

# EXPLORING CONSUMERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD ADVERTISING BY RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

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*The advertising industry faces criticism from many fronts regarding its practices and societal role (Pollay 1986; Pollay and Mittal 1993). Divergent opinions exist regarding the use of sex in advertising, advertising directed toward children, and the use of advertising by nonprofit organizations and professional service providers.*

*A survey of adult consumers was utilized to examine consumer perceptions toward advertising by religious organizations. The study presents an exploratory test of a scale measuring attitudes toward church advertisements and discusses its relationship with selected individual characteristics. Specifically, the role of religiosity, motivation and attend church, and attitudes toward advertising in general are examined in relation to respondents' attitudes toward churches' use of advertising. The study findings reveal consumers who hold positive attitudes toward advertising in general are in favor of the use of advertising by religious organizations. Additionally, consumers who attend church to fulfill spiritual motivations are positively disposed toward the use of advertising by religious organizations.*

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Advertising has been criticized as promoting many negative social behaviors such as materialism, cynicism, irrationality, selfishness, and anxiety (Pollay 1986; Pollay and Mittal, 1993). A compounding issue for advertising professionals is that due to the diverse nature of society, what is acceptable to one person may not be acceptable to another. Thus, advertisers are faced with a dilemma in designing and implementing media campaigns which appeal to the target audience(s) while not offending other individuals or groups.

One approach to making appropriate decisions regarding message content, media placement, and target market selection is the use of ethical standards and codes as a guideline. Ethics can be defined as "the study of human conduct with an emphasis on the determination of right and wrong" (Fraedrich and Ferrell, 1992, p. 246). However,

"ethical relativism is more popular in making ethical decisions about advertising than ethical absolutism, which assumes one true moral code" (Ferrell, 1985; p. 27). Unfortunately, while general consensus may exist regarding such practices as deceptive advertisements and use of puffery, there is less agreement regarding the use of sex in advertising, advertising of potentially hazardous products, advertising by professionals, and the use of advertising by certain nonprofit organizations.

Ethical standards and codes serve to guide the content of advertising, as well as the types of businesses and organizations which should utilize advertising. For example, advertising by professionals such as accountants, attorneys, and physicians was prohibited by their respective professional associations until the late 1970s. However, research conducted a decade after these groups mandatorily lifted their ban on advertising found that many professionals continue to harbor reservations regarding the use of advertising (Hite and Fraser, 1988). Similar to professional service

organizations, certain nonprofit organizations may be reluctant to utilize advertising. Churches and other religious institutions may be wary of advertising for two reasons. First, clergy view the use of advertising as inappropriate or unethical and, second, little information is available to clergy and church boards of directors regarding the effective use of promotional techniques (McDaniel, 1986).

However, churches and religious organizations have acquired an interest in using marketing techniques in order to survive, grow, and/or prosper (Shawchuck, Kotler, Wrenn and Rath, 1992). Advertising practices are currently being utilized by religious organizations in countering negative trends in membership and attendance. For example, Lutheran Hour Ministries, the service arm of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, has already spent more than \$500,000 buying TV time for a marketing campaign in twelve markets (Cleland, 1995). However, limited empirical research has investigated the appropriateness or ethicalness of religious organizations' use of advertising.

We address this issue by investigating consumer attitudes toward the use of advertising by religious organizations. This research is important since individuals who view advertising by churches as inappropriate may be unlikely to consider attending a church that uses this form of promotion. Furthermore, congregations may be able to target promotional appeals to audiences that will be receptive to advertising messages by understanding underlying factors that contribute to a person's view of advertising by religious organizations.

The current study presents an exploratory test of a scale measuring attitudes toward church advertising and discusses its relationship with selected individual difference characteristics. The implications of the study for marketing academicians and religious organizations are discussed and suggestions for future research are provided.

## **BACKGROUND**

The study of ethics and understanding what is ethical or unethical is based in the value system or personal philosophy of the group, organization or society. Some researchers have suggested that codes of ethics should be established for marketing professionals in order to preserve the credibility and reputation of marketing. In particular, advertising campaigns for social ideas and political candidates may "...damage the shaky ethical reputation of the marketing discipline" (Murphy, Laczniak, and Lusch, 1978, p. 198). Thus, controversy clearly exists regarding consumer acceptance of advertising by some organizations. Nonetheless, attorneys, physicians, hospitals, CPAs, and many nonprofit organizations continue to pursue advertising as a communication medium.

### **Marketing of Professional Services**

Until the late 1970's, many professional service providers (i.e., attorneys, physicians, and accountants) were prohibited by their professional organizations to utilize advertising (Hite and Fraser, 1988). Rationale for prohibition included notions that "advertising would lower the status of the professional in the eyes of the public and would increase the likelihood of professional practitioners making unethical and fraudulent claims" (Bullard and Snizek, 1988, p. 57). While the ban has been lifted for over 15 years, many professionals continue to harbor reservations regarding the use of advertising.

In a meta-analysis of research concerning attitudes of consumers and professionals toward advertising of professional services, large differences were found between the perceptions of consumers and professionals (Hite and Fraser, 1988). Consumers are optimistic about the positive effects of advertising and disagree that advertising could be harmful. However, professionals continue to believe that many negative consequences may result from the use of advertising and fail to see the positive benefits of its usage (Hite and Fraser, 1988).

A study which examined professionals' attitudes toward the use of various types of advertisements found that practitioners who identify closely with their profession and strongly believe in the maintenance of codes of conduct or standards are more likely to view the use of advertising as inappropriate. Respondents who had longer tenure within the profession were also more likely to view advertising negatively. Finally, attorneys were less favorable toward advertising as a communications medium than either dentists or accountants.

These studies identify a discrepancy between professional service providers and their clients. Consumers view advertising by professional service organizations positively and welcome informational advertisements which enable them to make a more informed decision regarding selection of a service provider. Conversely, service practitioners perceive advertising as improper and potentially detrimental to their profession.

### THE MARKETING OF RELIGION

The use of marketing techniques and practices by an ever expanding group of organizations provides evidence of marketing's pervasive role in society. Indeed, an expanded definition of marketing has paved the way for acceptance of marketing practices by social and nonprofit organizations and has spawned a new element of the marketing discipline — *social marketing*. Social marketing seeks to influence social behaviors, not to benefit the marketer, but to benefit the target audience and society in general. Examples of social marketing campaigns include "Keep America Beautiful", "Don't Drink and Drive", "Just Say No to Drugs", and countless others aimed at changing behaviors of individuals for the benefit of society. Social ideas, political platforms, issues such as gay and lesbian rights in the military, abortion, and health care are also marketed.

Many religious institutions have also begun to utilize marketing techniques such as advertising and market research. Religious organizations who conduct formal promotional campaigns can significantly impact the marketing discipline since

churches comprise the largest single type of nonprofit organization in the United States and are potential clients of advertising agencies and marketing professionals (McDaniel, 1986). Furthermore, religion is big business, with revenues of \$50 billion a year not counting volunteer efforts (Stewart 1989). The impact of religious organizations on marketing is evidenced by the growing numbers of Christian merchandise. Once limited mostly to Bibles, study guides and jewelry, merchandise now includes clothing, gifts, music, books, toys, and videos. In fact, sales of Christian merchandise totaled about \$3 billion in 1994 (Dressler, 1996). While some of these organizations have been slow to utilize marketing techniques and practices, changes in the environment have necessitated a renewed interest in marketing (Shawchuck, Kotler, Wrenn and Rath, 1992).

The embracement of marketing programs by some religious organizations can be viewed as an act of survival. The dominant Protestant denominations (i.e., United Methodist, United Church of Christ) have experienced a decline in membership and attendance since the 1960s (see Bellah et al., 1985; Roof and McKinney, 1987; Roozen, 1978; and Wuthnow, 1988). In fact, some mainline Protestant denominations have seen their membership drop by as much as 10 percent per decade. Similarly, Catholicism has suffered severe declines in religious participation from 74 percent attending mass weekly in 1958 to 51 percent in 1982 (Roozen, 1984). While many of the more traditional religious denominations have endured decreases, other churches are growing. For example, Protestant evangelicalism and fundamentalism, neo-Pentecostalism, and some splinter faiths have flourished (Roof and McKinney, 1987). These groups have grown because they are identifiable, offer an experiential faith, and maintain distinctive beliefs and moral teachings (Roof and McKinney, 1987).

We propose the growth in these religious institutions may also be due to a willingness to implement marketing techniques. Sullivan (1991, p. 42) notes "...for generations, evangelical

Christians have been preaching that American culture is woefully decadent and fraught with problems only Christianity can fix. But the new evangelicals don't just talk about a return to values. They draw up marketing plans." As illustration, one church in Illinois employed market research to develop a "religious mix" which reflected the area's preferences. As a result, the church offers a variety of programs targeted to various segments including children, teenagers, adult singles, and individuals experiencing personal crises. This approach is a huge success, as the church attracts about 14,000 people to its weekend services and approximately 5,800 people to Wednesday evening services (Sullivan 1991).

Consumer-based or customer-oriented churches can be successful however, several drawbacks must be considered. Religious institutions who employ the marketing concept or a customer-oriented strategy must be cognizant that changes in product and service offerings may be warranted. If so, this might require alterations of the teachings, doctrine, and practices of the denomination. These alterations may alienate current members who either disagree with the proposed changes or who are against any form of change (Attaway, Singley and Griffin, 1993).

Another example of a successful marketing campaign for religion is the Episcopal Ad Project in Minneapolis. This church's primary market is the person who currently does not attend church. Newspaper advertisements such as "You can't meet God's gift to women in a singles' bar" have wooed new members and made people reconsider churchgoing. The results are impressive; after seven years of advertising, attendance is up 30 percent and the average age of the congregation has dropped from 55 to 40 (Neff, 1987). Many other organized religious groups are also turning to marketing. The Southern Baptists, Lutherans, Roman Catholics and the Mormon Church have recently introduced national public-service campaigns focusing on children and families (Warner, 1995). Similarly, the Ursuline Order of Nuns in Cincinnati is utilizing a series of print ads, a radio spot and direct-mail brochure to depict

nunhood in the 1990s. The order is hoping to stop a decline in nuns which has dropped more than 50 percent in the last 25 years nationwide (Reitman, 1993).

While the benefits of marketing the church appear to be great, the acceptance of these practices is far from universal. For some consumers and clergy, religion is primarily a private matter having to do with family and local congregation (Bellah et al., 1985). In a similar vein, Roof and McKinney (1987) relate a story concerning Thomas Jefferson's view of organized religion. Jefferson stated "I am my own sect" and implied that if he could not go to heaven except with a group, he would prefer not to go at all (Roof and McKinney, 1987, p. 245). Such an extreme view of religion as private and personal suggests advertising and marketing practices may alienate potential customers as well as current members.

One of the few empirical studies of religious advertising assessed the attitudes of clergy and the general public regarding the acceptability of various advertising mediums and types of messages (McDaniel, 1986). Contrary to research on professional service advertising, McDaniel found the clergy (service provider) held more favorable attitudes toward advertising mediums and messages than consumers. McDaniel (1986, p. 28) posits "This may be attributable to the more personal and even emotional nature of the subject of church advertising, relative to other professional services advertising." Additional analyses were conducted to determine whether frequent church attenders differed from infrequent attenders. The results of these analyses were not significant, however, frequent church attenders were somewhat more positively disposed toward the use of advertising by church organizations than infrequent attenders (McDaniel, 1986). However, other individual characteristics may influence perceptions of the appropriateness and acceptability of church advertisements.



### Individual Characteristics and Attitudes Toward Church Advertising

We propose that individual difference characteristics will influence consumer's perceptions of advertising by churches. This study investigates the relationship between three individual difference variables and consumers' attitudes toward religious organizations' use of advertising. The specific individual difference variables examined are religiosity, motivations to attend church, and attitudes toward advertising in general.

**Religiosity.** The study of religiosity has been quite extensive in the sociological literature. Marketing researchers have defined religiosity as an individual's level of spiritual commitment or religious affiliation (McDaniel and Burnett, 1990). However, problems in defining and measuring religiosity have impeded our ability to fully utilize this concept (Cornwall, Albrecht, Cunningham, and Pitcher 1986). Debate continues as to whether religiosity is an unidimensional or multidimensional construct with evidence to support either opinion (c.f. Glock and Stark, 1964; Clayton and Gladden 1974). Nevertheless, "the evidence on multidimensionality versus unidimensionality in defining religiosity is not sufficiently clear to permit resolution of the debate" (Wilkes, Burnett, and Howell, 1986, p. 48).

In the sociology literature, religiosity has been examined as related to a variety of variables such as quality of life (Hadaway and Roof, 1978), denominational switching (Hadaway, 1980), values (Tate and Miller 1971), attitudes (McClain, 1979), and personality (Barton and Vaughn, 1976). Marketing researchers also believe religion and religiosity to be an important factor in consumer behavior (c.f. Hirschman, 1981, 1982; LaBarbera, 1987; McDaniel and Burnett, 1990; Wilkes, Burnett and Howell, 1986).

Research indicates individuals who are highly religious consider their lives to be more worthwhile, exhibit greater life satisfaction and may be more likely to switch to another church or

denomination (Hadaway and Roof, 1978; Hadaway, 1980). Individuals who are committed to religion have also been found to hold more traditional attitudes regarding the role of women in society and are more likely to be nonfeminists (McClain, 1979).

Researchers in consumer behavior have also linked the construct of religiosity to a variety of consumption-related variables. McDaniel and Burnett (1990) examined the relationship between religiosity and the importance of various retail store evaluative criteria. They observed that consumers who score high on measures of cognitive religiosity viewed shopping efficiency, sales personnel friendliness, and product quality as more important than individuals scoring low on measures of cognitive religiosity. Wilkes, Burnett and Howell (1986) found that individuals who are more religious are somewhat more likely to be opinion leaders than those who are less religious.

An individual's level of spiritual commitment or religiosity can be thought of as their level of involvement with religion or denomination choice. As studied extensively in marketing, involvement is thought to exist whenever an issue or object is related to the unique cluster of attitudes and values that constitute a person's ego (Sherif and Cantril, 1947). Individuals who possess enduring involvement have an ongoing concern with the object of interest that transcends situational influences (Houston and Rothschild, 1978; Laurent and Kapferer, 1985; Rothschild, 1979). Further, individuals who are enduringly involved with an object or process are largely motivated by the degree to which the object relates to the self and/or the hedonic pleasure received from the object (Bloch and Richins, 1983; Laurent and Kapferer, 1985). Thus, individuals who have a high degree of religiosity may indeed be enduringly involved with religion or their denomination.

Similar to consumers who are involved with products, an individual who is heavily involved with religion, would likely spend a great deal of time thinking about religion, share information with others, and be actively involved in obtaining and

processing information related to religion. Individuals who have high levels of enduring involvement are also likely to attend to object-related advertisements and magazines, and engage in word-of-mouth communication with others on an ongoing basis (Richins and Bloch, 1986). Further, highly involved individuals are likely to be very knowledgeable regarding the object of interest due to high levels of information search and processing activities and may also serve as opinion leaders (Higie and Feick, 1989) or market mavens (Feick and Price, 1987).

While the relationship between religiosity and attitudes toward the use of marketing practices by religious institutions has not previously been tested, we postulate that consumers who view religion as a central part of their life are likely to view marketing activities by religious institutions as more acceptable than individuals who are less religious. McDaniel (1986) observed frequent church attenders to be more positively disposed to church advertising than infrequent attenders. Individuals who have a high degree of religious commitment may believe it is their role to evangelize and spread the word of their faith. Further, because they are highly involved in their religion they will be interested in receiving and disseminating information. Therefore, we hypothesize:

H<sub>1</sub>: Measures of an individual's religiosity are positively related to their attitudes toward churches' use of advertising.

**Motivations.** The term "motivation" was originally derived from the Latin word *movere*, which means "to move" (Steers and Porter 1983). Motivation research is concerned with the question of *why* people behave as they do. A *motive* is a construct representing an unobservable inner force that stimulates and compels a behavioral response and provides specific direction to that response (Madsen, 1968). Motivation is viewed as an inner force and is commonly referred to as an urge, wish, feeling, need, or more appropriately motive (Coffey and Appley, 1964). The word *force* implies a dynamic, active nature as well as the power and

ability to stimulate and compel behavior. When individuals are motivated, their physical and/or mental systems are activated.

We believe that certain motives drive consumers to attend church and that these motivations will influence consumer attitudes toward churches' use of advertising. A basic distinction can be made between individuals who are intrinsically versus extrinsically oriented or motivated toward religion (Tate and Miller, 1971). Intrinsically oriented individuals have a strong spiritual identification and strive to *live* the teachings of faith. Extrinsically oriented individuals seek to *use* religion rather than live it. Thus, individuals may be primarily motivated to attend church or religious institutions for two primary reasons: (1) spiritual motivations and (2) social motivations.

The intrinsic versus extrinsic distinction is consistent with McGuire's typology of motives which classifies motives as either cognitive or affective (McGuire 1974, 1976). Cognitive motives are driving forces of the personality that stress a persons' need for being adaptively oriented toward the environment and for achieving a sense of meaning. Affective motives stress an individuals' need to reach satisfying feeling states and attain emotional goals. Thus, intrinsic motives are cognitive in nature and extrinsic motives are affective in nature.

From a spiritual perspective, religious institutions serve to provide a forum where expressions of faith are welcomed and expected. Members can be instructed in the faith and expand their knowledge of religious doctrine. Thus, intrinsically oriented individuals may be motivated to attend church in order to strengthen and express their religious faith.

From a social perspective, churches and religious institutions allow individuals to become a part of the larger community and society in which they live by participating and interacting with others. In this light, churches satisfy individual needs to belong. Furthermore, church organizations encourage social activities and bring individuals together who share common interests and values. Thus,

churches may satisfy important social needs of extrinsically oriented individuals.

We propose that these two motivational bases are positively related to consumers attitudes toward the use of advertising by religious organizations. Specifically, individuals who are motivated by spiritual needs enjoy attending church to satisfy their desire to express their faith and in some religions share their faith. These individuals will be likely to view religious advertising positively since they will be interested in sharing their values and faith with others. Additionally, individuals who attend church to achieve a sense of belonging or to satisfy social needs are likely to view church advertising in a positive light. These individuals view the church as a gathering place and an avenue for social networking. Socially motivated consumers are likely to perceive advertising by religious organizations favorably since they want to share the social opportunities with others who are similar to them in terms of common interests and values. Therefore, we hypothesize:

H<sub>2</sub>: Measures of an individual's spiritual motivations are positively related to their attitudes toward churches' use of advertising.

H<sub>3</sub>: Measures of an individual's social motivations are positively related to their attitudes toward churches' use of advertising.

**Attitudes Toward Advertising.** The third variable proposed to influence consumer attitudes toward the use of advertising by churches is an individual's attitude toward advertising in general. "Attitude toward advertising is defined as a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner to advertising in general" (Lutz, 1985, p. 53). It is expected that attitudes toward advertising in general may be related to ad processing, source credibility ratings, ratings of specific advertisements, and cognitive counterarguing (Pollay and Mittal, 1993).

Further, we postulate consumers who have a generally positive view of the role of advertising in society, are expected to view advertising by

churches positively. As reviewed by Pollay and Mittal (1993), advertising is posited to produce three personal uses and four societal effects which together determine consumers' global attitudes. Briefly, personal uses of advertising include product information, portrayal of life styles, and pleasure. Societal effects include economic good, materialism, value corruption, and uselessness. Individuals who perceive the positive effects of advertising are more likely to have a positive global attitude toward advertising.

Utilizing a cluster analysis program, Pollay and Mittal (1993) distinguish between four primary groups or segments of consumers using a multidimensional measure of attitudes toward advertising. One group views advertising positively, while the remaining three groups display varying degrees of negative perceptions toward advertising. While the relationship has not been empirically tested, we propose that consumers who view advertising positively will be in favor of the use of advertising by religious organizations since these individuals may derive informational, hedonic, social, and economic benefits from the advertisements. Conversely, individuals who hold negative attitudes toward advertising and are wary of its effects on society such as promoting materialism, corrupting values, and being deceptive and misleading, will not favor the use of advertising by religious organizations. Therefore we hypothesize:

H<sub>4</sub>: Measures of an individual's general attitude toward advertising are positively related to their attitudes toward church advertising.

## METHODOLOGY

### Sample and Data Collection

Self-administered questionnaires were completed by individuals in a southeastern city with a population of approximately 250,000. A judgmental sampling methodology was employed by enlisting twelve ministers from different church organizations throughout the area to assist with data collection. Each pastor distributed a small

number of surveys to members of their congregation and asked that the member fill out a survey and obtain two completed surveys from friends or acquaintances who were not members of that particular church. This data collection method resulted in 145 useable surveys being returned by the deadline imposed.

The sample is composed of 35 percent males and 65 percent females. The average age of the respondents is 33 and 34 percent of the sample are single. Overall, the sample is upwardly skewed in education and income and includes a greater proportion of females than the population.

### Measurement of Constructs

Assessment of attitudes toward churches' use of advertising and motivations to attend church was performed utilizing measurement scales developed following the general procedure suggested by Churchill (1979) and incorporating recent advancements in the evaluation of multi-item measures (Gerbing and Anderson, 1988). Exploratory research led to the composition of eight 5-point Likert items measuring consumers' attitudes toward churches' use of advertising. The items were initially analyzed using exploratory principal components analysis and one factor was obtained. Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to assess item reliability. The measure was purified by deleting items with individual item reliabilities (squared multiple correlations) below .35. Thus, the minimum item reliability criterion was established to be .6 consistent with Nunnally (1978). Three items which failed to achieve the reliability benchmark were deleted. The final scale items, factor loadings, goodness of fit measures, and reliability estimates are summarized in Table 1.

Religiosity was measured utilizing four items which were developed based on previous empirical research (c.f. McDaniel and Burnett, 1990; Wilkes, Burnett and Howell, 1986). Factor analysis on the four item measure yielded a single factor and subsequent reliability analysis produced a coefficient alpha estimate of .89. Church

TABLE 1

### Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results for Attitudes Toward Churches' Use of Advertising

Scale items <sup>a</sup>	Standard ized Loading	Scale Reliability
		.89
I think church advertisements are unethical	.75	
Churches that advertise are only trying to increase attendance so they can raise more money.	.76	
I don't understand why a church would want to advertise	.78	
I don't think churches should advertise	.88	
Advertisements for churches don't belong on TV	.77	
Chi-square (degrees of freedom)		18.20(5) p = .002
Goodness-of-fit Index	.95	

<sup>a</sup>On a five-point scale with 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree.

affiliation was not utilized as a measure of religiosity because great differences may exist within denominational groups (Brinkerhoff, 1978).

Exploratory research led to the composition of nineteen 5-point Likert items measuring consumers' motivations to attend church. The items were initially analyzed using exploratory principal components analysis and two factors were obtained. Confirmatory factor analysis was utilized to test the appropriateness of the two factor solution and to purify the measures. Items were deleted when individual item reliabilities were below .35. This purification step resulted in a finalized measure incorporating nine items with a coefficient alpha reliability of .83 for the "social"



and .83 for the "spiritual" dimensions of motivation to attend church.

Three semantic differential items were utilized to assess respondents' attitudes toward advertising in general. These items were previously used by Boles and Burton (1992) and exhibited a coefficient alpha reliability of .95. A four-factor confirmatory analysis of the endogenous variables was conducted; factor loadings, reliabilities, and model fit information are provided in Table 2.

TABLE 2

**Confirmatory Factor Analysis  
Results for Endogenous Variables**

Sample Scale Items	Factor Loadings
<b>Spiritual Motive<sup>a</sup> (<math>\alpha = .83</math>)</b>	
I feel closer to God when I'm in church	.71
Attending church allows me to express my religious faith	.79
<b>Social Motive<sup>a</sup> (<math>\alpha = .83</math>)</b>	
One of the nice things about going to church is the chance to meet new and different people	.72
I like seeing friends while at church	.80
<b>Religiosity (<math>\alpha = .89</math>)</b>	
How much time do you spend thinking about religion? <sup>b</sup>	.63
How important is your faith or religion to you? <sup>c</sup>	.78
<b>Attitudes Toward Advertising in General<sup>d</sup> (<math>\alpha = .95</math>)</b>	
Negative/Positive	.96
Unfavorable/Favorable	.88
Chi-square (degrees of freedom)	62.02 (27) p = .000
Goodness-of-fit Index	.93

<sup>a</sup>On a five-point scale with 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree.

<sup>b</sup>On a four-point scale with 1=almost no time and 4=a great deal of time

<sup>c</sup>On a four-point scale with 1=not at all important and 5=extremely important

<sup>d</sup>On a seven-point semantic differential scale.

## RESULTS

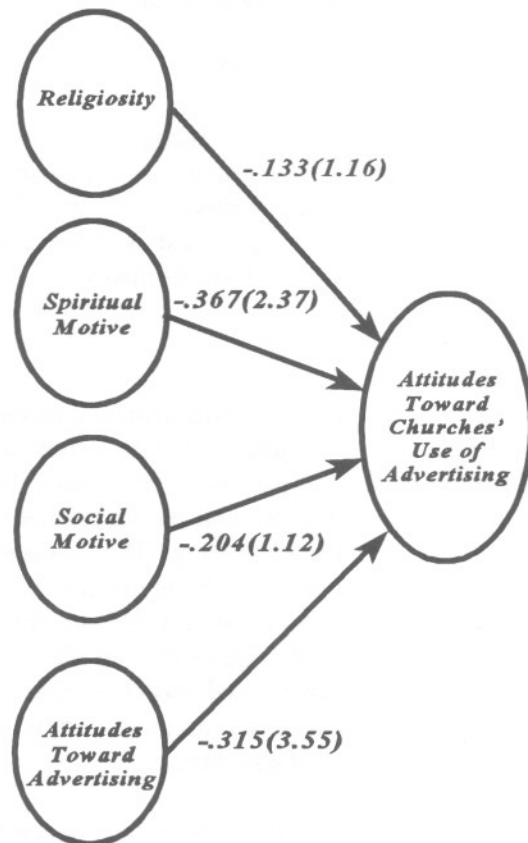
To examine the hypothesized relationships between the four antecedent constructs — religiosity, spiritual motive, social motive, and attitudes toward advertising in general — and the dependent measure, a structural model was estimated.

### Hypotheses 1-4

Results of fitting a linear, additive structural model to the data appear in Figure 1. Figure 1 contains the results which test the relationship between the four independent variables and the respondents' attitudes toward church advertising. The goodness of fit statistics indicate that the model attains a marginally acceptable fit to the data (Chi-square = 325.39 with 136 df; GFI=.82; AGFI=.77; RMSR=.06). The postulated model is able to account for 18 percent of the variance in attitudes toward churches' use of advertising.

Two independent variables were significantly related to attitudes toward church advertising by Spiritual motivation to attend church ( $\beta = -.367$ ) was most important followed by attitudes toward advertising in general ( $\beta = -.315$ ). Neither the beta coefficient for religiosity nor social motives were significant predictors of attitudes toward churches' use of advertising. Thus, hypotheses 1 and 3 are not supported. Hypothesis 2 postulated that individuals who were spiritually or intrinsically motivated to attend church would view advertising by churches positively. The significant negative beta coefficient indicates that spiritually motivated individuals tend to disagree with the negative affect statements. This result is consistent with hypothesis 2. Thus, hypothesis 2 receives support that spiritually motivated individuals view advertising positively. In addition, hypotheses 4 which postulated that attitudes toward advertising

**FIGURE 1**  
Standardized Estimates and t-values for  
Hypothesized Structural Model



would be significantly related to attitudes toward churches' use of advertising is supported. The beta coefficient is statistically significant and the magnitude is negative indicating that individuals who have positive attitudes toward advertising disagree with the negative affect statements.

### DISCUSSION

The research developed and tested a scale measuring attitudes toward church advertising and examined its relationship with several individual difference characteristics. This research is critical to clergy and members of church boards of directors, other nonprofit organizations, and academicians interested in exploring perceptions and use of advertising.

Based upon existing literature and research, four research hypotheses were formulated and tested, however, only two (H2 and H4) received support. Hypothesis 2, a positive relationship between spiritual motivations to attend church and attitudes toward church advertising was proposed. Hypothesis 4, a positive relationship between attitudes toward advertising in general and attitudes toward church advertising was proposed. The structural model supports these relationships; we can conclude advertising by religious organizations is acceptable to those who have spiritual motivations to attend church and who possess positive feelings about advertising in general. Thus, an obvious concern of the potential church advertiser is knowledge of the motivations to attend church and the general attitude toward advertising of the proposed target audience.

The hypothesized relationships between religiosity and social motivations to attend church and churches' use of advertising were not supported. Thus, no strong conclusions can be drawn regarding the suitability of advertising for those who perceive themselves as highly religious or those who have significant social motivations for church attendance.

### IMPLICATIONS

The research demonstrates attitudes toward advertising and spiritual motivations to attend church are important determinants of attitudes toward churches' use of advertising. While we expected to find a significant positive relationship between attitudes toward advertising in general and attitudes toward the use of advertising by religious organizations, the magnitude of this relationship was not known. Global attitudes toward advertising appear to be an important predictor of attitudes toward churches' use of advertising.

Future research is needed to further examine the role of global attitudes toward advertising and its relationship to the acceptability of advertising by nonprofits, political ideologists, and social activists. As each of these entities strives for success within a competitive environment, they will

likely view advertising as a useful tool. Researchers must determine if global attitudes toward advertising are determinants of the efficacy of advertising by other nonprofits or sponsor organizations. Future research should also incorporate the expanded measure of attitudes toward advertising developed by Pollay and Mittal (1993) and examine the effect of various dimensions on consumers' attitudes of acceptability of advertising by various nonprofit groups.

Logical extensions of this research would be to examine the relationship of attitudes toward churches' use of advertising and traditional advertising constructs such as attitude toward the brand (church or religious organization) and behavioral intentions. Additionally, future research should explore the acceptability and effectiveness of advertising themes and styles, optimum frequency patterns, and media sources. Many religious organizations currently use newspaper and Yellow Page advertising, however, billboard, television, radio and direct response are less frequently employed.

This paper represents an important first step in testing a measure of public attitude toward the use of advertising by religious organizations. The measure is reliable and the structural model provides evidence of construct validity. Future research efforts which explore the usefulness of this measure in predicting attitudes toward the brand and behavioral intentions will provide further confirmation of construct validity. Nevertheless, the definitive test of these relationships will be the actual use of advertising by religious organizations.

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