

BABEȘ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY OF CLUJ-NAPOCA
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MARKETING



„STUDY OF RELIGIOUS CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR
ANTECEDENTS OF RELIGIOUS CONVERSION, PERISHIONERS SATISFACTION AND
PERCEIVED BENEFITS”

„STUDIU PRIVIND COMPORTAMENTUL CONSUMATORULUI RELIGIOS:
ANTECEDENTELE CONVERTIRII RELIGIOASE, SATISFAȚIA ENORIAȘILOR ȘI
BENEFICIILE PERCEPUTE”

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INTRODUCTION

This research aims to provide an integrated perspective on the behavior of religious consumers by exploring three fundamental dimensions: the antecedents of religious conversion, congregants' satisfaction and the perceived benefits of religious participation. In a context where religious marketing is increasingly employed by congregations to attract and retain members, the study addresses a gap in the literature by proposing an interdisciplinary analysis grounded in quantitative and bibliometric methodologies.

The thesis begins with a systematic review of the literature on religious marketing and religious consumer behavior, a field situated at the intersection of marketing science and the sociology of religion. Although these disciplines contribute to understanding the phenomenon, they often operate independently, resulting in fragmented knowledge. This work seeks to overcome such limitations by adopting a holistic approach to the core concepts of religious marketing.

A primary objective of the study is to analyze the main trends in the academic literature. The findings are visually represented through network maps, illustrating the field's evolution and its principal research directions. This stage facilitates an understanding of how marketing strategies are perceived and implemented across various Christian traditions, including Orthodoxy, Catholicism, Protestantism, and Neo-Protestantism.

A second key focus is religious conversion, a complex and multidimensional process influenced by personal, social, religious, and cultural factors. Conversion is not merely an individual decision but the outcome of interactions among life experiences, familial and community influences, personal crises, and meaningful encounters with religious leaders. Thus, religious conversion is shaped by a dynamic interplay of these factors, prompting individuals to reassess their beliefs and adopt a new religious affiliation.

Another essential objective of the study is the assessment of congregants' satisfaction, which depends on multiple factors. Drawing on existing literature, the research highlights that congregant satisfaction is influenced by: (i) the perceived quality of religious services—how well services meet the spiritual needs of believers; (ii) congregant participation and involvement—opportunities for volunteering, prayer groups, and community activities; (iii) religious branding and church image—how the church constructs its identity and communicates its values; and (iv) internal marketing within congregations—strategies used to attract and retain members through relevant sermons, inspiring music, and social events.

To test these hypotheses, the study employs a quantitative methodology based on a self-administered questionnaire distributed to members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Romania. This context allows for the generalization of findings to other Christian congregations, as Adventism shares common traits with other Protestant denominations. The sample is segmented by age, gender, education level, and religious experience, enabling a detailed analysis of these variables.

Finally, the research explores the perceived benefits of religious participation, which include spiritual fulfillment, a sense of community, personal development, and interdenominational understanding. These benefits contribute to congregant loyalty and the maintenance of long-term commitment to the church. The study suggests that, in a secularized social context, religious marketing can be employed to meet the spiritual needs of believers, thereby maintaining the relevance and appeal of churches in modern society.

By integrating these perspectives, the thesis makes a significant contribution to the literature on religious marketing and religious consumer behavior. The research underscores the importance of an interdisciplinary approach that combines the sociology of religion with marketing strategies, offering a comprehensive framework for understanding religious conversion, congregant satisfaction, and the perceived benefits of religious participation.

ABSTRACT

The scholarly literature dedicated to the theory of religious marketing, particularly in the context of its involvement in the ministerial activities of congregations, spans a diverse range of disciplines, including religious economics, marketing science, and the sociology of religion. However, these fields often evolve in parallel, frequently overlooking each other's perspectives and findings, thereby contributing to a fragmented understanding of this specialized domain.

To date, academic research has not produced a systematic review of religious marketing theory. This analytical gap may hinder our comprehension of how marketing is applied and perceived within religious institutions. Consequently, there is a pressing need for an integrated approach to construct a comprehensive picture of the religious marketing phenomenon.

Throughout this thesis, the terms “religious marketing” and “church marketing” refer primarily to Christian denominations such as Orthodox, Catholic, Reformed, Protestant, and Neo-Protestant traditions. This delineation acknowledges the diversity and specific characteristics among various Christian traditions, which is essential for a detailed and context-sensitive analysis.

In cases involving other religious forms, particular attention is given, and any mention or extrapolation is explicitly stated. This approach ensures maximum accuracy and relevance in the analysis, considering the religious and cultural diversity of the contemporary world.

This research aims to integrate and systematize the core academic contributions, resulting in an interdisciplinary presentation of religious marketing and its essential organizational aspects. The study focuses on four key questions: Q1. What are the most relevant articles in the field of religious and church marketing? Q2. Are there correlations among these studies and the authors involved? Q3. What are the main characteristics of the religious marketing debate over time? Q4. How are these characteristics described, and what are their implications from the perspective of congregations?

The structure of this study unfolds through a presentation of the concept and evolution of religious marketing theory over time. Although church marketing practices can be traced back to the early days of Christianity, it was only in the 20th century that the topic emerged explicitly in academic publications (Mulyanegara et al., 2010). The adoption of marketing by religious congregations has gradually increased over the past two decades (Shepherd, 2004; Stolz & Usunier, 2019), alongside the examination of consumer needs and behavior,

appropriate market segmentation, service diversification, advertising campaigns, image, and branding (Chen, 2011; Einstein, 2011).

The following section details the study's design and methodology, including a systematic literature review (Xiao & Watson, 2019). Through bibliometric analysis of 227 articles and the use of statistical tools, the research seeks to broaden the perspective on religious marketing by identifying co-occurring keywords, relationships among subtopics, key authors, and interactions between articles (Waltman et al., 2010). This precedes the presentation of bibliometric results, where study interactions are graphically represented through network maps, using nodes and color-coded clusters (Van Eck & Waltman, 2013). Each of the five clusters formed through bibliographic coupling and term co-occurrence highlights a distinct research front.

Finally, the study discusses the research findings, presenting identified implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research directions. It is important to emphasize that the objective is not to evaluate a specific theory or implement a particular design, but rather to systematically present concepts such as strategies, marketing techniques, branding, market orientation, segmentation, and internal marketing, all integrated within the framework of religious marketing.

In European philosophy from the late 20th to the 21st century, the intersection between religion and everyday life has been the subject of profound examination and analysis. This philosophical exploration becomes particularly relevant when considering its correlation with the influence of religious service characteristics on the overall satisfaction of believers.

During this period, philosophers have explored the complexities of religion's role in shaping individuals' everyday existence. Existentialist thinkers such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus reflected on the human experience outside traditional religious frameworks (Bakewell, 2016). Their philosophies emphasized personal freedom, responsibility, and the creation of individual values—elements that may, in turn, influence the level of satisfaction derived from religious services (Sartre, 1992). At the same time, other philosophers, such as Martin Heidegger and Paul Tillich, sought to reconcile religion with the challenges of modernity. They explored the idea of a transcendent dimension or a “ground of being” underlying human existence (Zimmerman, 1990). In the context of religious services, aligning these characteristics with the existential concerns and aspirations of believers may significantly influence their overall satisfaction. Moreover, as the 20th century progressed—particularly during the 1960s and 1970s—postmodern thinkers such as Jacques Derrida and Michel

Foucault questioned dominant narratives, including religious ones, by deconstructing their power dynamics. Their critical analyses challenged traditional notions of religious authority and its impact on individuals' daily lives (Jay, 1993). As a result, believers' satisfaction with religious services may be shaped by how well these services align with postmodern sensibilities and address perceived power imbalances. In the 21st century, the exploration of religion and daily life within European philosophy has undergone significant development. The philosophy of religion, as an interdisciplinary field at the intersection of philosophy and religious studies, has expanded to encompass a broader spectrum. This expansion is attributed to factors such as the recognition of radical religious diversity, the influence of social sciences on the study of religious systems, and the emergence of new postmodern approaches in the philosophy of religion (Oppy, 2019).

Although philosophical reflection on religion dates back to antiquity, the distinct discipline of the philosophy of religion emerged in the modern era, influenced by the works of philosophers such as Hume, Kant, and Hegel (Shokhin, 2009). In contemporary times, the philosophy of religion has shifted focus within continental philosophy, where traditional topics such as arguments for the existence of God and the problem of evil have been overshadowed by new concerns, including questions about human and divine origins (Tilley, 2013).

Furthermore, there has been a call within the philosophy of religion to shift emphasis from God to religion itself, aligning more closely with other branches of philosophy, such as the philosophy of language (Harrison, 2020). This shift reflects a broader trend in the field toward active engagement with religious phenomena to maintain relevance for students (Loewen, 2014).

The future of the philosophy of religion envisions closer collaboration with other disciplines that study religion, moving beyond traditional Christian philosophical theology to embrace a global perspective on religious behavior (Schilbrack, 2012). This evolution is essential for addressing the complexities of religious freedom, national identity, and the changing landscape of religious nationalism in European countries such as Poland (Topidi, 2019).

Philosophers now reflect on the impact of globalization, technological advancements, and consumerism on religious practice and satisfaction. This necessitates a reevaluation of the characteristics of religious services to ensure they remain relevant and resonate with the evolving needs and expectations of believers. In summary, European philosophy from the late 20th to the 21st century has deeply engaged with the interaction between religion and everyday

life. In examining the influence of religious service characteristics on believers' overall satisfaction, philosophical inquiry has incorporated existentialist considerations of personal freedom, postmodern critiques of religious authority, and contemporary reflections on the impact of globalization and technology. These philosophical perspectives shape our understanding of the complex relationship between religion and daily life, shedding light on the factors that contribute to believers' satisfaction with religious services.

Researchers have begun to provide both conceptual and observational support for the application of marketing within religious organizations (Abreu, 2006; Mulyanegara et al., 2010; Wilde, 2001). Inspired by the broader concept of marketing, church marketing:

- highlights any activity undertaken by a religious institution to serve, retain, or recruit more members (Wilde, 2001);
- represents the management of the voluntary relationship between the congregation and its members to meet the needs of both parties; in depth, the focus of marketing used by congregations lies in creating high-quality services/programming, effective communication, and securing the necessary resources to sustain their activities (Frunză & Grad, 2020; Saunders, 1999; Stevens et al., 2013);
- aims fundamentally to identify the needs of the community and provide appropriate programs that fulfill those needs (Mulyanegara et al., 2010);
- demonstrates that marketing in churches and other religious organizations is an attempt to enhance member satisfaction and ensure their long-term commitment (Abreu, 2006).

The quality of religious services is a relative concept, largely dependent on believers' perceptions. Research on service quality within religious organizations highlights the importance of maintaining member satisfaction and fostering long-term relationships (Cronin Jr & Taylor, 1992). As religious institutions have become increasingly receptive to the idea that managing satisfaction and service quality is critical to their mission, studies have been conducted to measure the interaction between specific service encounters, perceived factors, and congregants' satisfaction (Cronin Jr & Taylor, 1992; Ilovan & Muntean, 2021). The present research aligns with the view that service quality is an antecedent of customer satisfaction, and that a set of service-related variables collectively shape overall satisfaction.

The literature addressing the need to identify indicators of service quality focuses on:

- the gap between expected and experienced quality, explained through attitudes and behavior, accessibility, flexibility, recovery, reputation, and credibility (Baek & King, 2008);
- the comparison between expectation formation and service perception based on the five dimensions of the predefined ServQual model (Attaway et al., 1996).

Religious organizations can apply service quality and satisfaction research methods similarly to business organizations, aiming to better understand and meet the needs of their members in a highly competitive environment.

Several studies reflect members' attitudes toward church characteristics. Research identifies key determinants of congregant satisfaction, such as the church environment, pastoral activity, music, and congregational participation, emphasizing their role in enhancing the quality of collective worship (Attaway et al., 1996; Casidy & Tsarenko, 2014b; Stevens et al., 1997).

Religious conversion is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon that has intrigued scholars and theologians for centuries. While religious beliefs and practices are often viewed through an individual lens (Ammerman, 2020; Rossiter, 2010), it is essential to recognize that religion is fundamentally a social construct (Lynch, 2017; Mugambi, 1996). In their seminal work *The Social Construction of Reality* (1973), Berger and Luckmann articulate the concept of religion as a "social construction of reality," where the meaning of social roles becomes embedded in society as cultural knowledge (Berger & Luckmann, 2016). An individual's religious journey is not merely the result of personal choice but is deeply shaped by external influences such as education, cultural environment, and social institutions (Hjarvard, 2011; McGuire, 2008; Sam & Berry, 2010). A subsequent section of this study will explore the antecedents of religious conversion, investigating the interplay of personal, familial, social, and religious factors that lead individuals to adopt new beliefs or affiliations.

Religious conversion represents a life-changing event, often driven by a profound search for spiritual connection, meaning, or a response to personal crises (Gallup & Jones, 2000). It may be triggered by personal revelations (Lund, 2002), intellectual exploration (Rambo, 1999), or dissatisfaction with existing beliefs (Norris, 2003). Family dynamics and education play a pivotal role in shaping an individual's initial religious identity, and familial support or opposition can either facilitate or hinder the conversion process (Carlson et al., 2002; Copen & Silverstein, 2008). Friends and religious communities offer a sense of belonging and support, influencing individuals' exploration of new religious paths (Todd et al., 2020).

Additionally, pastors and preachers serve as guides, mentors, and influential figures in inspiring religious transformation (Carrell, 2013).

This research analyzes the relationships between various factors and religious conversion, including individual experiences, family dynamics, friendships, and pastoral influence. Furthermore, it investigates the perceived benefits of religious conversion, ranging from spiritual and emotional fulfillment to the development of community belonging, interdenominational understanding, and cultural enrichment. These benefits are crucial to understanding why individuals choose to adopt religious beliefs (Py & Pedlowski, 2020).

The study employs a quantitative research approach, utilizing a self-administered questionnaire to collect data from members and attendees of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Romania. The selection of this religious denomination is strategic, as it aligns with broader Protestant Christian principles, thereby facilitating the generalization of findings. The study includes a diverse sample in terms of age, gender, education, and religious affiliation, offering insights into the factors influencing religious conversion and the perceived benefits of church participation.

Religious conversion is thus a deeply personal journey, shaped by interconnected factors. This research aims to unravel the complexities of religious conversion by examining its antecedents and perceived benefits, shedding light on the multifaceted nature of this transformative process.

CONCLUSIONS

This research provides an integrated perspective on religious consumer behavior by exploring the antecedents of religious conversion, congregants' satisfaction, and the perceived benefits of religious participation. In a context where religious marketing is increasingly employed by congregations to attract and retain members, the study addresses a gap in the existing literature by proposing an interdisciplinary analysis based on quantitative and bibliometric methodologies.

Fundamentally, the findings offer actionable insights for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Romania to enhance the spiritual journey of its members. By strategically leveraging the dimensions that significantly influence satisfaction and addressing those that generate dissatisfaction, the church can foster an environment that encourages strong spiritual commitment and a sense of belonging and community.

Believers, like any other consumers, expect continuous improvement in service quality. Even when satisfied, they remain open to change and willing to embrace it when necessary. Customer loyalty erosion is a key factor in any congregational strategy. According to Anderson, Fornell, and Lehmann (1994), customer loyalty critically depends on overall satisfaction, with higher levels leading to greater retention. Effective measurement of congregant satisfaction should provide clergy with a foundation for development in this area. Both practitioners and scholars agree that religious organizations must go beyond satisfaction to retain members. High levels of satisfaction drive loyalty, retention, and a willingness to engage with the church's doctrine (Iannaccone, 2012). To systematically uncover the desired insights, a careful evaluation of sampling methods led to the selection of an on-site questionnaire as the optimal and efficient data collection method. This included a survey aligned with a service quality assessment model as a foundational framework, along with face-to-face interviews to gather detailed information. Multiple regression analysis was employed to assess the importance of various variables in predicting satisfaction with the religious experience. Aspects such as the pastor's appearance, attire, exemplary behavior, persuasive and ethical messaging strongly influenced satisfaction. The results underscore the importance of these factors in creating a fulfilling religious experience for congregants. The empirical analysis utilized the χ^2 statistical test to establish a robust link between distinct characteristics of religious services and overall satisfaction. This analytical effort revealed a direct and substantial connection, highlighting their intrinsic interdependence. The depth of this relationship was quantified using Pearson coefficients. These coefficients, along with their

asymptotic significance values, firmly indicated statistically significant correlations with 95% confidence. The statistical rigor reinforces the reliability of the findings in broader contexts.

The study classified the characteristics of religious services based on their importance to congregants' satisfaction. The highest weight was attributed to a clear message, the preacher's communication skills, spontaneity and novelty, attitudes, and interactions with other participants. The evangelistic environment of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Romania is predominantly Orthodox, as reflected in national statistics. The qualities of religious services—highlighted by their prominent dimensions as revealed in the study—have a significant impact on other denominations and, consequently, on the conversion process. These include Hypothesis H9, which encompasses educational content, clarity, conviction, ethical nuances, the ability to meet individual needs, and the novelty of the message. In stark contrast, characteristics associated with Hypotheses H5 and H6—such as parking facilities, clothing provisions, architectural aesthetics, and interior design—were found to be less influential in shaping overall satisfaction with the religious experience. Through multiple regression analysis, the research emphasized Hypothesis H8, namely the preacher's appearance and attire, along with exemplary behavior, as strong predictors of satisfaction levels. Robust statistical examinations underscored the direct links between intricate service characteristics and participants' holistic satisfaction. Central to this are the pivotal roles of message content (H9), pastoral conduct (H8), and congregational interactions (H7) in shaping the complex landscape of congregants' satisfaction. Ultimately, this comprehensive exploration reveals a profound insight: the satisfaction experienced by believers in the context of religious services is significantly tied to dimensions encompassing the message, the conduct of pastoral leadership, and community interactions within the congregation. The findings highlight the importance of these dimensions, offering a solid foundation upon which churches and religious institutions can develop strategies to optimize participant satisfaction and spiritual enrichment. Accordingly, church leadership should consider the variables that influence member satisfaction, as these individuals are the ones who sustain congregational activities.

Moreover, the importance attributed to aspects such as message clarity and novelty, the preacher's behavior, and the dynamics of congregational interaction can inform strategic decisions within the church. Emphasizing improvements in the educational, ethical, and convictional aspects of the message may deepen engagement and foster spiritual growth. Similarly, investing in the development of pastoral communication skills and authenticity can cultivate a deeper connection between clergy and congregants. The finding that ambience-

related variables have a lesser influence on satisfaction may encourage the allocation of resources toward areas that directly impact spiritual nourishment, rather than focusing solely on superficial enhancements.

In addition, the study's conclusions regarding elements that cause dissatisfaction—particularly in relation to the physical environment—offer opportunities for targeted improvements. Addressing areas of discontent, such as ambient noise or parking availability, can refine the overall experience for participants.

The study also highlights the central role of individual beliefs and experiences (self-influence) in religious conversion to the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Romania. It further emphasizes the importance of spiritual and emotional benefits in shaping individual perceptions and overall satisfaction with the church experience. Moreover, family influence and relationships with other church members become more prominent as individuals spend more time within the religious community. Overall, this research provides valuable insights into the dynamics of religious conversion, congregant satisfaction, and the perceived benefits of church participation.

The decision to adopt religious beliefs, trust in those beliefs, and member satisfaction can yield a variety of perceived benefits. From spiritual resonance and emotional fulfillment to a sense of community, interfaith understanding, and cultural enrichment, individuals embarking on this transformative journey often find their lives enriched in numerous ways. Congregants are primarily motivated by spiritual benefits during the initial stages of their church participation. This suggests that the sense of divine presence is a key factor in attracting newcomers. Emotional benefits—such as belonging and devotion—gain importance within the first year of participation and influence individual behavior. Social benefits, including relationship-building and camaraderie with other members, become increasingly significant during the first three years of involvement. While cultural benefits are acknowledged, they are less prominent than the emotional and social aspects of church participation. Regression analysis confirms that Hypotheses H10 and H11—spiritual and emotional benefits—are statistically highly significant in predicting overall congregant satisfaction. Hypotheses H12 and H13—social and cultural benefits—also show relevance, albeit to a lesser extent. Most respondents report high satisfaction with their church experience, which is positively associated with spiritual and emotional benefits.

The implications of these findings for the Seventh-day Adventist Church are noteworthy. A meticulous examination of the various dimensions of religious services and their

correlation with congregant satisfaction provides valuable insights for optimizing congregational experiences.

7.1. Scientific Contributions and Practical Implications

Religious conversion represents a complex and individualized journey shaped by numerous factors. While family, friends, and pastors may exert varying degrees of influence, individuals retain autonomy and personal experiences that significantly contribute to their decision-making process.

The analysis of self-influence reveals that individuals undergoing religious conversion—particularly those from Orthodox backgrounds—demonstrate a high degree of personal agency in their decision to join the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This suggests that personal beliefs and experiences play a critical role in the conversion process. Moreover, while family influence has a moderate impact on individuals with no prior religious affiliation, it becomes more prominent among those with longer participation in the church. This indicates that familial influence may increase as individuals become more integrated into the religious community. The influence of friends and pastors on religious conversion is generally limited and does not significantly affect the decision to join the church, regardless of participation duration. In the overall hierarchy of influences, personal belief (self-influence) emerges as the primary determinant of religious conversion, followed by family influence for some individuals. Friends and pastors exert minimal influence on the conversion decision. Regression analysis confirms that Hypotheses H1 (“Self”) and H2 (“Family”) are statistically significant predictors of an individual’s decision to become a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Hypotheses H3 (“Friends”) and H4 (“Pastor”) also show significance, though to a lesser extent.

The demographic structure of the studied population reveals that one-third of the initial sample from the Seventh-day Adventist Church has an Orthodox background. This indicates a religious landscape characterized by fluid boundaries and affiliations. The transformation observed within the sample raises questions about the factors contributing to this shift. Further examination could shed light on whether this change results from authentic conversion, a gradual shift in belief, or other contextual factors. This unexpected transformation opens avenues for deeper exploration of religious identity and transformation in the Romanian context.

This study also explored the complex relationship between various dimensions of religious services and their profound impact on congregants' satisfaction. Focusing on the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Romania, the research adopted a conceptual framework that acknowledges the potential direct and indirect influences of service characteristics on individual well-being. The study examined the interaction between distinct service dimensions and levels of congregant satisfaction, including critical aspects such as location, atmosphere, social environment, pastoral guidance, and message content. Regression analysis revealed that a clear and persuasive message, the preacher's behavior, and the dynamics of congregational interaction are the most influential elements in shaping religious satisfaction. In contrast, factors such as architectural aesthetics, parking facilities, and other logistical details had a lesser impact on satisfaction.

This research contributes to the academic discourse on religious marketing by demonstrating that it can be strategically employed to enhance congregant satisfaction and increase member retention within religious communities. The study introduces new perspectives on how churches can adapt marketing strategies to emphasize spiritual and social appeals, thereby strengthening their connection with the community.

The practical implications of this study are particularly relevant for church leaders and those responsible for managing religious communities. The findings suggest that churches should place special emphasis on improving the quality of sermons, the clarity of the messages delivered, and the relationship between clergy and congregants. Focusing on the development of pastoral communication and the creation of relevant, meaningful messages can strengthen congregant engagement and foster spiritual growth.

Furthermore, the findings regarding the limited impact of logistical factors on satisfaction suggest that church resources should be invested in areas that contribute directly to spiritual nourishment—such as pastoral training, community interaction, and religious activities—rather than in superficial improvements. At the same time, identifying elements that generate dissatisfaction (such as social dynamics or ambient noise) offers opportunities for targeted improvements aimed at optimizing the congregational experience.

In terms of member retention, the study emphasizes that congregant loyalty is directly dependent on satisfaction with religious services. Therefore, an effective religious marketing strategy must go beyond mere satisfaction and create an environment conducive to spiritual development and a strong sense of community belonging.

The conclusions and recommendations derived from this research provide a framework of guidelines and best practices for the leadership of Adventist and Protestant churches, facilitating adaptation to both internal and external environmental factors. Clergy must remain aware of the variables that influence congregant satisfaction, recognizing that it is the members who sustain church activities and contribute to its continuity.

7.2. Research Limitations and Future Directions

Although the literature review was conducted in accordance with academic rigor, it is not without limitations. The scope of empirical literature remains modest, with only 227 eligible articles identified for this review on religious marketing. The study highlighted an ongoing academic and clerical debate regarding the acceptability and increasing use of marketing by religious leaders, members, and the general public (Stolz & Usunier, 2019; Wrenn, 2010). Indeed, this tension is likely to persist as a barrier between economics, marketing, and theology. Continued interdisciplinary academic research, along with the careful, well-informed, and context-sensitive application of religious marketing, should serve as a comprehensive solution. The findings of this study contribute to advancing the academic debate on the intersection of marketing and religion (Tkaczynski, 2017). However, a more comprehensive theoretical perspective on how religious marketing is integrated into service marketing would further improve practitioners' attitudes toward these concepts. The results of this study are predominantly based on Christian research objects from the United States, with limited contributions from a European perspective (Sengers, 2009; Usunier & Stolz, 2016). To enhance the generalizability of the proposed models, future analyses should consider cross-country diversification. Moreover, despite the ongoing evolution of the religious marketing concept, various congregations and religious sectors still require further examination. A common reason for the failure of many church marketing efforts is the lack of marketing training among leaders and the inability to identify appropriate strategies and techniques for their congregations. Each of these challenges can be addressed through future research initiatives. Religious marketing, in all its forms, will continue to be a vital element for the survival and growth of religious organizations worldwide.

Religion remains a valuable source of spiritual development, and this aspect cannot be overlooked in the context of marketing approaches. Interest in the concept of religious marketing is growing, particularly in understanding the consumption behaviors of believers. This study focused on members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, highlighting the need

for deeper research into this phenomenon. However, the exclusive focus on the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Romania limits the diversity of religious contexts analyzed. Expanding the study to include other denominations and religions would contribute to a broader understanding of the phenomenon. Additionally, the relatively small sample size may affect the generalizability of the conclusions, limiting the applicability of the results on a larger scale. A larger sample could provide a more comprehensive perspective on religious consumer behavior.

Nevertheless, the presentation of the study's conclusions does not mark the end of the research process. Following the church leadership's review of the research report, further questions and clarifications may arise. Future research will thus play a crucial role in continuing this endeavor—whether to clarify methodological aspects or to explore the conclusions and recommendations in greater depth. It is also important to note that this research was based not only on the methodological rigor specific to marketing studies but also on creativity, intuition, and experience gained from previous research in the field of religious marketing. This indicates that the research process was holistic, integrating both quantitative and qualitative elements to achieve a comprehensive understanding of religious consumer behavior.

Given the growing interest in religious marketing, future studies could explore believers' consumption behaviors in greater depth, analyzing how churches can adapt organizational strategies to the dynamics of internal and external environments. Additionally, a comparative analysis involving congregations from different religious traditions would be valuable in assessing the universality of religious marketing strategies.

Another important aspect worth exploring in future research is the nature of religious transformations among individuals from Orthodox backgrounds. Future studies could examine in greater detail whether these changes reflect genuine conversion or more complex processes of adaptation and integration into the community. Furthermore, expanding the study to include individuals who, for various reasons, have left the church could provide valuable insights into the factors contributing to dissatisfaction and the decision to disengage from religious participation. Analyzing these aspects would allow for a deeper understanding of unmet congregant needs and help identify potential discrepancies between expectations and lived experiences within the religious community. Such insights could be essential for developing effective strategies to improve engagement and retention in church life.

Future research could also explore ways to personalize religious services to better address the spiritual and emotional needs of congregants. This may include investing in

pastoral skill development, crafting messages tailored to different categories of believers, and promoting activities that facilitate community integration. Although this study demonstrated the correlation between satisfaction and loyalty, future research could examine in more detail the specific factors that contribute to congregant retention. Longitudinal studies could offer insights into how religious satisfaction evolves over time and how contextual factors influence long-term commitment.

Analyzing the dynamics of religious services in other denominational contexts could provide a valuable comparative perspective, contributing to a broader understanding of the religious phenomenon and the impact of marketing strategies on believers' religious experiences.

In conclusion, this thesis makes a significant contribution to the literature on religious marketing and religious consumer behavior. The research highlights the importance of an interdisciplinary approach that combines the sociology of religion with marketing strategies, offering a comprehensive framework for understanding religious conversion, congregant satisfaction, and the perceived benefits of religious participation.

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