Chapter 10

Mix Marketing: A Set of Tools at the Disposal of the Religious Entrepreneur

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this work is to contribute to the decompartmentalization of knowledge resulting from practitioners’ experiences in religious marketing. Through an exploratory survey among six leaders of new churches and 90 of their worshippers, the authors tried to provide the basis for a reflection on the relevance of the use of religious marketing in a context of poverty. For this purpose, they use a thematic content analysis and a descriptive analysis. Results show that the religious field is just a field of social life experimentation, characterized by the expression of economic interests. This work provides a model for understanding church followers.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to contribute to the debate on religious entrepreneur. In this regard, it is interested in the use of marketing tools in religious practices, precisely marketing mix instruments. To do this, we propose, through a thematic content analysis and a descriptive analysis, the bases of a discussion on the relevance of using religious marketing to attract more worshippers. The purpose of this exploratory work is to contribute to the opening-up of the knowledge resulting from practitioners’ experience in religious marketing.

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Mix Marketing

Background

The use of marketing tools in religion is becoming more and more important in the religious world. The uptake of marketing techniques facilitates the blending of the local and global, and the sacred and the profane (Gordon & Hancock, 2005). The result is a religious message built on hope for material wealth on earth, while preserving the potential for transcendence and eschatological salvation (Otobil, 2002). The various religious messages have resulted in the multiplication of religious obediences leading to the creation of a religious market. Africa, and particularly Cameroon, is not left outs of this dynamic of religious market emergence (Bonsu& Belk, 2010; BUCREP, 2010).

As a market there is a religious offer and a religious demand. Demand for religious services is declining sharply in developed countries, as living conditions are good for most people. On the other hand, the marketing mix is expanding in poor countries, specifically in countries where Christianity carries the highest share of the market (Mpabe-Bodjongo & Abba, 2018). This fact seems to be justified, among other things, by the economic crisis that affected the country’s economy in the 1980s and 1990s (Batibonak, 2007), increase in the level of poverty and unemployment rates and, alongside this heavy poverty, faith crisis, spiritual desire and search for paranormal powers that further explain emergence of Pentecostal churches (Batibonak, 2012).

This plague contributes to weakening the individual and making him vulnerable to offers of various religious groups. Indeed, an important part of the Cameroonian population considers churches¹ as a new way towards salvation (Akoko, 2007); religion can henceforth be treated as an offer and churches as brands (Usinier & Stolz, 2014) which must be backed by a specific marketing field. Also, beliefs in monotheistic religions stand for the well-being of individuals in the society (Cohen & Hill, 2007). Individuals seek religious services to improve their well-being. This is the reason why some members are victims of syncretism.

The religious market offers religious services which include: “divine wisdom, knowledge of God, faith, divine healing, prophecy, miracles, discernment of spirits, practice of mysterious languages (glossolalia) and their interpretation “(Mpabe Bodjongo & Abba, 2016). Although, the sermons in churches fall in direct line with the search for earthly happiness, the race for tangible assets, the search for husbands ...; one would be more interested in wealth than in the main vocation of religious doctrine. Considering what is said above, this work examines the effects of marketing practices on worshippers.

The religious market is controlled by entrepreneurs who rely on religious organizations. An organisation is an entity that operates in a given environment, whose rules and management decisions organize and regulate the central part of common life which deals with “working together” (Honoré, 2014). Here the author
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