

Abstract

After Karl Marx (1844) postulated that ‘economics’ formed the underlying structure while ‘religion’ (like other societal institutions) formed the superstructure, and the two were, in fact, “inseparable”; it was Max Weber who first talked about the impact of religion on economics in his 1904-05 seminal work. However, despite the theory put forth by Marx and Weber, it wasn’t until 1949 when the first article speculated that religion may have something to offer business made its appearance in the Harvard Business Review. However, it would still take 26 years before the first empirical study is published by Engel in 1976. Since then, marketers have started studying the impact of religion on marketing, but it is important to note that this research still remains limited. A major cause for this has been attributed to the sensitive nature of religion, which still remains a taboo topic. Furthermore, most studies have focused on Judeo-Christian religions and have been carried out in the West. Only Lindridge in 2005 studied the shopping styles of British Indians vis-à-vis Asian Indians and British Whites. However, it is important to note that the focus of the Lindridge (2005) study was British Indians. Hence, Indians in India as a consumer group have been ignored so far and not a single study has been carried out to assess the role religion and religiosity plays while shaping consumer behavior of Indians living in India.

This study aims to address this gap and examine the impact of religious affiliation and religious commitment on consumer decision-making styles amongst middle-class urban Gen-Y consumers in Delhi. Furthermore, the

study aimed to assess and compare if these influences were shaped by the gender of the Gen-Y consumer.

The findings revealed that the impact of religion on shopping orientations differed by gender. Five shopping orientation factors, namely brand consciousness, novelty and fashion consciousness, confusion by overchoice, brand loyalty, and recreational and shopping consciousness were related to religious affiliation. However, only four shopping orientations, namely quality consciousness, brand consciousness, novelty/fashion consciousness, and confusion by overchoice were found to be related to religious commitment. However, for the combined impact exerted by religious affiliation and religious commitment in shaping consumer decision-making styles, only one shopping orientation was supported: novelty and fashion consciousness. The quantitative study was backed by a qualitative study, which revealed a general consensus that religion would impact shopping styles and revealed several interesting insights.

Keywords

Religion, Religious Affiliation, Religious Commitment, Consumer Behavior, Shopping Styles