

Chapter 1

Religions as Brands. New Perspectives on the Marketization of Religion and Spirituality

Jörg Stolz and Jean-Claude Usunier

The church cannot engage in marketing. The church cannot put itself on a pedestal, create itself, praise itself. One cannot serve God while at the same time covering oneself by serving the devil and the world.¹

Karl Barth

We shouldn't be surprised then that religion—whether in the form of a film or a church—is being marketed in the current commercialized culture. In order to be heard above the noise of the rest of society, religion, too, must participate in order to survive.

Mara Einstein

There can be no doubt: marketing and branding have started to transform religions.² Despite ferocious critiques, we have seen the emergence of televangelists (e.g. Oral Roberts, Jim Bakker), celebrity pastors (e.g. Rick Warren), stars of compassion (e.g. Mother Teresa), church commercials, religious “product lines,” mega-churches, branded religious sites (e.g. Lourdes), religious best-sellers (e.g. *the Left Behind* series), and blockbusters (e.g. *The Passion of the Christ*). Marketing and branding have not spared non-Christian religions. Think of the success of the Kabbalah centers, veiled Barbie dolls, Mecca cola, the Buddha as a decorative item, or the marketing of the Dalai Lama. At the same time, observers have noted that shopping and consuming may take on religious traits. After all, branding makes products into something “out of the ordinary,” “mythical,” and sometimes even “sacred.” Brand communities have

¹ The translation is ours. The original text is: “Die Kirche kann nicht Propaganda treiben. Die Kirche kann sich nicht selber wollen, bauen, rühmen wie alle anderen ... Man kann nicht Gott dienen und mit dem Teufel und der Welt solche Rückversicherungen eingehen” Barth (1930).

² We thank David Voas and Vincent Vandersluis for excellent remarks and David Voas, Vincent Vandersluis, and Christine Rhone for help with the English at different stages of this text.

formed around such products as Jeep, Star Trek, or Harley Davidson. And Apple fans have not only venerated their Macs, they have also deeply believed in the transformative power of the savior of their brand: Steve Jobs. Are then religions becoming brands while brands are becoming religions?

In this introduction, we lay out the different questions to ask and survey the relevant literature. It is interesting to note that various disciplines—sociology, economics, marketing, theology, history, and anthropology—have contributed to our current knowledge about “religions as brands.” However, these disciplines have not always taken their respective insights into common consideration. One of the aims of this book is therefore to bring these strands of research into closer contact and to suggest promising directions for future research.

The plan of our introduction is as follows. We first describe the *historical antecedents* of religious consumer society. By this term we mean a society in which religious organizations see themselves as offering “products” and “services” on a “market,” while individuals see themselves as “consumers” choosing these “products” and “services.” We show that modernization processes, the transformation of forms of religious groups, and generalized competition between religious and secular goods have led to a situation that makes both religious consuming and religious marketing increasingly probable. In a second part, we look at the *individual effects* of the above-mentioned historical antecedents. We analyze changing expectations of individuals towards religious organizations and an increase in choosing and combining different forms of religion and spirituality. We also discuss recent claims that shopping and consuming might be modern forms of religion and spirituality. In a third part, we describe the *organizational effects* of the historical antecedents. We look at both general and specific forms of religious branding and marketing and also discuss the influence of societal and cultural context. Part four describes the contributions to this volume, giving a sense of how they open up new perspectives concerning the question of “religions as brands.”

Antecedents: Causes of the Religious Consumer Society

A substantial part of the literature describes historical causes that are said to have led to a “religious consumer society.”³ We look at modernization processes, a change in the form of religious groups and the emergence of a generalized religious-secular competition.

³ While most authors would probably agree with some kind of story of a modernization process leading to the religious consumer society, there is a debate as to *when* it happened. Some scholars think that the major turning point

Modernization processes

While the specific theoretical preferences and terms vary, most authors seem to agree that some sort of “*modernization process*” is responsible for the emergence of the current religious consumer society (Altermatt, 1981; Beck, 1992; Dawson, 2011; Gauthier *et al.*, 2011; Norris and Inglehart, 2004; Wallis and Bruce, 1995). This process entails (among many others):

- *a breakdown of religious norms.* Before the 1960s, there was general pressure on individuals to be members of a religion, and to have the same religion as their parents. Depending on various context variables, there could also be pressure to believe and practise.
- *an increased individual freedom to choose,* emphasizing the freedom and duty of individuals to decide for themselves in all matters important to them—including religious identity, practice, and belief.
- *a change in values.* Traditional values linked to authority and duty are replaced by self-realization and individualistic values. In the religious field this can be seen as a replacement of the semantic of “religiosity” by “spirituality.”
- increases in *disposable income.* This gives individuals a wider range of options, especially concerning secular leisure, which may compete with religious options.
- an increase in *individual security.* The invention of welfare schemes, various types of insurance, improved biomedical services, etc. give individuals a level of security unprecedented in history. This in turn competes with the reassuring function of religious beliefs and practices.
- an *increased exposure to mass media* (TV, radio, later the internet). Individuals spend more and more time exposing themselves to and interacting with mass media. This increases the possibility of getting information about all kinds of religions, but equally about all kinds of secular matters.

was the 1960s. They speak of a rather sudden “cultural revolution” (Einstein, 2008; McLeod, 2007; Stolz, Könemann, Schneuwly Purdie, Englberger, and Krüggeler, 2012)). Other scholars, however, believe that the important change came about only in the 1980s (Gauthier, Martikainen, and Woodhead, 2011). Our own view clearly gives preference to the argument concerning the 1960s. We base this judgment on the quantitative, qualitative and historical data produced by scholars such as McLeod (2007) and Brown (2001).

- *increased individual mobility*. Individuals travel increasingly long distances and start to think of their world (and possibly their religious and spiritual involvement) in terms of options that have a price, that may be consumed and that have to be chosen according to individual preferences.

Interestingly, these modernizing processes have led both to extended *religious markets* and to *less religiosity*. On the one hand, there has indeed been an increasing number of individuals choosing religious “products” that were specifically marketed by religious entrepreneurs. Alternative spirituality, a form of “consumer religion,” has shown important growth. And it is no accident that the number of megachurches rose dramatically from the 1960s on (Chaves, 2006). On the other hand, there has been a clear tendency towards *less religiosity* for many individuals. Since religion was not prescribed anymore and since individuals were now “free to choose,” they were also free to choose no religion, no belief, no practice. This led to a rise in “fuzzy religiosity” (Storm, 2009; Voas, 2009) and to a rise in the number of secular individuals. Due to this increased freedom, religion also lost its former importance in the choice of a spouse, leading to a marked rise in the number of religiously mixed couples as well as in couples with only one partner having a religion (Voas, 2003). Summing up, we thus observe a *simultaneous* process of marketization, individualization, and secularization. Much of the literature sees these processes as mutually exclusive, which is misleading. Rather, they are part of one single social process that has to be explained with a more general theory (Stolz, 2008, 2009a).

The change of religious groups from institutions to non-profit organizations

A second large-scale cause for the emergence of religious consumer society can be seen in the changing *form* of religious groups. In many countries they seem to evolve from institutions to kinds of non-profit organizations. While, in the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century, they were institutions to which individuals often belonged by tradition and which were linked multi-functionally to many other societal institutions (the power structure, schools, hospitals, media etc.), religious groups have increasingly been transformed into voluntary associations such as sports clubs or philanthropic societies. Like all other voluntary associations, religious groups now have to compete for memberships and for their members’ time, donations, and energy. And like all other voluntary associations, they are therefore forced to engage in some form of marketing and branding. Thus, religious organizations should not be seen as incorporated “religious companies” with a commercial object and limited liability, but rather as non-profit organizations (NPOs) or voluntary (membership) organizations. In several important respects, non-profit

organizations are distinguishable from firms orientated to profit (Mottner, 2007; Schwarz, 1986; Stolz, 2009):

1. They have members and their main goal lies not in the profit making but in the satisfaction of the needs of their members or other specified social groups.
2. They do not produce private goods (like cars), but a number of services for their members or for the general public (or both).
3. They have several important publics that all have to be cared for: members, prospective members, staff, volunteers, and the general public.
4. They do not finance themselves principally by the sale of products, but by members' contributions or donations.
5. They compete on various levels with various other organizations and institutions. In modern societies, the main competition often stems not so much from other religious institutions as from secular organizations.

This has important practical consequences for the marketing activities in which religious organizations may engage (see below).

Religious-secular competition

A third large-scale process that has made the religious consumer society possible is the emergence of a *generalized religious-secular competition*. This process is well established in the marketing literature (Einstein, 2011; Mottner, 2007), but has not yet been given the attention it deserves in the sociology of religion and economics of religion literature (see, however, Gruber and Hungerman, 2008; Stolz, 2009b). Since individuals are now free to choose, all organizations and institutions that want to stay “in business” have to compete for the attention, the time and the donations of individuals (Einstein, 2008). This is just as true for religious organizations and groups as for any other secular institutions.

The religious-secular competition is a very serious matter for religious organizations. In fact, the traditional and institutionally based “motivators” that led to religious activity have been destroyed or at least seriously damaged by the modernization process. Christian practice in the nineteenth century was often motivated by the fact that non-practice was socially stigmatized, or that practice was prescribed by employers, or that the church was a place where spouses, friends and business partners could be found, or that the congregation was a place where social status could be displayed (among other things by

appearing in one's "Sunday best"), or that individuals were concerned with their lives hereafter (Brown, 2001; Bruce, 2002). Since these motivators have faded away and an array of secular alternatives is available for finding spouses and showing status, Christian Churches have to engage in marketing in order to renew individual interest in their "products."⁴

Individual Effects: Religious and Spiritual Shopping and Consuming

The societal changes mentioned have had various *effects on individuals* that are characteristic of "religious consumer society." We discuss four such effects: changing expectations towards religious organizations, an increase in choosing and combining religious/secular elements, a tendency to shop and consume religion/spirituality, and the possibility that consumption (of all kinds of products) may itself become a form of religion in modernity.

Changing expectations of individuals towards religious organizations

A first effect resides in significant changes in individual expectations towards religion. In consumer society, individuals learn that products and services should be attuned to their every need. It is therefore no wonder that they also expect such behavior from religious organizations and their products and services. A substantial number of publications show that individuals increasingly expect:

1. *"High quality" services* (Bruhn, 1999; Santos and Mathews, 2001; Stolz and Ballif, 2010). Several studies show that members of Christian churches increasingly expect high quality religious services, high quality music, good speakers and convenient access to places of worship. One way of reacting to the rising costs this entails has been the trend towards megachurches (Chaves, 2006; Fath, 2008).
2. *Entertainment*. In religious services, writes Mara Einstein (2008: 8) "consumers have a heightened expectation of being entertained, which is usually met with music and dramatic presentations." Religious groups will increasingly copy successful entertainment formats from the secular sphere or invent new forms, in order to let individuals "have a good time" during their rituals and religious services (Favre, in this volume).

⁴ The socioeconomic literature concerned with religion has focused almost exclusively on the competition between different religious groups. In contrast, we argue that the competition between the religious and the secular is much more important than intra-religious competition.

3. *Freedom to choose.* Individuals are increasingly concerned that religious groups will not restrict their choices and will respect their absolute freedom to believe and practise according to their individual preferences (Stolz and Ballif, 2010). Just as in the world of shopping and consuming, they want to be able to choose what they like instead of being told what to do.

An increase in individualized religion and religious shopping

In religious consumer society, individuals increasingly *choose* what to believe, how to practice and what norms to obey (if any). Different disciplinary approaches—individualization theorists, consumer society theorists, economists of religion, marketing theorists and even secularization theorists—agree on this point (Iannaccone, 1992; Roof, 1999). The agreement stops, however, when it comes to the question of what this increasing choice does to individual religiosity.

One position, often found in religious economics or the rational choice approach to religion, is that increasing religious freedom leads to increased religious shopping and a generalized religious market (Finke and Iannaccone, 1993; Iannaccone, 1991, 1992, 1998; Stark, 1999; Stark and Finke, 2000).⁵ These authors normally see any kind of society as a potential religious market that is more or less regulated. Individuals are seen as “naturally religious” and will behave as religious and spiritual shoppers, if only they are allowed to do so. They choose religious beliefs and practices according to their preferences—much as they choose cars or toothpaste. For example, Stark and Iannaccone (1994) argued that it was wrong to believe that Europe in the second half of the twentieth century underwent a process of “secularization” and, on the contrary, that increasing individual freedom would eventually lead to a religious revival.⁶

⁵ This approach is often called the “supply-side approach,” because it argues that demand of religion across all societies is essentially stable and that differences in aggregated religiosity must therefore be explained by variation in the supply of religion.

⁶ See for general overviews and assessments: Warner (1993), Young (1997), De Graaf (2012), Jelen (2002), Stolz (2007). See for critical views Bruce (1999), Bryant (2000). The mainstream version of the rational choice approach to religion has been strongly challenged on empirical grounds. Some of the most influential articles and books have been Chaves/Gorski (2001), Voas/Olson/Crockett (2002), and Norris/Inglehart (2004).

A second position sees the effect of increasing religious freedom not so much in increases in “shopping” and “consuming,” but rather in the fact that individuals believe and practise in an increasingly syncretistic and individualized way. Various terms have been created and used in order to highlight this phenomenon: bricolage, à la carte religion, do-it-yourself religion, recomposition, Sheilaism, or patchwork-religion (Bailey, 1990; Bellah, 1985; Dobbelaere, 2002: 173; Hervieu-Léger, 2001; Luckmann, 1967). The overall message of this literature is that more religious freedom does not lead to less religiosity, but to a change in the *form of religiosity*. Since individuals are no longer controlled by institutions, they become religious in ways that often do not look religious to the unsuspecting observer (hence the talk of “invisible” or “implicit” religion) or that are increasingly “spiritual” (Bloch, 1998; Heelas and Woodhead, 2004). Since each individual becomes a “special case,” qualitative research in particular seems to be a good method to investigate these new forms of religiosity and spirituality.

A third position also acknowledges increasing individual religious freedom, but sees various possible individual reactions to such a state of affairs (Gruber and Hungerman, 2006; Need and De Graaf, 1996; Stolz, 2009b). Individuals may, according to this position, become religious shoppers, but they may also choose not to be religious or entertain a kind of “fuzzy fidelity” (Storm, 2009; Voas, 2009). It depends on the context just what kind of reaction should be expected of a given individual or social group. In contexts where there are strong norms that the individual should be religious in some way, where there are few secular alternatives, where there is freedom as to the kind of religious products that may be chosen and where individuals have a certain income, they are very likely to become “religious shoppers.” Good examples are the Halal markets, the markets for Islamic fashion (Sandikzi and Ger, 2010), or the market for Christian music in the evangelical milieu. In contexts, on the other hand, where there are few norms sanctioning religious behavior and where there are many secular alternatives, we should expect more fuzzy fidelity and secularity.⁷

⁷ In this way, some of the differences between the USA and most European states can be (partly) explained. In the US, there has been a strong societal expectation that individuals should be “religious” and a generally held belief that religion is a “good thing” even after the 1960s (Lipset, 1991). In such a situation, religious freedom will lead to a religious market. In many European countries, after the 1960s, individuals were not expected to be religious anymore. The result was, therefore, more fuzzy fidelity and secularism. Other variables that strongly influence the reactions of

Shopping and consuming as a new religion

Some authors have argued that one of the important life domains where individuals can experience sacredness these days is *shopping* and *consuming* (Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry, 1989). Baggini (2005), writing about the opening of a new branch of Ikea, suggests that “shopping is the new religion and Mammon our new God.” This is because “The kind of ‘must have’ mania that infects some shoppers as they close in on a good deal is more akin to the imperatives of religious devotion than those of personal finance.” Belk *et al.* (1989) show various ways in which individuals may “sacralize” the experience of consuming. Other authors describe how individuals may engage in various forms of “brand fandom”: they venerate the product, feel an emotional bond to other brand users, fantasize about enemies of the brand and begin to engage in “evangelistic” behavior. In extreme cases, “cult brands” may be so strongly venerated that fans create “brand communities” (Muniz and O’Guinn, 2001). This has happened, *inter alia*, with Macintosh, the Apple Newton, Harley Davidson, Star Trek, Jeep, or Saab (Muniz and Hope, 2005).⁸

While it may be tempting to see shopping as the new religion of consumer society and shopping malls as the temples of our society, we should be wary of accepting these theories too quickly. For the research started off by the famous article by Belk *et al.* (Belk *et al.*, 1989) may be seen as one example of a much larger research tradition concerned with seeing the sacred in all kinds of domains of modern life.⁹ The phenomenon has been given various names: invisible religion, surrogate religion, quasi-religion, implicit religion, or secular religion (Bailey, 1990; Greil and Robbins, 1994; Luckmann, 1967).

While the specifics differ, the argument is always that elements and/or functions that once characterized religion can now be found in seemingly secular domains of life. Formerly it was religion that gave meaning, integrated the social group, legitimated the social structure, allowed individuals to accept misfortune and distress, and let them experience times of frenzy and enthusiasm. Today, these

individuals to religious freedom are gender, age, religious socialization, religious tradition and the level of development of their country of residence (Norris and Inglehart, 2004; Ruiter and Graaf, 2006).

⁸ Shachar *et al.* (2011) provide one of the few articles that uses experimental evidence in order to argue that “religiosity and brand reliance are negatively related, at least in part, because both allow individuals to express aspects of themselves to others.”

⁹ Belk *et al.* already acknowledge this in their article.

attributes and functions may be found in other social situations. Frenzy and enthusiasm, for example, can be found in the collective excitement at a pop concert or a football game. The problem with this line of research, evidently, is that the definition of “religion” (or implicit, or quasi-religion etc.) used is so broad that it is difficult to conceive of phenomena that could not—at least in principle—also become “implicitly religious.”¹⁰ In order to make a convincing case for a growing “implicit religion,” it does not suffice just to enumerate “religious” or “sacred” traits and functions in various social phenomena. Rather, it is important to give a clear, operationalizable, definition allowing for the measurement of religious change.¹¹

Our own view is that one may indeed find some “religious” or “spiritual” elements in the world of consumption, but that most authors in marketing and sociology seriously overstate their case. In order to get a balanced view, it may be useful to look at Table 1.1. Here, we order a number of “candidates” for religious and quasi-religious phenomena both on a “likeness to religion and/or spirituality” and a “formal organization” continuum (Brinkerhoff and Jacob, 1999). Likeness to religion and spirituality is a construct that measures the number of traits that are similar to the attributes normally thought to characterize transcendence-orientated religions and spiritualities. We then distinguish four degrees of likeness to religion and spirituality and call them zero-religions/spiritualities, secular religions/spiritualities, hybrid religions/spiritualities, and religions/spiritualities.

Zero-religions and spiritualities have no or almost no resemblance to transcendence-orientated religions or spiritualities. Of course, virtually all social practices may give “meaning” to individuals or may in some fashion or other “structure” the life of individuals. In so far as religions and spiritualities also give meaning and structure, even here we find a likeness to religion. However, most attributes normally found in transcendence-orientated religions and spiritualities are lacking. Phenomena found in

¹⁰ Here are some phenomena that have in fact been written about as “implicit religion” or “quasi religion”: sports, pop music, television, sex, one’s own home, art, psychotherapy, mindfulness, self-help groups, medicine, vegetarianism, science (Babik, 2006; Brinkerhoff and Jacob, 1999; Hamilton, 2000; Lam, 2001; Rudy and Greil, 1988).

¹¹ In the (few) cases where this has been done, several hypotheses of the proponents of this line of argument have been falsified. Thus, there does not seem to be a trend towards “believing without belonging” or “vicarious religion” (Bruce and Voas, 2010; Voas and Crockett, 2005). Nor can we speak of a “spiritual revolution” in western societies (Voas and Bruce, 2007).

this category are, for example, school, police, construction companies (high formal organization), or watching television, cleaning (low formal organization). Shopping in most cases would clearly fall under the heading of zero-spirituality.

Secular religions and spiritualities have somewhat more likeness to transcendence-orientated religions and spiritualities. They may, for example, show similar functions—such as the capacity to integrate, give meaning, give identity, compensate, and legitimate. However, they normally lack the criteria of transcendence. While we may find “specialists,” a “founder,” certain “ethics,” “myths,” “veneration,” and emotions of awe, these elements are not linked to some sort of god, supernatural entity or transcendent principle. It is the political leader, the founder of the ideology, the inventor of the brand, the pop star who is venerated—but not a supernatural invisible or incarnated god. It is obvious that brand fandom and shopping products that serve to define individual identity (clothing, accessories, cars, etc.) may be seen as secular spiritualities.¹²

Hybrid religions and spiritualities are phenomena that have many attributes in common with religions and spiritualities—but as their name suggests, they also seem to be something else—parasciences, therapies, musical cultures, fan-cultures, businesses, etc. As Greil and Rudy (1990) explain, often these phenomena actively seek an ambiguous status concerning their “religious” nature. This is because a “religious” label gives certain advantages (e.g. respectability, tax exemption, non-falsifiability), but also disadvantages (e.g. being seen as “not serious” or “not scientific”). Good examples of such hybrid phenomena are Scientology, Transcendental Meditation, Alcoholics Anonymous, or Synanon on the formally organized side, as well as rave culture, astrology, sacred sex, or Reiki on the less organized side. Extreme brand fandom such as the brand communities that have formed around Mac, Saab, or Harley Davidson have indeed produced transcendental elements built into millenarian ideas, myths, rituals, and ethics (Belk, 2005; Lam, 2001; Muniz and O’Guinn, 2001).¹³

¹² Interestingly, even economics has been called a “religion.” In his book on “Economics as Religion,” Robert Nelson (2001: i). writes: “Economists think of themselves as scientists, but as I will be arguing in this book, they are more like theologians.” See also Piore (2006: 19). In our terminology, we are faced with a “secular religion.”

¹³ In Mac devotees’ communities, Belk (2005: 205) finds “a creation myth, a messianic myth, a satanic myth, and a resurrection myth.” Such brand communities may therefore be seen as hybrid spiritualities. It has to be noted, though,

Table 1.1 A typology ordering phenomena according to their "likeness" to religions/spiritualities

		Degree of "likeness" to transcendent religions/spiritualities			
		none	low	medium	high
Formal Organization	high	Zero-Religions —Police —School —Construction company	Secular Religions —Nazism —Marxism —Psychotherapy	Hybrid Religions —Scientology —Transcendent Meditation —Alcoholics Anonymous —Synanon	Religions —Islam —Christianity —Judaism —Buddhism —Christian Science —Raelianism
	low	Zero-Spiritualities —Shopping —Television —Cleaning	Secular Spiritualities —Brand fandom —Identity shopping —Pop fandom —Soccer fandom —Extreme sports —Wellness —Conspiracy theories —Positive thinking —Intensive pub culture —Sports yoga	Hybrid Spiritualities —Extreme brand fandom —Dianetics —Sacred sex —Rave culture —Mindfulness —Alien research groups —Star Wars religion —Astrology —Reiki —Hybrid yoga	Spiritualities —New Age —Esotericism —Channelling —Spiritual yoga

While this analysis shows that it is conceivable that consumption phenomena include religious and spiritual elements, it is clearly exaggerated to say that shopping, brand fandom or even extreme brand fandom are the "new religion" of our times.

Organizational Effects: Marketing and Branding Religion and Spirituality

We now turn to the organizational side of "religious consumer society." The historical antecedents mentioned above (modernization, change from institution to voluntary association, religious-secular competition) have put religious organizations and entrepreneurs in a completely new situation, leading to an increased need to market and brand their products and services. Let us first say what we mean by marketing and branding.

that these cases of extreme brand fandom are rather rare and that the studies investigating them have concentrated on the most extreme cases.

Marketing may be defined as “the performance of business activities that direct the flow of goods and services from the producer to the consumer, to satisfy the needs and desires of the consumer and the goals and objectives of the producer” (Barna, 1990: 41). Marketing should be understood in a broad way not just as advertising and publicizing, but as including any means that furthers a mutually satisfying exchange between the organization and the customer. This includes the design of the product or service, the choice of the target market, the screening of the main competitors, the organization of the means of distribution, as well as the publicizing and branding of the product (Kotler and Levy, 1969).

A *brand* can be defined as the idea or image of a specific product or service that consumers connect with by identifying the name, logo, slogan, or design of the company that owns the idea or image. The *branding process* occurs when that idea or image is marketed so that it is recognizable by more and more people, and identified with a certain service or product when there are many other companies offering the same service or product. As outlined by Keller (1993: 10), “the semantic meaning of a suggestive brand name may enable consumers to infer certain attributes and benefits” and “facilitates marketing activity designed to link certain associations to the brand.” Advertising professionals work on branding not only to build brand recognition, but also to build good reputations and a set of standards that the company should strive to maintain or surpass. Branding is identity-generating storytelling and therefore involves not only the alphanumeric content of a brand name, but also logos, slogans, and celebrity endorsers who officially speak for the brand.¹⁴

According to Mottner (2007), branding language helps to identify some of the tools and strategies that may be used. These include: 1) brand name, 2) brand personality, 3) brand equity, 4) brand positioning, 5) brand image, 6) brand campaign, and 7) brand promise.

Changing acceptance and use of religious marketing and branding by organizations

¹⁴ The economic institutionalization of branding and legal protection based on property rights against potential infringers is a relatively recent phenomenon. The early attempts at legalizing property rights on names and inventions, about two hundred years ago, were accompanied by debates as well as legislative trial and error processes. The French Revolution dismantled the nascent intellectual and industrial property rights and was obliged to reintroduce them after some years. Benjamin Franklin was among the strongest opponents of property rights, because he valued innovations (and the public good through their broad diffusion) over profits (and their private appropriation).

Researchers in general seem to agree that both acceptance and use of religious marketing and branding have increased in western countries since the 1950s for “suppliers” of various religions (Cutler and Winans, 1999; Einstein, 2008; McDaniel, 1986; Twitchell, 2005; Webb, Joseph, Schimmel, and Moberg, 1998). According to these authors, religious groups increasingly investigate consumer needs, design forms of worship and product lines, engage in advertising, image campaigns, and branding. Such claims are made especially concerning Christian churches, be they mainline, evangelical or fundamentalist (Chen, 2012; Einstein, 2011), but also for non-Christian religions. Prominent examples in Islam are the transformation of the veil from a “stigmatized practice to a fashionable object” (Sandikzi and Ger, 2010), or the booming Halal Industry (Fischer, 2009).¹⁵ A good example of marketing by a religious group rooted in Jewish mysticism can be seen in the Kabbalah Center established by Philip S. Berg (Einstein, 2008: 147 ff.). A Buddhist example is the huge success of Buddhist books even in mainstream bookstores (Jones, 2007); a Hindu example is the successful marketing of Yoga in the domain of “wellness” (Deshpande, Herman, and Lobb, 2011). New religious movements like Scientology, the Moonies, or the Raelians have also been known to engage in important efforts of marketing (Barker, 1984; Einstein, 2011; Palmer, 2004). In all traditions, we see a growing importance of religious tourism (Finney, Orwig, and Spake, 2012). While almost everybody seems to agree that both the acceptance and the use of religious marketing by organizations have grown—and the claim seems plausible overall—there is a clear lack of quantitative longitudinal data to prove the point.¹⁶ An important parameter influencing public acceptance and the use of religious marketing and branding is the overall legal framework (see Usunier in this volume).

Specific religious marketing and branding techniques

¹⁵ Haenni (2009) mentions a great number of Muslim consumer products and brands that have emerged, for example: Muslim drinks (Muslim-Up, Arab-Cola), Muslim dolls (Muslim Barbies Razanne and Full), Muslim fast food (Halal Fried Chicken, Beurger King), or “green leisure.”

¹⁶ Cutler and Winans (1999), for example, point to the career of George Barna who has specialized in teaching church marketing to churches; they also show that publications about church marketing have clearly increased in recent decades. Webb (1998: 4) locates the first attempts at formal church marketing back in the late 1950s, when James Culliton proposed that churches should use the “4 P’s” of product, price, place, and promotion.”

Marketing has a strong normative stance and uses a combination of action strategies. We discuss publics/markets and strategies (marketing mix) of religious organizations.

Publics and markets A number of publications highlight the fact that religious groups face different publics. If they want to survive in a society where individuals have choices, they are well advised to distinguish these different publics or various types of markets (market segmentation) in order to engage in a positive exchange with each of them (Schwarz, 1986). Mottner (2007) distinguishes input publics, internal publics, partner or intermediary publics, and consuming publics. Input publics provide resources and constraints to the organization, including donors and various stakeholders; internal publics consist of staff and volunteers; partner or intermediary publics are marketing agencies, consultants or other entities that help the organization to fulfill its objectives; consuming publics are its members, prospective members, people who are served in a general way, or even the general public. Webb, Joseph, Schimmel, and Moberg (1998) advise distinguishing prospective members, present members and former members in order to plan a church's strategy. The central idea in public or market segmentation is that different publics/markets have different needs that can only be met separately. A special marketing policy can be implemented for every public. For example, the very successful megachurch ICF in Switzerland has created specifically designed worship services for different age groups (Favre, in this volume). The Alpha Course was created in order to meet the needs of a population with a certain interest in spirituality or "life questions," but who would not normally enter a church (Hunt, 2003; Sengers, 2009). Both the Christian music industry and the Islamic fashion, toys and halal industry are targeting devout middle-class populations in the respective religious traditions. The Catholic and reformed churches in Germany and Switzerland have tried to use the marketing tool of "life-style milieus" in order to find targetable publics for their services (MDG, 2005; Meier, 2006; Stolz and Ballif, 2010).

As Mottner (2007: 93) explains, when religious organizations use marketing, they often do so not to make individuals "buy a product." Rather, they try to influence a whole range of behaviors in their target publics. These include:

- "a) joining an organized religious group, either from another religion (conversion) or from having no religion;
- b) maintaining or increasing "loyalty" to a certain type of religion;
- c) increasing the level of "religiosity" and conformity to a specific religion's norms;

- d) increasing one's depth of belief or faith in a religion; and
- e) financial support of religious organizations.”

Branding In the scholarly literature on “religious branding,” there is, paradoxically, little overlap between territorial boundaries of disciplines. As a general rule, the religious branding literature uses the term “brand” interchangeably with “name,” or sometimes “slogan” or “catch phrase.” Few authors cite classical references in the branding literature (Keller, 1993). Few references in Science of Religion articles or Economics of Religion papers, even when they explicitly mention religious branding, come from the marketing, branding, and consumer research literature.

There can be no doubt that *branding as a concept* is applicable to religious phenomena. Religions may be considered to have *brand names*: Christianity, Islam, Judaism, or Christian Science. They normally have signs that may well be interpreted as easily recognizable *brand logos*: the cross or fish for Christianity, the Yin-Yang sign for Taoism, the star and crescent for Islam, the Lotus flower for Buddhism, the star of David for Judaism. They have “brand stories” (myths) that are embodied in rituals, objects, works of art, buildings and clothing. Their places of worship are often built in a branded, i.e. recognizable, way representing churches, mosques or temples. Registering the name of world religions, however, is generally impossible, because the label is considered a generic name, not acceptable for registration. As a consequence, generic religious names and symbols may be seen as “half-brands,” with a full capacity to support a wide range of religious marketing, advertising, and sales objectives (Einstein, 2011), but with legal limitations as regards brand name protection.¹⁷

In contrast, new religions or religious organizations included in larger religious traditions may find it easier to register their trademark. Thus, Scientology has been able to protect its names, logos, and products by trademark rights.¹⁸ Likewise, the Alpha Course, Transcendental Meditation, and “Purpose

¹⁷ If we think of religious brand names (e.g. names of holy books, names of holy places, sacraments and rituals, pilgrimages, etc.) as pre-industrial property rights, they are non-economic and non-institutionalized exclusion rights, which include the moral, but not the commercial aspects of property rights. By institutionalization, we mean the legal framework of property rights which has been elevated to a global scale by the adoption in 1995 of the TRIPS (Trade Related Industrial Property Rights) agreement by member states of the World Trade Organization.

¹⁸ See for example : <http://www.rtc.org/guarant/pg006.html>.

Driven” products are registered trademarks. Of course, consumer brands that try to become “religious” also have the full set of branding tools, both marketing and legal (Muniz and Hope, 2005).

As in branding in general, religious or spiritual brands may be used in order to market and possibly sell a whole line of products. A good example is the “Purpose Driven” brand by Rick Warren. Here, the brand is used to symbolize both the “purpose-driven” man, pastor and author Rick Warren, the bestselling books “The Purpose Driven Life,” the Saddleback church which is presented as the first model of a “Purpose Driven Church,” the various CDs and videos presenting the “Purpose Driven” concept, etc. We find similar lines of products for the Nicky Gumbel Alpha Course (Hunt, 2003).

Strategy The famous 4 Ps of marketing (Product, Price, Promotion, Place) may be applied to religions and spiritualities (see Usunier, in this volume).¹⁹ The specific choices in these domains form what marketers call the “marketing mix.” In what follows we give various examples, highlighting specifics for religious and spiritual organizations and products.

Product or service offering Religious organizations and entrepreneurs offer a wide variety of products and services that often claim to have some sort of transcendent utility. Max Weber called them “salvation goods” (Stolz, 2006; Weber, 1978 (1920)). A number of publications treat the question of how religious and spiritual entrepreneurs change their products or services in order to compete successfully with other religious or secular providers. Among the strategies employed we find:

- using *market research* in order to better understand the religious and spiritual or other needs of a given population.
- *gearing the product to a special kind of public or audience*. Religious organizations create special religious services for different age groups, social milieus, groups with various interests, etc. (Stolz and Ballif, 2010).
- making the product more *entertaining*. Religious groups increasingly include music and humor in their services (Einstein, 2008).
- using *economies of scale* in order to guarantee a very high *quality* product. By becoming a *megachurch*, the organization can offer first class entertainment, music, facilities and the diversity of small groups to customers (Chaves, 2006; Fath, 2008).

¹⁹ Mottner (2007) extends the list to 7 P’s, adding Physical evidence, People and Process.

- *adapting the product quickly to changing needs of the population.* Alternative healers in particular have been found to adapt very quickly to the perceived needs of customers, by changing the number and types of healing techniques offered (Mayer, 2007).
- *reducing the demands on the customer in terms of lifestyle, commitment, or belief,* in order to reach a greater number of possible customers (Einstein, 2008).

Price Some products on religious and spiritual markets do have a monetary price that can be adjusted. These goods may be called religious or spiritual consumer goods (Stolz, 2006). Examples are the prices of religious books, religious films, spiritual healing sessions, meditation courses, entrance fees for spiritual concerts and the like.

Many religious and spiritual goods, however, do not have direct prices but *shadow prices* (Stolz, 2009b). This often means that the individual pays a church tax or membership fee, or makes a donation and can then enjoy the benefits of products produced by the group either freely or at a much reduced price. A question for religious groups is then how to set their church tax rate, membership fees and/or how strongly they should insist on donations. The fact that, in religion, we often have a group in which members contribute to produce religious goods together leads to the interesting fact that religious groups will often give out religious consumer goods and services *for free or clearly under the market price even to nonmembers*. Jehovah's Witnesses give away their brochures for free (although the individual members have to pay for them); Christian religious services are normally open to all; and many films or theatrical events organized by religious organizations are free or priced inexpensively. The theological reason might often be that the gift is seen either as "good works" or as a means of evangelization.

One cost of the religious product is the *time* used when taking part in the ritual, since time has a shadow price (Becker, 1990 (1976); Iannaccone, 1990). One market adaptation may lie in reducing the length of religious services in order to make them more attractive since they become less time-consuming. Another strategy is to organize large religious events. With these, the individual only has to show up once and is sure to have an extraordinary experience, but does not have to commit to a recurring and fixed ritual. A third strategy is used by megachurches: when going to a religious service, individuals may also be able to fulfill other needs (i.e. going to the gym, eating out), thus saving time. A fourth strategy is to use modern media (internet, television, radio) in order to allow individuals to take part while not being physically present.

Another cost possibly linked to the religious product may be seen in that individuals may hold a negative view of the fact that they have to *believe implausible things or act in ways that seem unnatural to them*. One way to lower these costs is to devise special formats for individuals who are not yet believers or who are “doubting.” Recent decades have seen various examples, such as the Alpha course, seeker services, the Thomas mass and others (Hunt, 2003; Kotila, 1999; Sengers, 2009).

An important literature following Kelley (1986 (1972)) and Iannaccone (1994) argues that various religious groups use an explicit or implicit strategy not to lower but to *raise* the cost of membership in order to screen out free riders and thus increase the quality of the group atmosphere and level of belief. This in turn is thought to increase the attractiveness of the group, making it grow in the medium and long term. It is true that in western countries and among Christian churches, conservative churches have fared better than liberal ones. There is no consensus, however, on whether this finding can satisfactorily be explained by the free-rider mechanism (Bruce, 1999; Olson, 2001, 2005).

Promotion A growing literature analyses promotional activities by religious organizations. Several points can be made.

- Religious organizations may use the *whole range of promotional tools* available to secular organizations. These range from commercials on television or radio, ads in newspapers, billboard advertising, internet sites to door-to-door evangelization. Einstein (2011) analyses TV ads by Scientology and the Methodists; Chen (2012) looks at a very successful use of search engine optimization by the Latter Day Saints.
- There does *not seem to be one main promotional tool* for religious organizations that is sure to be most successful. Rather, religious organizations normally use a whole range of promotional tools, while unsuccessful organizations often do not use any or only at a very low level (Vokurka, McDaniel, and Cooper, 2002). When it comes to organizational growth, one of the most important tools seems nevertheless to be communication through friendship networks and word of mouth (Carrick Coleman, 2008).
- Since religious organizations normally do “*good works*,” these activities are especially useful in order to create a positive image. If they can be publicized and if the religious leaders can be shown to lead these good works in the media, the religious organization has a powerful tool at hand.

- Since religions are often ritual based (and ritual being, in essence, repetitive), they may find problems in “creating news” that could be used for publicity. One way around this problem is to organize special “*religious events*” that are newsworthy and may therefore be used to get the religious organization into the media (Salzbrunn, 2004). Examples are yearly religious festivals, Catholic world youth days, Lutheran “church days,” evangelization rallies, and the like. Such events may become especially newsworthy if they seem to have a wider, not only religious importance. The Saddleback Church Forum, for example, was able to host a meeting between Barack Obama and John McCain when they were running for president in 2008. Religious organizations may also gain much publicity when they conduct the ceremonies associated with nationally important events (such as major funerals, services following natural catastrophes like earthquakes or tsunamis, or when a national event is celebrated or remembered).
- Although rather rare, some religious organizations may use *scandal* and *humor* in order to get publicity. For example when the Raelians claimed that they had cloned a human being (Palmer, 2004), the payoff was very inexpensive, worldwide media coverage and a boost to organizational growth. Bhagwan Shree Rashneesh was also known to use unusual, confusing and sometimes humorous statements and actions in order to attract attention and media coverage (Gordon, 1987). Even mainline churches in Europe can obtain a lot of publicity when they defy the state and offer “church asylum” to asylum seekers who are supposed to leave the country in question (Just and Sträter, 2003).
- An extremely useful promotional tool is the “*brand personality*” and “*celebrity endorser*.” When religious organizations have a “religious star” available to them, this individual’s life, opinions, successes, failures, etc. become newsworthy and can get the religious organization into the media. Examples for brand personalities are the Pope, the Dalai Lama, Sister Emmanuelle, or Mother Theresa. Widely known examples of celebrity endorsers are Tom Cruise (Scientology) and Madonna (Kabbalah). As is the case for brand personalities or celebrity endorsers in general, religious organizations are extremely vulnerable if the individuals that stand for the organization are seen to fall short of public expectations.

Place (distribution) Some authors discuss questions of the “place” for the optimal distribution of the products of religious organizations in religious consumer society. Again, some general points can be made:

- In countries with established churches, these churches have often used the *parish system*, trying to offer a comprehensive supply with a church in the center of every village. With growing mobility, increasing secularization and growing religious diversity, such a system often cannot be sustained in religious consumer society. The small churches are not sufficiently attractive to compete with all the other secular possibilities for spending one’s time. The parish system therefore seems to break down, giving way to a system in which larger churches try to attract individuals from larger areas (Stolz and Ballif, 2010).
- Historical Christian churches in inner cities may capitalize on their location by transforming themselves into “*city churches*,” that is, churches that are not the home of a congregation, but that are geared to the needs of larger audiences. Such city churches try to attract passers-by, offer religious concerts, theater, meditation and meeting spaces (Sigrist, 2000).
- In contrast, *megachurches* often seek out places in the suburbs, easily accessible by car, where land is relatively cheap, and where enough parking is readily available.
- New kinds of places are emerging that give more flexibility to a variety of religious and spiritual providers: *Spiritual meeting centers* and *esoteric fairs* have the advantage of not being centered on just one or two types of supply, and of acting as an open space in which many different suppliers may engage with various publics.
- An increasingly important location for religious and spiritual supply is *bookstores*. Here, the competition between various religious and spiritual goods and between secular and religious/spiritual products becomes completely obvious.
- An interesting phenomenon is the continuing success of “*house churches*,” where individuals try to create the “religious supply” themselves, renouncing the services of an institutionalized church.
- Overall, in an increasingly globalized world, we note the growing importance of religious and spiritual *place-brands*. Lourdes, Santiago de Compostela, Jerusalem, Mecca, Bethlehem, and

Stonehenge are sites that can be successfully branded and then become very attractive both for religious and secular tourists (Finney *et al.*, 2012).

- Surveying the major new developments in places of distribution of religious products, we can observe the downfall of the formerly institutionalized distribution of religious goods and an upswing of more consumer-orientated, flexible, and readily branded channels of distribution.

Effects of marketing and branding

It is clear that some religious organizations have been effective at marketing and branding and that this has helped them to *grow* considerably—good examples are megachurches (see in this volume). It is not the case, however, that marketing always leads to growth. In fact, most churches in the western world—despite applying certain types of marketing—have *difficulty keeping their members*. The reason is precisely the fierce secular competition these religious groups face.

Many observers have noted that the increasing use of marketing and branding in the religious sphere has led to a considerable *blurring of genres* and to the fact that it may become increasingly difficult to distinguish the religious from the secular. Often, religious organizations will seek to copy successful secular products in order to become more attractive both to religious and secular audiences. The religious service becomes a pop-music “celebration”; the sermon is turned into an entertaining “message” full of humor, movement, and theater. Many televangelists have copied the “amiable style” of secular talk show hosts like Johnny Carson or Jay Leno (Moore, 1995). Many successful megachurches, like ICF (International Christian Fellowship), Vineyard, or Hillsong use high quality pop bands and choirs (see the chapter by Olivier Favre and Thomas Wagner in this volume). Some forms of yoga have been completely incorporated into the wellness programmes of fitness clubs. In another dimension, many esoteric producers copy elements of science by making their organizations “institutes” conducting “seminars” and “conferences” (Greil and Rudy, 1990; Hero, 2010: 147 ff.). When the copying is successful, we may witness cross-over phenomena, that is, religious products may enjoy success in the secular market (e.g. the “*Left Behind*” series, holidays in the cloister) or secular products may do so in the religious sphere (e.g. rap music in Black Churches (Barnes, 2008)).²⁰ We should not forget, however, that

²⁰ As a reaction to this blurring of genres, some have reprimanded religious organizations for the “shallowness” or “lightness” of their audience-tuned products (Carrette and King, 2005).

while there is blurring in some cases, we also find a *refocusing of boundaries* in other cases, namely when religious products are sharply branded in order to convey one and only one important message.

Limits of religious marketing and branding

When religious organizations try to market and brand their products, they meet interesting problems.

- *Vulnerability of transcendent claims.* Religious and spiritual products are linked to some sort of transcendent claim. Explicitly or implicitly, they promise some sort of “salvation good.” Problems may arise when religious organizations try to be too specific in their claims, opening themselves up to criticism. Thus, Jehovah’s Witnesses have been criticized for their erroneous predictions of the end of the world, Scientology and various spiritual techniques have been under attack concerning the effectiveness of their therapies, and young world creationists are ridiculed for their beliefs. These problems occur when the claims of religious organizations concerning salvation goods are too specific and thus falsifiable; it does not occur when the claims are general and non-falsifiable. In the latter case, religious organizations find themselves in the company of secular organizations that also market and brand their products with all kinds of rather far-fetched unverifiable promises and claims (the luxury perfume will make you irresistible, the branded computer will show that you’re “hip,” the new coffee brand will improve your relationship with your parents-in-law ...).
- *Difficulties in controlling product stability and quality.* Since religious organizations are mostly non-profit organizations or voluntary associations, it is often very difficult to control the stability and quality of the “product.” The way a religious service in the reformed church is performed in one village may differ greatly from the way it is performed in another. Denominational names may be stable, but the “product” underneath may differ drastically. While it may be possible to promote the denomination with ads or internet sites, such marketing is inefficient if the claims cannot be followed up when people actually see the product (Einstein, 2008).
- *Lack of acceptability by the general public.* Another obstacle is related to limited acceptance by the general public due to a number of converging reasons. First, religious organizations are considered non-profit organizations relying chiefly on donations; the public may therefore adopt a critical view if the donated funds are used to promote the “public image” of the organization. Second, religious goods, especially salvation goods, are perceived as non-sellable; promoting

them can therefore be seen as a form of desacralization, of breaking a taboo (McGraw, Schwartz, and Tetlock, 2012). Third, the public is increasingly critical when organizations are seen to be trying to “manipulate” people. Any type of evangelizing strategy is therefore easily seen as going against the principle of religious freedom (Wrenn, 1994). On a completely different note, some religious groups reject brands and branding as symbols of a negatively perceived capitalist society, this being especially true for Muslims (Izberk-Bilgin, 39). In general, we can say that the acceptability of marketing and branding is strongly dependent on the cultural context, making it mandatory for international organizations to adapt their marketing efforts to the respective local cultures (Usunier and Lee, 2009).

- *Lack of acceptability by the group members themselves.* A great many religious organizations also face internal opposition to marketing and branding. Members and staff of churches may see marketing as the exact opposite of their beliefs and religious practice. Marketing may be thought to go against the central religious message, or to soften or alter it (Barth, 1930; Kunz, 2006; Wrenn, 1994).
- *Lack of skills.* A further limit to religious marketing and branding lies in the fact that religious organizations may lack the necessary skills to do the marketing. Marketing is normally not taught in theological seminaries or in other religious group schools and universities (Kuzma, Kuzma, and Kuzma, 2009).

The Contributions in This Volume

As a second introductory chapter in this volume, *Jean-Claude Usunier* explores how the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS, 1995, one of the 18 trade agreements in the World Trade Organization) promotes the global commoditization of religions. GATS legally opens the way for free trade in religious services worldwide. Usunier further questions in detail whether marketing concepts and practices apply to religion and gives a positive, though nuanced, answer.

Marketing and branding religion and spirituality

A first group of chapters investigates the supply side, i.e. the applicability of marketing/branding concepts and practices to religious organizations.

Olivier Favre studies the ICF (International Christian Fellowship), a Swiss evangelical movement established as a church since 1996, as an important example of religious marketing consistent with a

modern urban environment. From its start, the organization has aimed to attract young adults by developing appropriate marketing tools, sustained by a radical growth strategy. Favre shows that the insistence on marketing by ICF leads to interesting “blurring” phenomena.

Thomas Wagner analyses the musical worship experiences of congregation members of the Australian and London branches of Hillsong Church, an Australia based inter- and trans-national Pentecostal church that brands itself through its distinctive musical offerings. Through interviews with the musicians and technicians as well as “lay” members of the church, Wagner seeks to comprehend the complex interplay of pragmatic production decisions, the understandings of locality among the musicians and members of Hillsong, and how these understandings inform the experience of the Hillsong brand.

Markus Hero shows that the concept of entrepreneurship applies extremely well to the field of alternative spirituality. Drawing in an original way on neo institutionalist theory, Hero focuses on spiritual small businesses that tailor their health services by propagating religious connections to human identity, the body and its health as a discursive way of generating trust. Hero’s article is mainly conceptual and suggests many possibilities for further research.

The contribution by *Jason Dean* on “non-fortuitous limits to the brand metaphor in the popularizing of ‘justly balanced Islam’” also looks at social, political, symbolic, and legal rivalries in the competition among churches. Dean shows that a Bourdieusian, sociological model of rivalry is more appropriate for describing religious competition than a Beckerian, economic model.

Hanifa Touag investigates traditional Muslim healing rites—*roqya*—by Salafists in France and Belgium. Drawing on ethnographic research and interviews with both practitioners and patients, Touag describes how the *roqya* rite has been able to impose itself on a “market of healing.” The adoption of the rite is shown to combine secular and spiritual attributes and functions.

Religious and spiritual consuming

A second group of chapters looks at the demand-side of religious and spiritual consuming or the influence of religiosity on demand.

Jochen Hirschle argues that consumption competes on both the level of imaginations and the level of social action with religious institutions. In the empirical part of his chapter, he tests this hypothesis by analyzing the development of income, consumption-related leisure activities and church attendance using a sample of young German Catholics. According to Hirschle, it is precisely in these confines, on the

borderline between economic/secular and non-economic/sacred realities, that late-modern spiritual consumers try to reconfigure meaning.

Haytham Siala investigates the impact that religious factors have on a consumer's perception of brand loyalty. Specifically, the study focuses on the attitudinal and affective form of brand loyalty and how the concept of Takaful can become a 'catalyst' to inducing religious brand loyalty in devout religious customers. An empirical investigation conducted on a sample of Muslim consumers tests whether the extent of religious commitment can instill attitudinal brand loyalty towards a car insurer selling religiously-conforming insurance services. The results confirm that there is a positive relationship between the exogenous religious constructs and the endogenous attitudinal brand loyalty, price tolerance and word-of-mouth constructs.

Elizabeth Stickel-Minton examines how religious affiliation grouping influences consumer behavior. She assesses the predictive ability of three different religious grouping systems supported in the literature: simple (Catholic, Protestant, Jew, none), fundamental (liberal, moderate, fundamentalist), and denominational. Her findings suggest that the segmentation of religious affiliation may be to blame for non-significant results in previous studies.

Economic analyses of religious phenomena

Roger Finke and *Christopher P. Scheitle* show that the pluralism of religious suppliers is a product of the pluralism of religious preferences and the number of potential adherents within an environment. This pluralism of suppliers, in turn, produces a pluralism of religious consumers. They then distinguish between expected pluralism and observed pluralism, and argue that a relationship between pluralism and participation will be expected only when a meaningful gap between these two variables exists.

Steve Bruce presents a critique of the market-of-religions paradigm and explains why he rejects the rational choice theory of religion, before outlining in an original way the circumstances in which such an economic approach to religion would be viable. As we read Bruce, his view on secularization is in no way incompatible with the religious marketing and branding that is presented in other chapters in this book.

Finally, *Philippe Simonnot*, in his contribution on the Temple of Jerusalem discusses the "business model" of Jewish monotheism as a Unique Selling Proposition, a classical advertising copy strategy. Simonnot shows that, despite a shared tendency of all religions to want to be sole and exclusive suppliers, monotheism is better placed than polytheism because, as a matter of principle, it gives to a single God.

All chapters in the book show new perspectives on the marketization of religion and spirituality. We hope that they will—in their combination—help to encourage future research and thinking in our overlapping disciplinary fields.