiosity also should increase the relevance of social-adjustive functions of products, including their image, appearance, or other features that can be assessed by others. Extrinsically religious people seek positive judgments by others, companionship, and social interactions. Thus, they appreciate products that allow them to adapt to social situations. Formally:

H2: Higher extrinsic religiosity implies a higher (a) value-expressive function and (b) social-adjustive function of consumers' attitudes toward products.

As an example, imagine a person with high intrinsic religiosity and low extrinsic religiosity. Her internal identity already is based on her intrinsic religious values; from a social perspective, she does not need the approval of others. Although she still uses products, her value-expressive and social-adjustive functions already are partially satisfied by her intrinsic religiosity. Now imagine another person with low intrinsic religiosity and high extrinsic religiosity. He relies on products to express his identity, both toward himself and others. Yet intrinsic religiosity and extrinsic religiosity also are orthogonal dimensions, so their effects are distinct, and another consumer could score high on both types of religiosity, leading to counterbalanced effects and uncertain attitudes toward products.

Through advertising, marketers can position their specific products as means to satisfy value-expressive or social-adjustive functions. Study 2 therefore investigates how intrinsically and extrinsically religious people respond to ads that issue either value-expressive or social-adjustive claims. Following the preceding reasoning, intrinsically religious people should be less sensitive to both types of ads, such that neither type of advertising radically modifies their purchase intentions. Extrinsically religious people instead may be more sensitive to both value-expressive and social-adjustive ads, responding to them with higher purchase intentions. The following hypothesis summarizes this prediction:

H3: The purchase intentions of extrinsically religious consumers who have been exposed to an advertisement with a (a) value-expressive claim or (b) social-adjustive claim are higher than the purchase intentions of intrinsically religious consumers who see the same ads.

In empirical research, Study 1 addresses the effects of religiosity on attitude functions toward products in general (H1, H2). Study 2 investigates how value-expressive and social-adjustive ads for specific products affect consumers' behavior, according to their intrinsic or extrinsic religiosity (H3).

STUDY 1

Method and Sample

To collect data, an international online questionnaire solicited responses from both a panel of online respondents, each of whom received between \$0.5 and \$1 for completing the survey, and voluntary participants who clicked on a banner in online social media. Each respondent completed the questionnaire, which contained the scales for the four variables under investigation (intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity, value-expressive and social-adjustive functions), as well as common socio-demographic questions (though the answers remained anonymous). Among the 206 questionnaires received, 31 were incomplete and discarded. The final sample of 175 usable questionnaires entered the study analysis. These respondents indicated an average age of 28.2 years (SD = 9.6), ranging from 18 to

68 years. Their geographic regions varied, though the best represented areas were South Asia (42%; e.g., Bangladesh, India, Pakistan), Southeast Asia (25%; e.g., Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam), Africa (12%; e.g., Egypt, Morocco, South Africa), North America (8%), and Europe (6%). The modal occupational category was students (37%), though a variety of professions was represented as well, such as sales managers, self-employed, teachers, and housewives. The religious affiliations of the respondents also included Muslims (47%), Buddhists (17%), Catholics (9%), Protestants (5%), and atheists (12%).

Measures

To ensure the validity of the results, the variable measures used scales already validated in prior literature. The measure of the two dimension of religiosity came from a scale applied in consumer behavior literature by Vitell et al. (2007), who slightly adapted the scale by Allport and Ross (1967), which is the most widely applied religiosity scale (Gorsuch, 1988). Vitell et al. (2007) modified the wording of some items of Allport and Ross’s scale to avoid any reference to a specific religion and account for a general religious orientation. In addition, they included fewer items than the original scale. For this study, a slight modification of Vitell et al.’s (2007) scale resulted from the removal of three reverse-coded items (“It doesn’t much matter what I believe so long as I am good,” “Although I am religious, I don’t let it affect my daily life,” and “Although I believe in my religion, many other things are more important in my life”). These three reverse-coded items are present in the intrinsic dimension and not in the extrinsic dimension, so they created an imbalance in the measurement instrument. De Vellis (2003) also advises against the use of reverse-coded items, because they might create confusion among respondents, which overwhelms any of their benefits. Finally, Allport and Ross (1967) note the tendency of some respondents to agree in generic terms to statements regarding religion, which might multiply their acquiescence bias and lead them to agree with both regular and reverse-coded items. The final religiosity scale employed for this study is in the Appendix.

The general consensus among religious scholars is to treat intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity as two orthogonal factors (Kirkpatrick & Hood, 1990) rather than as poles of a one-dimensional construct. Allport and Ross (1967) observe that in their original scale, the correlation between intrinsic and extrinsic components was very low. Thus, they suggest that intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are not part of a one-dimensional scale but rather represent two independent dimensions, which they refer to as mature and immature religiosity.

Results and Discussion

The reliability assessment shows satisfactory Cronbach’s alpha scores for the value-expressive (.875), social-adjustive (.842), intrinsic religiosity (.834), and extrinsic religiosity (.912) scales, in that they were above the .70 threshold (Nunnally, 1978). The check for common method bias used structural equation modeling (SEM) in AMOS 18, imposing a structure in which a single overall factor represented all items from the four variables. That structure offered unsatisfactory fit ($\chi^2 = 520.377$, $df = 225$, $p < .001$; normed fit index [NFI] = .634, relative fit index [RFI] = .597, confirmatory fit index [CFI] = .609, root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = .137), suggesting common method bias was not an issue. Table 1 includes the main statistics for the variables.

Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations

	Mean	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Intrinsic religiosity	4.73	1.93	(.834)			
2. Extrinsic religiosity	3.83	1.65	.720**	(.912)		
3. Value-expressive function	4.31	1.54	.518**	.572**	(.875)	
4. Social-adjustive function	4.19	1.47	.513**	.589**	.854**	(.842)

Notes: N = 175; the Cronbach’s alpha coefficients are on the diagonal in parentheses. The measures used a 1–7 scale. ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

To verify the effects of the two types of religiosity on value-expressive and social-adjustive functions, SEM using AMOS 18 accounted for the simultaneous effects of variables, which, unlike common regression, enabled the verification of the overall structure of the hypotheses (see Figure 1).

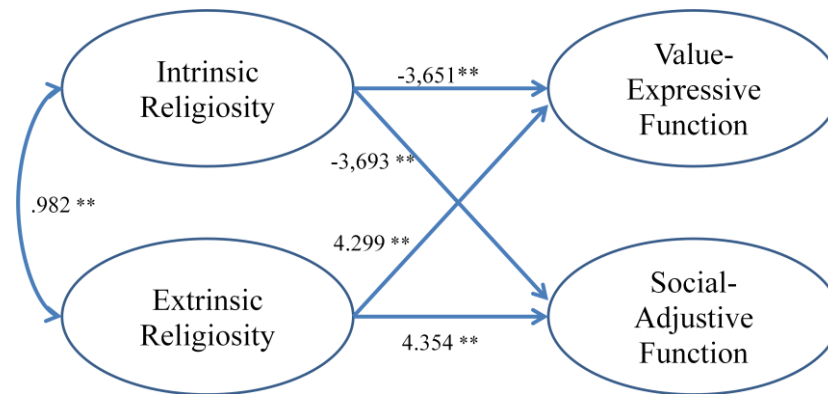


Figure 1: SEM Structure

The model fit parameters were leaning towards acceptability, although not fully conclusive. The χ^2/df ratio, which is more useful than χ^2 statistics (Bagozzi & Heatherton, 1994), equaled 2.312 ($\chi^2 = 520.377$, $df = 225$, $p < .001$), less than the conventional threshold value of 5 (Thomson et al., 2005). The NFI, RFI, and CFI statistics were all close to the acceptable level of .90: NFI = .807, RFI = .783, and CFI = .879. The RMSEA statistics of .087 also was close to its usual .08 threshold.

The results thus lean to suggest that intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity may affect value-expressive and social-adjustive functions. As hypothesized, intrinsic religiosity exerted a negative impact on both the value-expressive function ($\beta = -3.651$, $p < .001$) and the social-adjustive function ($\beta = -3.693$, $p < .001$), in the direction of H1a and H1b, respectively. Extrinsic religiosity had a positive impact on the value-expressive function ($\beta = 4.299$, $p < .001$) and the social-adjustive function ($\beta = 4.354$, $p < .001$), coherently with H2a and H2b. Thus, intrinsic religiosity may reduce both attitude functions toward products; extrinsic religiosity instead may exert a positive impact on both value-expressive and social-adjustive functions.

STUDY 2

Method and Sample

Given the limitations of the results of Study 1 and given the aim to explore further aspects of the research, a second study is here considered. Study 2 features a tangible product (wristwatch), instead of a general notion of products. By adopting a concrete example, it is possible to assess the influence of religiosity more realistically. This online experiment manipulated ads to offer either value-expressive or social-adjustive claims. Participants first indicated their type of religiosity (intrinsic or extrinsic) on an online pop-up window; the analysis did not include respondents who declared themselves non-religious. The respondents then viewed a fictional print advertisement for a watch. For each respondent the ad was randomly presented and it primed either value-expressive or social-adjustive goals (see Figure 2), using different claims. The claims had already been validated by Wilcox et al. (2009) as effective primes of value-expressive or social-adjustive goals. To avoid potential effects due to the brand or the different watch models, the advertisement contained no brand information and presented four different models (two for men and two for women). Coherent with previous studies (Wilcox et al., 2009), the product should be widely used and familiar to consumers; watches also are publicly visible and can satisfy either value-expressive or social-adjustive functions.



Figure 2: Sample Ads with Value-Expressive (Left) and Social-Adjustive (Right) Claims

(Source: Adapted from Wilcox et al., 2009)

To maximize participation and address some limitations of the online survey systems (i.e., respondents answered an interactive pop-up question, so the stimulus must be short enough to fit the pop-up), this study used single-item measures of the focal variables. Bergkvist and Rossiter (2007) confirm that single-item measures can be suitable, especially for concrete attributes, and other studies (e.g., Wilcox et al., 2009) have used single-item measures of purchase intentions. Study 2 used a seven-point scale to measure purchase intentions (1 = “would definitely not purchase,” and 7 = “would definitely purchase”). The single items to measure intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity came from Gorsuch and McPherson (1989), who argue that single-item measures are suitable in the domain of religious attitudes. Before seeing the ad, a screening process categorized respondents on the basis of three items related to intrinsic (“My approach to life is based on my religion”) and extrinsic (both personal and social: “Religion comforts me in times of trouble” and “I go to religious services to meet people”) religiosity. The wording that Gorsuch and McPherson (1989) used was adapted slightly for the current study.

The sample consisted of 375 valid responses, drawn from a general U.S. population, whose descriptive statistics appear in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of the Sample in Study 2

a. Gender		
Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	315	84.0%
Male	42	11.2%
Unknown	18	4.8%
b. Age		
Age	Frequency	Percentage
18-24 years	10	2.7%
25-34	16	4.3%
35-44	46	12.3%
45-54	98	26.1%
55-64	130	34.7%
+65	54	14.4%
Unknown	21	5.6%
c. Geographic Region		
U.S. Region	Frequency	Percentage
Midwest	105	28.0%
Northeast	70	18.7%
South	128	34.1%
West	70	18.7%
Unknown	2	.5%
d. Income		
Income	Frequency	Percentage
\$0-\$24,999	54	14.4%
\$25,000-\$49,999	211	56.3%
\$50,000-\$74,999	88	23.5%
\$75,000-\$99,999	14	3.7%
Unknown	8	2.1%

The composition of the sample was fairly similar to that of the general U.S. population, with the exception of gender; women were overrepresented in the sample compared with the general population. Various demographic subsets of the sample did not differ significantly in their type of religiosity (i.e., χ^2 tests were not significant). For example, the numbers of intrinsically and extrinsically religious women were equivalent to those of men. The overall sample thus served as the input for this analysis.

Results and Discussion

In line with similar, valid tests used in prior literature to address consumers’ attitudes towards advertising (e.g., Okazaki et al., 2010), an analysis of variance (ANOVA) assessment included purchase intention as the dependent variable, with religiosity (intrinsic and extrinsic) and ad type (value-expressive and social-adjustive) as factors. Among respondents exposed to the value-expressive ad, the ANOVA results indicated no statistically significant difference in the purchase intentions of intrinsically (N = 115, $M_{intr} = 3.17$, SD = 1.7) and extrinsically (N = 134, $M_{extr} = 3.37$, SD = 1.5) religious people ($F_{1,247} = 1.034$, Sig. = .310). Therefore, H3a did not receive support. Among respondents who saw the social-adjustive ad, the difference between intrinsically (N = 68, $M_{intr} = 2.60$, SD = 1.7) and extrinsically (N = 58, $M_{extr} = 3.24$, SD = 1.8) religious people was statistically significant ($F_{1,124} = 4.198$, Sig = .043, $p < .05$) and in the expected direction, in support of H3b. Thus, extrinsically religious people expressed higher purchase intentions when they viewed social-adjustive ads than did intrinsically religious people. They did not differ in their responses to value-expressive ads.

For intrinsically religious consumers, the value-expressive ad also elicited significantly higher purchase intentions (N = 115, $M_{val-exp} = 3.17$, SD = 1.7) than the social-adjustive ad (N = 68, $M_{soc-adj} = 2.60$, SD = 1.7; $F_{1,181} = 4.68$, Sig = .032, $p < .05$). Among extrinsically religious people, no significant difference emerged between the two types of ads (N_{val-exp} = 134, $M_{val-exp} = 3.37$, SD = 1.5; N_{soc-adj} = 58, $M_{soc-adj} = 3.24$, SD = 1.8; $F_{1,190} = .270$, Sig = .604). Figure 3 depicts these various outcomes of Study 2.

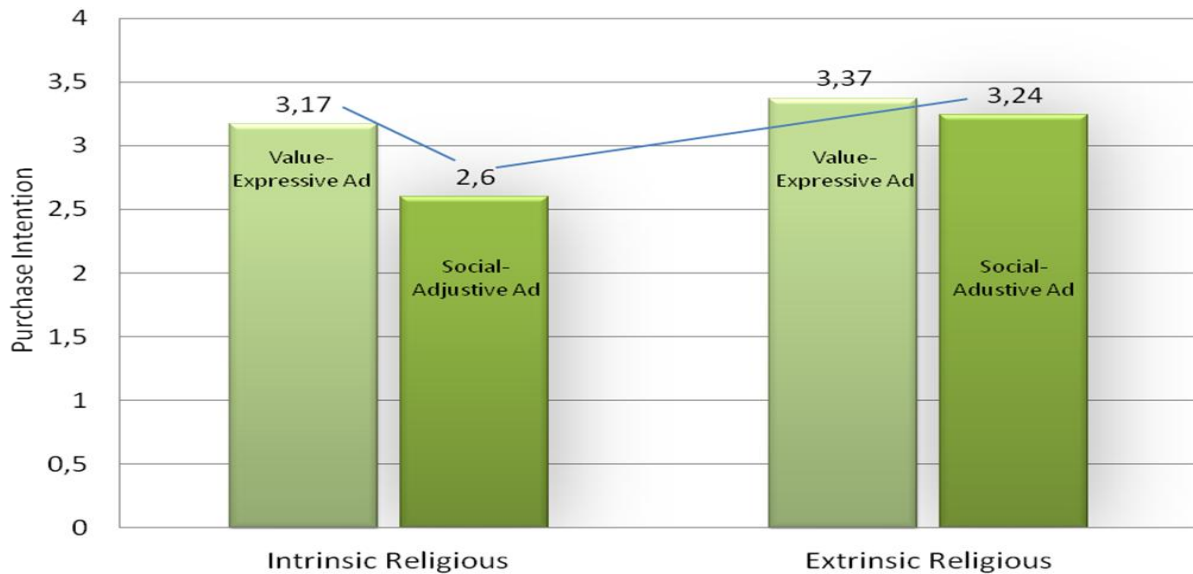


Figure 3: Effects of Value-Expressive/Social-Adjustive Ads on Purchase Intentions of Intrinsic/Extrinsic Religiosity Consumers
 Notes: Lines indicate statistically significant effects.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Religiosity, as distinct from religious affiliation, is a key research and social issue, especially considering that “[a]ccording to a recent report by the Pew Research Center, the percentage of Americans who are not affiliated with any religion is on the rise, including a third of Americans under 30. Even so, 68 percent of unaffiliated

Americans say they believe in God, and 41 percent say they pray at least once a month” (O’Leary, 2012, p. A14). Although this trend refers to the United States, it is coherent with other national contexts, where religious affiliation appears to be declining or becoming more fragmented, even as the intensity of people’s spirituality remains strong. As extant literature has shown extensively, religiosity affects consumer behavior. This study tries to go beyond brands and consumer ethics, to suggest that the very function of products depends on consumers’ religiosity. This research thereby adds to extant literature by proposing that the two components of religiosity (intrinsic and extrinsic) should be taken into account to gain a full understanding of its effects. The results suggest that when religiosity is a tool to gain social ties and personal benefits, people use products for their value-expressive function and are attracted by social-adjustive ads.

For extrinsically religious consumers, products help them express themselves and adapt in social situations. Accordingly, they are sensitive to product advertising, regardless of the type of claim being used. These consumers flexibly use products to fulfill the functions they want those products to meet. The results related to intrinsically religious consumers are more nuanced. Intrinsic religiosity does not have an impact on the reliance on products to express the self and fit in with social groups, yet intrinsically religious consumers respond to value-expressive ads, more so than to social-adjustive ads. In this case, they do not differ from extrinsically religious consumers exposed to value-expressive ads. Perhaps consumers just generally prefer value-expressive ads, compared with social-adjustive ads (other analyses of the data confirm that value-expressive ads trigger higher purchase intentions across both types of religiosity). Another possible explanation is that the use of “you” in the ad triggered value-expressive attitudes, which primed the inner identity of intrinsically religious people and increased their purchase intentions.

In terms of managerial implications, the findings suggest that marketers can increase the effectiveness of their actions if they distinguish the types of religiosity embraced by their consumers. Value-expressive ads represent the best strategy if they do not know the religiosity profile of their consumers, because they can induce positive responses among both intrinsically and extrinsically religious consumers. If the two segments can be identified, marketers should address extrinsically religious consumers with a social-adjustive claim instead. Further studies should also extend these results to other product categories and marketing actions. For example, is prestige pricing more attractive for extrinsically religious people? Is functional, practical packaging more interesting for intrinsically religious consumers?

Public authorities also can benefit from a deeper understanding of how intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity affects consumption. Attempts to address consumption misbehavior (e.g., overeating, gambling) could include the different effects of intrinsic/extrinsic religiosity to more effectively deal with such consumption-related problems.

Finally, further studies should seek to overcome the limitations of the present study by including other product categories and assessing other product-related attitudes held by consumers (e.g., perceived quality, hedonic vs. utilitarian value). Qualitative interviews would also be helpful to achieve a richer understanding of how religiosity gets embedded in the consumption choices that people make.

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APPENDIX

Value-Expressive Function of Attitudes toward Products (adapted from Grewal et al., 2004)

(1 = "completely disagree" and 7 = "completely agree")

- The products that I consume reflect the kind of person I see myself to be.
- The products that I consume help ascertain my self-identity.
- The products that I consume make me feel good about myself.
- The products that I consume are instruments of my self-expression.
- The products that I consume play a critical role in defining my self-concept.
- The products that I consume help me to establish the kind of person I see myself to be.

Social-Adjustive Function of Attitudes towards Products (adapted from Grewal et al., 2004)

- It is important for my friends to know the brand of products I possess.
- The products that I consume are a symbol of social status.
- The products that I consume help me in fitting into important social situations.
- I like to be seen using the products that I consume.
- The brands of products that a person owns, tells me a lot about that person.
- The products that I consume indicate to others the kind of person I am.

Intrinsic/Extrinsic Religiosity (adapted from Vitell et al., 2007)

(1 = "completely disagree" and 7 = "completely agree")

Intrinsic Religiosity

- I enjoy reading about religion.
- It is important for me to spend time in private thought and prayer.
- I have often had a strong sense of God's presence.
- I try hard to live all my life according to my religious beliefs.
- My whole approach to life is based on my religion.

Extrinsic Religiosity

- I go to religious services because it helps me to make friends.
- I pray mainly to gain relief and protection.
- What religion offers me the most is comfort in times of trouble and sorrow.
- Prayer is for peace and happiness.
- I go to religious services mostly to spend time with my friends.
- I go to religious service mainly because I enjoy seeing people I know there.