

## **PERSONAL-SPIRITUALITY ACROSS CULTURES: CONCEPT AND MEASUREMENT INVARIANCE**

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### **EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

Religion and its practice are integral parts of culture that represent key driving forces in a society's culture and consumer behavior. The effect that religious beliefs and associated practices have on a country and its culture helps to explain the extent to which a dominant religion influences a society's cultural belief systems; this holds true regardless of the religion (or denomination) involved. Ysseldyk, Matheson, and Anisman [1] conceptualize religiosity as a universal human trait that represents an identity construct and that can be measured independently from religion (including atheism). Wilkes, Burnett and Howell [2, p. 47] argued that "religion assists in the socialization processes by mediating the effects of other institutions and by encouraging consumers to embrace certain values and precepts;" this provides a good explanation as to how religion and/or religiosity influence consumer behavior. To better conduct research focusing on this linkage between religiosity and consumer behavior they called for improvement in operationalization of the religiosity construct and its measurement for purposes of consumer research. Yet, there is still a need for additional scale development.

There are a great many measures of religiosity [3] [4]; however, the majority of those scales had been developed to study diverse Christian denominations in the Western world. Although cross-cultural religiosity studies have been done in the last two decades a vast majority of studies took place outside of the Far East and many of them relied on student samples. The research presented in this paper focused on measurement validation of a newly proposed scale, entitled the Global Personal Spirituality (GPS) scale, which seeks to assess a form of an intrinsic religiosity that is independent of any specific religion and is highly personal in nature. The new proposed spirituality measure, the Global Personal Spirituality (GPS) scale, relies on a modification of the 'Cross-Cultural Religious Dimensions' (CCRD) scale originally conceptualized by DeJong, Faulkner, & Warland [5].

### **THE STUDY**

Surveys were conducted in one Western, and three Far Eastern societies: the United States, China, Japan, and South Korea. Convenience samples were used for data collection in all countries. In the U.S., Japan, and South Korea collection occurred in university settings with students enrolled in various

classes helping collect the data from their family members, friends, and other associates. In China data collection occurred with the cooperation and help of field interviewers/data collectors, recruited for the project in Beijing. A small monetary reward worth about three dollar was offered as an incentive to complete the survey. To have somewhat balanced samples of adults across all countries, individuals between the ages of 30 years and 69 years were included in the analysis resulting in sample sizes of 453, 314, 350, and 436 for China, Japan, Korea, and the United States respectively.

The intrinsic religiosity scale consisting of 13 items in the form of 5-point agree/disagree Likert statements were initially developed based on the scale used by DeJong et al. [5]. Based on exploratory factor analysis and a review of item-to-total correlations in all four countries the scale was reduced to five spiritual-oriented statements and that represented the new Global Personal Spirituality (GPS) scale (Appendix). The procedure, developed by Steenkamp and Baumgarten [6], was used to assess measurement invariance of the scale in the four countries. The procedure consists of carrying out a series of confirmatory factor analysis with progressively more restrictive conditions. Also, multiple indicators were used to assess the overall fit of the model at each state as recommended by Bagozzi and Yi [7]. Results show that the GPS scale to be reliable across these culturally and religion-wise diverse countries.

## **DISCUSSION**

Although it is known that religiosity in its many forms and manifestation has an impact on the consumption behavior of individuals it is a complex and difficulty issue to study on a global basis. In the present research we attempted to develop a scale to cross-culturally measure a form of intrinsic religiosity that is independent of specific religious beliefs; thereby, enabling people belonging to different religions to respond to the same set of questions concerned with intrinsic religiosity and facilitating cross-cultural research. A reliable scale like this could be effectively used to study religiosity across cultures.

These findings have important implications for marketing scholars and practitioners. First, this demonstrates that similar concepts of cross-cultural religiosity exist in cultural diverse countries and the measure is reliable. That is, phenomena related to cross-cultural religiosity can potentially be studied without much concern for cultural bias related to the measurement of religiosity. Marketing practitioners may also find this a valuable tool to understand religiosity-based behavior across culturally diverse countries.

## **APPENDIX**

The Global Personal Spirituality (GPS) scale items

1. I feel that my spirit will continue to exist in the universe in some way or another.
2. There are particular moments in my life when I feel "close" to the Divine.
3. I know what it feels like to repent and experience forgiveness of sins.
4. I have felt the joy and peace you get from recognizing that you are a sinner whose sins have been forgiven.
5. I have had moments of unusual appreciation of truth, beauty, goodness, etc.

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