
RELIGIOUS MARKETING SYSTEMATIC REVIEW AND RESEARCH AGENDA

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Abstract

Various studies dealing with religious marketing and Church marketing were examined to see how the issues raised have evolved over time. This research plans to determine the primary studies, key authors, and the relevant terms used, exclusive through the implication of marketing in religion. Within the Scopus, Clarivate, and other top four major Publishers' databases (Taylor & Francis, Wiley, Springer, and Emerald), a systematic literature review was performed to select, synthesize and analyse studies on religious marketing and Church marketing. Finally, bibliometric analysis was performed on 227 articles. Five major research clusters were pointed out (1. religious marketing strategies and techniques, 2. religious branding and the case of megachurches, 3. religious marketing orientation and segmentation, 4. religious consumer behaviour, 5. and internal Church marketing) and discussed. According to our knowledge, the present paper is the first systematic review on religious marketing. The research provides a broad overview of the concept, establishing connections between relevant topics, key terms and sub-themes in this area. The findings help to close a gap in the network between all relevant issues. Finally, several research objectives are recommended for the future.

Keywords: religion, church, bibliometric, analysis, systematic literature review

1. Introduction

The literature on religious marketing theory, through the implication of marketing in congregation ministry, is divided into various areas, including religious economics, marketing science, and religious sociology, all of which ignore each other's insights. To the best of our knowledge, no systematic review was conducted on religious marketing before. Throughout the manuscript, when the term 'religious marketing' or 'Church marketing' is mentioned, the authors mainly refer to Christian denominations such as Orthodox, Catholic, Reformist, Protestant, or Neo-Protestant. In the case of any other form of religion, it will be mentioned.

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By the present review, our goal is to integrate and systematize the main articles, resulting in an interdisciplinary overview of religious marketing and its essential aspects from an organizational standpoint.

Our focus is on the following questions: Q1. What are the most relevant articles in religious and Church marketing? Q2. Are there correlations between these studies and the authors? Q3. Which are the main characteristic of religious marketing debate over time? Q4. How are these characteristics described, and what are their implications from congregations' perspective?

The outline of this paper is as follows - a description of the religious marketing concept and theory evolution over time. The use of Church marketing may be traced back to the beginning of Christianity, but it was not until the twentieth century that it became a specific topic in the scholars' publications [1]. The adoption of marketing by religious congregations gradually increased in the last 20 years [2, 3] through consumer needs and behaviour investigation, proper market segmentation, a wide range of service lines, design form of worship, advertising, image campaigns and branding [4, 5]. The next section describes the study design and methodology, compressing a systematic literature review [6]. Through a bibliometric examination of 227 articles and usage of statistical tools, we extend our view on the religious marketing concept due to the identification of co-occurred keywords, the relationship between sub-themes, main authors, and interactions between papers [7].

This is followed by a presentation of the results from the bibliometric analysis. The interactions between studies were exposed in network maps, graphically represented by nodes and colour clusters [8]. A specified research front is determined by each of the five clusters formed by bibliographic coupling and co-occurrence of terms.

Finally, the research findings are discussed, implications presented, study limitations and future research suggested. Our purpose is not to evaluate any theory nor implement any design but to present systematically that concepts such as strategies, marketing techniques, branding, marketing orientation, market segmentation and internal marketing are all integrated with the concept of religious marketing.

2. Religious marketing

In academic literature, James Culliton was the first who brought up the possible integration of marketing concepts into religious organizations, implying that the decline of religion is due to congregations' incapacity to adequately use marketing concepts [9]. Since the early '60s, for more than three decades, retaining current members and attracting prospective ones became hard to handle by congregations [10]. Several intellectuals debated the implication of marketing concepts at that time and encouraged researchers to apply marketing in non-business settings, such as Churches [11-13]. As a conclusion for this period, Cutler's analysis reflects that the available literature was sparse and inconsistent, with just 35 publications on marketing and religion appearing in the

main marketing publications [14]. Stevens found that between 1990-and 2000 in this area were published only 25 theoretical articles and 17 research papers [15]. Beginning with 2000, historical antecedents (modernization, globalization, and secularization) put religious institutions in a completely new background, leading to an increase in marketing [3]. Further, researchers began to grant conceptual and observational support for the concept and use of marketing to religious organizations [1, 16, 17]. Drawing on the conception of marketing, Church marketing: i) points out any activity taken by a religious institution in order to minister, retain or recruit more members [17]; ii) is the management of the voluntary relationship between the congregation and its members with the goal of meeting both sides' needs. In deep, the focus of marketing used by congregations is creating high-quality programs, communicating efficiently, and obtaining necessary resources to sustain their activities [15]; iii) core aim of the congregation is to recognize the requirements of the community and deliver proper programs that meet those demands [1]; iv) reveals that marketing within churches and other religious organizations is an endeavour to intensify members satisfaction and secure their commitment [16].

Recently, authors have observed the fast developments in the religion area, the increasing diversity of congregation needs, and the intensified competition for the public, employing a proper marketing approach [18-20]. In an age of market consequences, religious marketing: i) is the deliberate application of tools of modern marketing to religion and microeconomics to the analysis of the religious organization and market [19]; ii) is backing up congregations to fulfil their social roles and responsibilities and the use of it is in publicizing their events and activities [18]; iii) basically, it conceptualizes religions as operating in a market where religious organizations (suppliers) compete with one another for members (religious consumers) [20]. There is some debate among academics about what type of marketing is related to religion and a gap in theoretical research on how marketing approaches religious organizations [2]. Some here describe that religious marketing should be interpreted as non-profit marketing [19, 21], while others as services marketing. Santos et al. present two arguments why congregations should be consider part of services sector - first, Church services are ethereal in nature (main criteria for service sector) and secondly, members degree of engagement in the Church supply chain, production (partial involvement), ministry and consumption, all of which contribute to service quality [22].

3. Methods

Two methodological techniques were used for the present research.

To begin, we examine the most comprehensive peer-review databases of scientific literature, Scopus and Web of Science, to perform a systematic literature review [23]. This analysis was performed to create a consistent database for a bibliometric investigation. The bibliographic coupling approach

[24] and co-occurrence of keywords technique [25] were employed in the present study.

Secondly, we admit that the above database does not fully cover the scientific literature indexed in any other database [26]. To avoid the omission of any paper, the first ranked publishers (Taylor & Francis, Wiley, Springer, and Emerald) were also examined for a systematic literature review [27].

3.1. Systematic literature review

The papers included in this research were established by consulting academic publications indexed in the Clarivate/Web of Science and Scopus database. Following an initial screening, we discovered that 1638 Scopus papers and 3940 Web of Science articles comply with the inclusion requirements. Moreover, we extend our research to the other four top publisher's databases [27]: Taylor & Francis (94 papers), Wiley (51 articles), Springer (655 papers), and Emerald (124 articles). The phrases 'church and marketing', 'religion and marketing', 'religious and marketing' and combined were utilized in the search engine, along with the basic Boolean operator 'OR'. The inquiry was conducted in the categories of paper titles, abstracts, and keywords. It was held in November 2021. Thus, 6502 articles were analysed, and filters for language (English only) and journal topics (Marketing, Religion, Economic, and Social) were embedded. Furthermore, the titles and resumes of the studies were examined for additional investigation. Those that met any of the exclusion criteria were not included in the research database. We eliminated papers that lacked technical information such as author, year, or abstract, those that were not connected to Economics, Marketing, religion, or Social science, and articles that used the implication of religion in marketing instead of involvement of marketing in religion. The entire search engine criteria and results are reflected in Table 1. As a result, the final database included 227 publications, 89 Scopus entries and 34 Web of Science articles, 70 papers from Taylor & Francis, 11 papers from Wiley, Springer 10 articles and Emerald 13 articles.

3.2. Bibliometric analysis

We utilized the VOSviewer 1.6.16 program to conduct the bibliometric study [8]. Bibliographic coupling and word co-occurrence analysis techniques were utilized [28]. When two research articles cite at least one joint research publication, this is referred to as bibliographic coupling. The amount of citations that appear in both articles represents the strength of the bibliographic coupling. The greater strength, the more similar research is [29].

The VOSviewer program may be used to create bibliographic coupling using an only database like Web of Science or Scopus [30]. For this reason, this approach was only applied to a sample of 89 papers from Scopus. Related to words co-occurrence, terms are categorized according to their intensity of correlation within the academic publications, allowing researchers to determine

which themes were studied over time. Title and abstract data co-occurrence are presented for this study as a technique in which title terms are utilized as markers for the substance of a studied subject, and abstract data are proposed as the background in which terms receive their interpretation. This technique offers various advantages, including a large number of publications covered [31].

Table 1. Search engine criteria and results.

Database	Search engine syntagma	Results	Final papers
Scopus Elsevier	[TITLE-ABS-KEY] (church AND marketing) [OR] [TITLE-ABS-KEY] (religious AND marketing) [OR] [TITLE-ABS-KEY] (religion AND marketing)	1638 documents	89 papers selected by type of journal, relative title, or where it was the case by reading the abstracts
Web of Science	[TOPIC]: (church marketing) [OR] [TOPIC]: (religious marketing) [OR] [TOPIC]: (religion marketing) [TIMESPAN]: All years [INDEXES: SCI-Expanded, SSCI, A&HCI, CPCI-S, CPCI-SSH, BKCI-S, BKCI- SSH, ESCI, CCR- Expanded, IC]	3940 documents	69 articles out of which 35 papers were founded both in Scopus and Web of Science 34 papers selected by type of journal, relative title, or where it was the case by reading the abstracts
Taylor & Francis	[All: 'church marketing'] OR [All: 'religion marketing'] OR [All: 'religious marketing']	94 documents	out of which 24 papers were founded both in Scopus and Web of Science 70 papers selected by type of journal, relative title, or where it was the case by reading the abstracts
Springer Link	[All: 'church marketing'] OR [All: 'religion marketing'] OR [All: 'religious marketing']	655 documents	out of which 2 papers were founded both in Scopus and Web of Science 10 papers selected by type of journal, relative title,

			or where it was the case by reading the abstracts
Wiley	[All: 'church marketing'] OR [All: 'religion marketing'] OR [All: 'religious marketing']	51 documents	out of which 2 papers were founded both in Scopus and Web of Science 11 papers selected by type of journal, relative title, or where it was the case by reading the abstracts
Emerald	[All: 'church marketing'] OR [All: 'religion marketing'] OR [All: 'religious marketing']	124 documents	out of which 2 papers were founded both in Scopus and Web of Science 13 papers selected by type of journal, relative title, or where it was the case by reading the abstracts

Thus, the frequency of words occurring in the flock and how often two separate terms appear correlated in various tasks are evaluated to investigate the co-occurrence of data from the title and abstract. The VOSviewer program was used to create co-wording based on a total of 227 publications.

The correlations that result from the use of these methodologies were presented in network maps. Maps are being created by calculating the intensity of words correlation, which consider the amount of linkages between them [7]. Nodes and colour clusters are used to depict the words graphically, with larger ones representing more essential terms. Network lines show the connections, relations, and distance between the nodes [8]. Finally, we propose that each group created by bibliographic coupling and terms co-occurrence form the foundation of a specific research topic.

4. Results of bibliometric analysis

4.1. Main studies

The investigation of the most important papers in the field points out McDaniel's research [13] is the most referenced of the publications in the sample, being one of the pioneers that sketch a relationship between marketing and religion (Table 2).

Table 2. Most cited fifteen publications, the affiliated journal, citation number and the total citations (TC)/year.

Name of the author	Name of the journal	Citation number	Total citations/year
S.W. McDaniel [13]	J. Advertising	37	1.06
B.B. Hull et al. [32]	Int. J. Soc. Econ.	35	1.09
K. Swimberghe et al. [33]	J. Consum. Mark.	31	2.58
S.W. McDaniel [34]	Rev. Relig. Res.	28	0.88
M.S. Webb et al. [10]	Journal of Professional Services Marketing	26	1.13
B.D. Cutler [14]	Journal of Professional Services Marketing	25	0.86
A. Palmer et al. [35]	Consump. Mark. Cult.	21	1.50
M. Abreu [16]	International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing	21	1.40
S.J. Levy et al. [36]	J. Micromarketing	20	2.50
M. Einstein [5]	Soc. Compass	19	1.90
J. Hayward [37]	J. Math. Sociol.	19	1.19
J. Hayward [38]	J. Math. Sociol.	19	0.86
R.C. Mulyanegara [39]	Nonprofit and Public Sector Marketing Journal	17	1.70
A.D. Rennhoff et al. [40]	Am. Econ. J. Macroecon.	16	1.78
B.C. Coleman [41]	Nonprofit and Public Sector Marketing Journal	14	0.74

4.2. Co-occurrence with data from title and abstract

After applying the co-occurrence model with data from the title and abstract fields and the binary counting approach [42], we discovered 3734 distinct terms. From this lot, only words that had at least five appearances were chosen, the remaining 185 items.

A relevance score was generated for each word, and the most significant terms were selected. The basic option was to admit the 60% most important words, generating for analysis 111 items. The syntagma's 'church marketing', 'religious marketing' and 'religion marketing' were used a priori in the articles search engine; thus, they were left out from the further study. Synonymous terms like 'attendance' and 'participation' are also considered for elimination. The analysis reveals five distinct clusters. The network graph is shown in Figure 1, with each group circled to facilitate identification.

Group 1 (Red) reflects the concept of religious branding [3] through church relationships, communication, and advertising as a response of religion to secularization. A study by McDaniel [13] paved the way, followed by relevant research by Vokurka et al. [43]. This group also reveals the example of the Catholic church as a substantial brand equity and high-level brand loyalty [44].

Moreover, the megachurch concept is reviewed through this cluster, being initially studied by Von der Ruhr et al. [45], following that then Yip [46]. Group 2 (Green) suggests papers [47, 48] that have explored the religious organization's microenvironment. Church members' attendance and their perception related to Church management, leaders, programs and ministry. Most articles from this cluster developed empirical studies to identify factors that have a relevant impact on the church microenvironment, as the example of Kortt et al., identifying evidence from Australia [49].

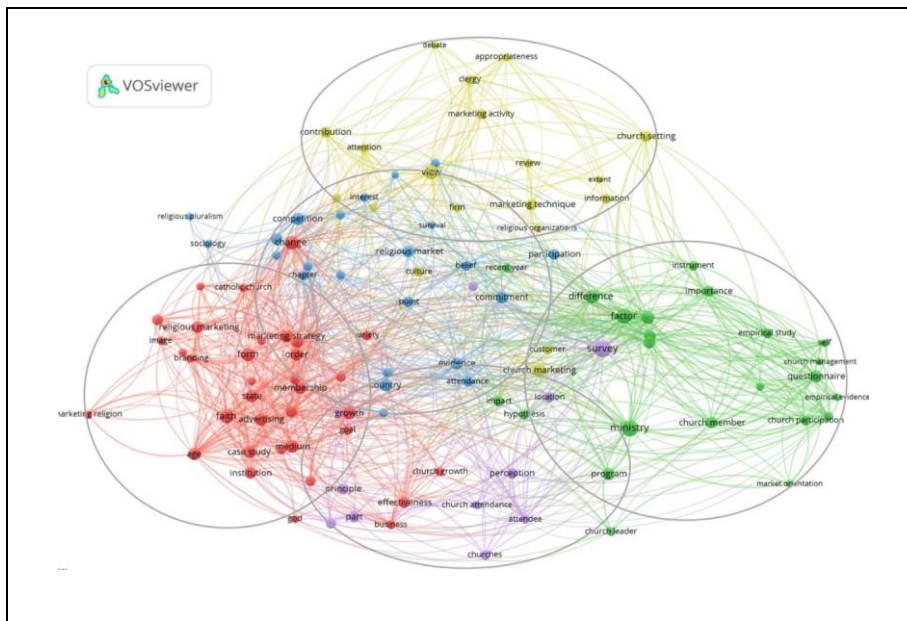


Figure 1. Co-occurrence of data from title and abstracts (red - concept of religious branding, green - religious organization's microenvironment, blue - Sociology area, yellow - marketing techniques, purple - consumer behaviour and Church marketing).

Group 3 (Blue) - The third cluster is related to articles from sociology area, revealing terms as religious beliefs and commitments. Most recent examples on the field are studies by Adebayo et al. [18], Dali et al. [50], and Mainardes et al. [51]. From a marketing perspective, this cluster reveals the religious market segmentation, the most debated being US religious pluralism [52]. Group 4 (Yellow) presents studies that seem to connect elements of marketing techniques [34], given that this term has extensive networking within the group. It is essential to note that studies also reflect the clergy's attitudes towards marketing activities in religious organizations [53-55]. Finally, Group 5 (Purple) includes terms like opinion, perception, principles, opportunity and attendee, suggesting that consumer behaviour is related to Church marketing [21, 56].

4.3. Bibliographic coupling

The approach of bibliographic coupling by articles, with fractional counting, was used to find connections between papers based on similarities between references in a sample of 89 publications from Scopus [42]. For each paper, a bibliographic coupling strength score was calculated, with larger values reflecting higher similarities between articles [29]. For a homogeneous analysis, our choice was to set the clustering parameters to a minimum of 7 articles in a cluster, with the merger of small clusters [8]. Finally, five groups were found. The network graph is shown in Figure 2, with each group circled to facilitate identification.

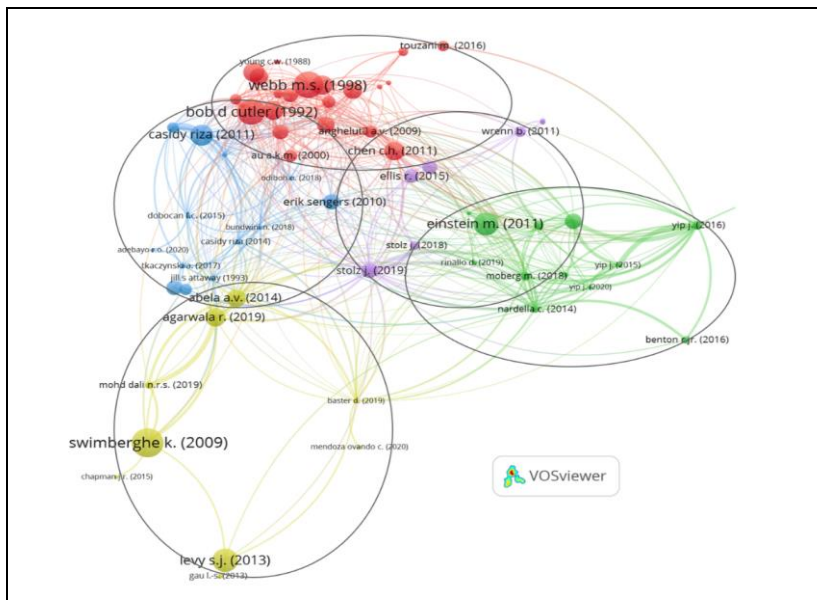


Figure 2. Bibliographic coupling (red - marketing strategies used by religious organizations, green - concept of religious branding and its evolution, blue - role and effects of marketing orientation on perceived benefits and Church participation, yellow - consumer behaviour and parishioners' loyalty, purple - internal management and marketing).

When looking into the top-cited papers within each group, it appears that all clusters are concerned with religious/Church marketing conceptual ideas. However, each set of articles indicates a specific area of research. Therefore, studies congregated in Group 1 (Red) focused on marketing strategies used by religious organizations. The cluster includes papers by Webb et al. [10] and Vokurka et al. [57], which along with McDaniel [13], are the pioneers in the religious marketing theories, all referring to Christian Churches. In the most cited paper of Group 2 (Green), M. Einstein introduces the concept of religious branding and its evolution [5]. Related to this theory, the group is focused on empirical studies of megachurches' existence and the role of marketing in their

corporate activities [58, 59]. On the other hand, Group 3 (Blue) research present the role and effects of marketing orientation [39, 60, 61] on perceived benefits and Church participation. From another point of view, Group 4's (Yellow) most relevant papers investigate the religious consumer behaviour and parishioners' loyalty to religion [33, 62]. From this standpoint, Tkaczynski investigated the ministry's attendees perceived value [56]. A step forward, developed a multi-dimensional religiosity scale based on beliefs, commitment, or practice [50]. Group 5 (Purple) is heterogeneous in terms of component studies, but they seem to aim at issues from internal management and marketing. It integrates and systematizes contributions related to clergy capacity to approach religious marketing [63] and embrace Church management by conserving actual members' participation [17] and selecting potential attenders [64]. Finally, this cluster approaches the area of economics of religion as an enabler between Economics and Sociology [65].

5. Analysis and discussion of results

This study's aim is to present in a systematic manner that concepts such as strategies, marketing techniques, branding, marketing orientation, market segmentation, and internal marketing are all integrated into the concept of religious marketing.

Group 4 (Yellow) from the co-occurrence of data and Group 1 (Red) from bibliographic coupling present articles that focused on marketing strategies and techniques used by religious organizations. Studies from these clusters are also reflecting the clergy's attitudes toward marketing activities.

5.1. Religious marketing strategies and techniques

Religious organizations are providing services and programs to meet the needs of congregations by retaining their members and contesting services with other congregations to attract parishioners [10, 40, 66, 67]. Beginning with the empirical research of Vokurka [57] determined two factors that appear to design the strategy - worship services and special programs. Moving a step forward, Unsunier concludes that religious organizations' strategies can be developed based on the classic marketing mix or the 4Ps (Product, Price, Place and Promotion) [19]. We collate to the study of Adebayo [18], according to which the overall strategy of a congregation is based on services marketing mix or the 8Ps (Product/Service, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, Physical Evidence), adding the Church philosophy.

Following Wrenn, there were identified two directions fostered by church strategies: i) the desired relationships between humankind and God and cohesiveness among people, stimulating personal growth, and ii) internal/external relationship between the Church and its public, targeting numerical growth [63]. This is because Church policy focuses first and foremost

on Theology and canon. In this sense, the tension between the dual structures has concrete effects on the formation of the overall strategy [68].

The Church numerical growth thesis, first addressed by Wrenn [67], through measurement of the religious marketing programs' effectiveness, came to be updated by mathematical models which delivered to congregations' major growth mechanisms [37].

The market differentiation strategy proposed by Muncy appears to be a feasible consumer selection technique for most religious organizations [69]. The advantages of differentiated strategies aim to develop the 'critical mass' necessary for congregations' survival, services, and ministries to families and entire diverse communities. Congregations have been successful by having different segments of members, diverse services (day-care centres, food banks, all kinds of social services, etc.) [63], and programs (ministries to youth, seniors' adults' singles, women, etc.) [47]. The empirical study investigations of Busenitz strengthen the idea that niche marketing strategies within congregations stimulate personal growth since a general strategy contributes to numerical growth [66].

In the past, religious organizations adopted strategies and techniques similar to economic organizations. Most studies have spotlighted the applicability of marketing approaches and tactics rather than their efficiency in retaining and attracting members [43]. Nevertheless, scholars record that radio and ads effectively attract new members since monthly newsletters, in-person contact through recommendations, and e-mailing were the most efficient for retention [70]. After McDaniel [71] considers the remarkable success of television ministries, studies after the 1990s found television, cable access, and door-to-door canvassing ineffective [10]. More recent findings indicate that the music, layout, and design of the Church are strong determinants for attracting young adults to religious services [21].

Wilde brings support for the supply-side concept, which contends that congregations develop more diverse strategies where the market is more competitive [17]. Urban congregations are more suitable to engage marketing strategies than rural congregations, with overwhelming evidence from high-growth churches [43]. The strategic choice among religions is determined by the beliefs that underline religious competition [72]. New forms of religious missionizing challenge both traditional and contemporary religious institutions [73]. The common reason for the lack of success of many Church marketing efforts is due to the failure to recognize types of strategies by congregations.

5.2. Clergy attitudes towards religious marketing

Over time, scholars have identified the risk and vulnerability associated with the implementation of marketing in religious organizations [74]. Thrilling, Weisenberg points out the repugnance of the theologian Reinhold Niebuhr about the American Churches doing advertising in 1924, even before any published paper on religious marketing [68]. From the theological perspective, the major

issue with the implementation of marketing to religion is that such relation mixes the Divine with the profane, going against the central religious message [34, 48, 63]. Church leaders consider that they proved to attract and retain members by offering solid worship programs, preaching and counselling without any use of marketing [53, 75].

In the present study, we aim to examine and highlight the positive clergy attitudes. Cutler's review concluded that more than 83% of the Church management had positive feedback related to the application of marketing in religion, with Protestants more open to marketing than traditional religions [14]. At that time, over 90% of the congregation's management consider yellow pages advertising, newspapers ads and radio communications as appropriate marketing methods. The research of Au et al. presents that over 75% of the Church priesthood agreed that advertising and promotions would not adversely affect the public image of their religion [76]. Finally, we collate to Usunier's conclusion that in the last years, the acceptability and application of religious marketing in congregations have increased [19]. However, the literature still presents a gap in empirical research that supports this view.

It is essential for religious managers to understand the extent meaning of marketing to have a clear comprehension of the non-profit organization environment and to ensure that the range of ministered offered means to serve people efficiently [1, 18]. Congregations growing and attracting new members are those who successfully implement marketing in all aspects, from image and branding to strategy of the ministries [54].

Studies display in Cluster 1 (Red) from the co-occurrence of data, together with articles in Group 2 (Green) from bibliographic coupling, introduce the concept of religious branding and its evolution as a response of religion to secularization. Related to this theory, these groups are focused on empirical studies of megachurches' existence and the role of marketing in their corporate activities.

5.3. Religious branding

Branding is the new religious marketing initiative as a fundamental evolution of the concept [77]. Research on the area of religious branding is limited. Statements by Wrenn [48] and Stolz [3] underline the importance of branding to market and deliver personalized spiritual services to attract attendance. An increased number of congregations employed branding to offer parishioners a private and identifiable election [5]. The empirical evidence of Mulyanegara [39] demonstrates that a powerful Church brand is a sign of the congregation's capacity to give meaningful advantages to current and potential participants. The positive evolution of Church image, alongside the spiritual and social benefits associated, leads to higher and more active participation. The Catholic Church enjoys a high level of brand equity and loyalty among its adherents [44]. Religions across the globe are considered to possess brand names (Christianity, Islam, Buddhism), logos (star of David for Judaism, Yin-

Yang for Taoism), brand stories embodied in rituals (Eucharist, Bar-Mitzvah, Ramadan), and branded places of worship (churches, mosques, and temples) [19]. All tools of branding serve to help religions in delivering their branded promises [78]. Therefore, responsive religious organizations should engage actively and continuously to develop their brand identity, brand image and brand position to effectively reach their target audience.

5.4. Megachurches

Notorious religious organizations that have been effective at religious marketing are megachurches [3]. By widely accepted definition, a megachurch is an extremely large Protestant congregation or cluster of churches that regularly weekly attendance gets over 2.000 members [58, 79]. Generally, these Churches share a standard set of organizational dynamics, including a complex organizational structure managed by a board, senior mission statement, active seven days a week community, comprehensive use of religious marketing, and venture investment for financial return in form of Church projects [80].

Several scholars conduct their studies to highlight the marketing strategies and behaviour of the most successful megachurch models worldwide. Willow Creek Church in Chicago is reaching present an international association that claims over 11.000 franchises and offers first-class sermons, supplemented with music, visuals, and original dramas [10, 58]. Hillsong is another highly successful megachurch offering a joyful, music-filled worship experience that fosters continued involvement with the congregation. In contrast with other Churches, blending traditional Pentecostalism with popular culture, the congregation proposes to the churchgoer as a religious consumer status, with no membership obligations involved [46]. Rick Warren's Saddleback is a well-known seeker-oriented megachurch that emphasizes a modern appearance while downplaying ecclesiastical affiliation and traditional missionary work. The congregation makes efforts to meet the needs of different groups of participants at various phases of their connection by gradually increasing its requirements in terms of time, effort and donation [45].

By perfecting religious marketing strategies, megachurches appear to be satisfying the requirements of the plural and secular population [19, 45]. They promote the 'prosperity gospel' by personal fulfilment and the theology of growth [59, 81]. Nevertheless, there is an expressed concern about the moral and ethical dimensions of some marketing approaches of megachurches [10, 82].

Concepts of marketing orientation and marketing segmentation are revealed by the articles included in Group 3 (Blue) from bibliographic coupling and Group 3 (Blue) co-occurrence of data analyses.

5.5. Religious marketing orientation

Community and environment are continuous and consistently changing. To survive and enjoy healthy growth, religious organizations must adopt their

ministries in meeting the various market needs while keeping intact their doctrine and theology [48, 82, 83]. In a pluralistic religious market, churchgoers are engaged with those communities that best meet their needs [84]. A marketing-orientated Church develops a clear vision for ministry and establishes a long-term relationship with its members to provide satisfaction [85]. These congregations stand out among other organizations and embrace a unique, positive image among the community, attracting more and more people [86]. Despite that market orientation is a central theory in marketing, there is little debate on the function of this concept to religious organizations. White & Simas found that market-orientated Churches have a statistically significant relationship between resources attraction and resources allocation [87]. They best effectively allocate their available resources to design and provide services and programs that support the mission [88]. According to Mulyanegara's research [39], market orientation is related to identified advantages and has an impact on church attendance. Moreover, a greater financial contribution and increasing volunteering from participants were noticed [47, 89]. Further, the examination of marketing orientation levels from participants' perspectives reveals three dimensions [90]. 'Consumer orientation' determines the spiritual, emotional, rational, and relational needs of the individual and provides targeted services and programs to satisfy those needs [48, 89]. Involving members as co-producers grant services and programs with higher quality [85]. 'Interfunctional coordination' ensures that the diverse ministries in the congregation are providing exceptional value to the community [61]. 'Competitor orientation' is concerned that the Church mission is not previewed as a strategic tool to compete with other congregations. This was discovered to have a negative correlation with involvement since religious competition prevents individuals from identifying with a community [17].

Regardless of an urban or rural context, traditional or modern Church, programs, or worship-orientated ministries, successful congregations provide specific services to precise segments of customers [56, 57].

5.6. Religious marketing segmentation

The monopolistic religious market theory hypothesizes that the Church penetrates the entire society, increasing religiosity (Catholicism) [91]. In-depth, any competition will harm the image and position of religion in society, especially in the case of small, individual Churches [52, 92]. As an alternative, endorsed by this study, pluralistic religious theory suggests that a free competitive market will increase Churches' efforts to fulfil the needs of individuals, resulting in a higher religious 'consumption' (Protestantism) [64, 68, 93, 94]. Modernization induces religious organizations a generalized secular competition [3, 5, 83]. Major indicators that cause the religious competition are pluralism, lack of regulations and niche markets [95]. In the secular world, the theory of mass marketing is no longer suitable. Instead, today's successful markets are niche markets, this concept being effective for religions and

congregations [89]. Active congregations with smaller market share (niche) register among members with higher satisfaction levels, religiosity, attendance, and contribution, because of their effort to compete. The United States is the most religious pluralistic market with the highest participation rate, tested and proved over time by the religious pluralism theory [96].

Market segmentation's central idea is that different groups share different characteristics and needs that can only be fulfilled separately [43]. The process involves three steps: i) analysis of the community and offering rationale support for leaders to consider market segmentation, ii) define major segments, and iii) select the market segment and focus on it with specific 'niche' marketing strategies [97, 98]. Most congregations have a common segmentation using five significant variables: demographic, geographic, psychographic (personality and lifestyle), behavioural characteristic (frequency, status, attitude, and loyalty), and benefit expectation (need of activity that satisfies) [19, 98]. From another perspective, scholars' empirical studies reflect that thriving congregations have made a segmentation of community religiosity [10, 69, 99]. Despite the size and affiliation of a congregation, the below-proposed segmentation model covers all individual's status in their relationship with the church (Figure 3).

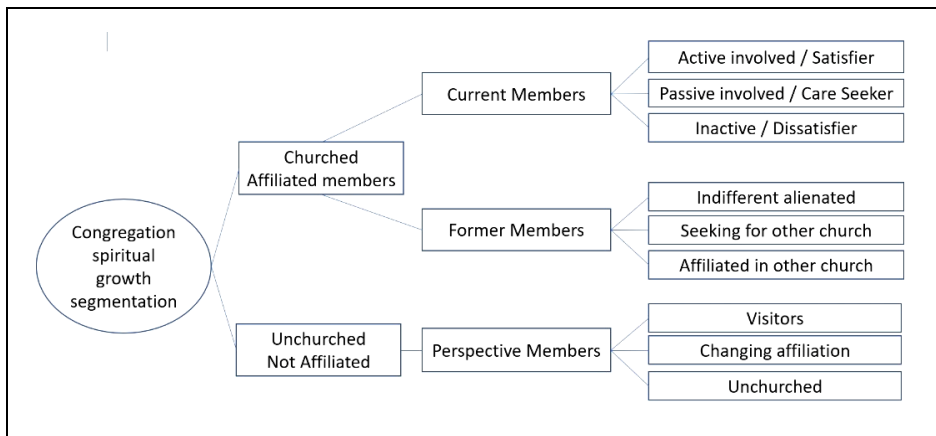


Figure 3. Congregation spiritual growth segmentation.

Marketing segmentation, properly used, will strengthen the image, position and ministry of a congregation.

Religious consumer behaviour is discussed under the articles included in Group 5 (Purple) from co-occurrence with data and Group 4 (Yellow) from the bibliographic coupling. Most cited articles investigate factors that influence churchgoers' attendance and commitment. Also, worth mentioning that Group 3 (Blue) from both bibliometric analyses presents articles from the sociology area, rounding the field of religious consumer behaviour.

5.7. Religious consumer behaviour

The individual's total evaluation of the utility of attending a church program is known as perceived value [10]. When the perceived advantages of attending and volunteering in ministries outweigh the perceived expenses, members will sense favourable outcomes [56, 100]. Religious consumer research shows that high-quality services with good music and prestigious speakers meet churchgoers' high requirements [101]. Moreover, individuals are increasingly concerned about their freedom to choose; in other words are expect that the Church and religious community will uphold their unrestricted right to think and practice in accordance with their personal preferences [19, 102]. The cultural revolution has breakdown the religious norms, increased individuals' freedom to choose their values, led to extend religious markets, and finally decreased individual religiosity [3]. Religiosity is described as a multifaceted collection of values that consist of a strong commitment to religious beliefs and practice them on a daily basis [50]. Individual spirituality is based on two major dimensions: vertically, personal relationship with the Divine (intrinsic religiosity) and horizontally, social communion (extrinsic religiosity) [56, 60]. A bipartite conceptualization of religiosity based on two directions: attendance and commitment, was proposed by [33].

Studies by Casidy [60] and Granger [103] reveal that social engagement is the most critical factor influencing church attendance. Presence at church with regularity influences religious appreciation, conviction, and faith [100]. Creed and communion are generally independent of economic factors. Anyhow, the church attendance and faith regression model indicates an influence from wage rate and time allocation, so higher wage and time allocation lowers participation frequency and faith intensity [49].

Commitment is influenced by religious competition and distinctive subcultures [92]. Robust community engagement is related to a positive church image [15]. Members of the congregation with a significant ranking usually present a low level of attendance and commitment. Contrary to small, very active, and enthusiastic Churches, members' sense of defending loyalty is very high. Researchers [51, 104] declare that the more devoted a person is to a spiritual community, the higher religious commitment is established.

Review findings indicate that the condition of being religious influences overall well-being, low materialism, intolerance, high ethical behaviour, and sensitivity to risk aversion [62]. Churchgoers' lifecycle reflects high involvement during childhood and decreases in adolescence and middle age [21]. Younger adults are not dedicated to a particular congregation; they are committed to their faith set few characteristics of a parishioner: ability in developing relationships, passion for ministry, individual integrity, and a code of religious ethics [18, 70]. In conclusion, once secularization, religion loses its role as the key factor in establishing individual identity [35].

Group 2 (Green) from the co-occurrence of data and Group 5 (Purple) from bibliographic coupling are heterogeneous in terms of component studies, reflecting papers that explored the religious organizations' internal marketing. Most articles from these clusters developed empirical studies to identify factors that have a relevant impact on the Church microenvironment, including the area of economics of religion

5.8. Congregations internal marketing

Church micro-marketing examines specific factors that deal with the atmosphere of the Church and religious services to create an attractive and efficient environment [105]. From a 4P marketing mix perspective, the place, congregation's premises, and diverse affiliate facilities (hospitals, schools, bookstores) [3], respond to the market needs in terms of size, location and design [20]. High-quality sound music, instrumental music moments, visual projections for congregation involvement in musical services, and notorious singers increase members' level of satisfaction [21]. Preaching, teaching subjects and methods positively influence the religious public [106].

Church management needs to consider the internal public with its various stakeholders (members and prospective members, volunteers and employees) [39, 68] to gain resources to fulfil its objectives [10]. The fundamental factor in developing religious services concerns the group involved in making the decision (pastor, Church board and departmental committee) [67].

Another field of religious marketing research focuses on factors associated with Church charity giving and finds that competition positively influences member contribution and Church charitable services [32]. Besides internal funding sources (tithing and diverse contributions), there is public financing for religious or non-profit organizations related to congregations [73].

Many Churches face constraints related to internal marketing elements (premises, human resources and finances), a reason why an appropriate approach will increase their future ministry potential [56].

6. Conclusions

The present research presents in a systematic manner the relationships between different themes of religious marketing and details how these concepts have been implemented. As the essential theoretical assessment, the findings of the network graph and clusters revealed the focus on the literature in five fields: i) marketing strategies and techniques effective in retaining and attracting members [18, 19, 21, 37, 43, 72]; ii) religious branding and how to position the congregation image and identity to effectively reach its audience [5, 39, 44, 77] (this has become important, particularly for megachurches and their global brand [3, 46, 58]); iii) market orientation and segmentation in a pluralistic religious market to develop clear and specific niche ministries and long-term relationships with its community to deliver satisfaction [10, 83, 85, 89]; iv) religious

consumer behaviour to investigate factors that influence churchgoers' perceived values, commitment, and religiosity [18, 51, 56, 103] and v) congregations' internal marketing, including the area of economics of religion, to identify factors that have a relevant impact on the Church microenvironment [3, 73, 105].

Historical antecedents (modernization, globalization and secularization) put religious institutions in a completely new background, leading to an increase in marketing [3]. Religious organizations recognize that conventional religion is no longer enough to address today's non-conventional society. The present review should be of particular value for religious leaders to understand how religious marketing can endorse a comprehensive Church offering that perfectly suits the requirements of a diverse congregation. Moreover, discussed subthemes bring into attention tools ready to use by Church management and examples from other congregations of their use [1, 18]. Lessons learned from congregations that properly embrace marketing are extremely timely and essential for those Churches seeking to make a difference in their communities [54].

7. Limitations and future research

Even though his study was carried out in accordance with academic rigor, it is not without its limitations. The extent of the empirical literature is modest. We found eligible for the present review only 227 articles on the marketing of religion. The study detailed a continuous academic and clerical dispute about marketing's increasing acceptability and use levels by religious leaders, members, and the general public [3, 63]. Indeed, this canvass will continue over time as a barrier between economics, marketing, and Theology. A continuous inter-correlated academic research, together with a careful, well-trained, and abdicated use of religious marketing, should be the solution overall.

The study has produced findings that will benefit to alleviate the academic debate over the domain of marketing proper related to religion [56]. However, a future comprehensive theoretical insight on how religious marketing concept is integrated into services marketing will improve practitioners' attitudes toward concepts.

The results of the present article are dominated by Christian research objects from the United States, with little research being published from a European perspective [19, 107]. In the interest of generalizing the presented models, future analysis should consider diversification between countries.

Furthermore, despite the religious marketing concept's continuous evolution, diverse congregations and religious sectors still require examination. A common reason for the lack of success of many Church marketing efforts is due to untrained leaders in marketing and the failure to recognize the proper strategies and techniques for their congregations.

Any of the presented obstacles may be overlap by different proposed future studies. Religious marketing in all its forms will continue to be the essential element for the existence and prosperity of religious organizations worldwide.

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