

THE INFLUENCE OF CONSUMER RELIGIOSITY AND RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION ON SUNDAY SHOPPING

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ABSTRACT

Sunday, once considered a day for family as well as a religious holiday, is increasingly becoming a day for consumer activity. In response to this consumer demand, unrestricted Sunday shopping within urban areas has become commonplace; however, this retail practice has not extended itself to rural areas. Hence, Sunday shopping by rural consumers may constitute a dimension of generalized outshopping. Although many demographic and psychographic variables have been examined in relation to outshopping, no study has specifically investigated Sunday outshopping and the possible moderating effects of the religious commitment of the rural community. The purpose of this study, then, is to provide an empirical examination of the relationship between religiosity, Sunday shopping, and Sunday outshopping. This investigation appears warranted in that a defined association between religiosity and Sunday shopping further characterizes and explains the consumer, allows better retail strategies with respect to the trading areas' religiosity, and creates a basis for selecting target markets.

Three primary constructs were operationalized for examination in this study -- Sunday shopping, Sunday outshopping and religiosity. Sunday shopping and outshopping were measured on behavioral components. In the manner of Wilkes, Burnett, and Howell (1986), and McDaniel and Burnett (1990), religiosity was measured by religious affiliation, and by behavioral and cognitive dimensions of religious commitment.

An area comprised of five small communities with household units totaling 8,566 was used for this study. This area is well-suited for outshopping studies, as the largest town of the five surveyed has a population less than 20,000 and local shopping is limited to a traditional downtown area and two stand-alone discount stores. Additionally, more sophisticated regional retail shopping is only available in substantially larger cities some distance

away. A random telephone survey, employing the addition of a constant integer, was utilized to collect the data for this study. A total of 923 calls were completed resulting in 338 usable responses for a 36.6 percent response rate.

Differences in religiosity were found to be a determinant in the distance travelled for Sunday shopping, the frequency of Sunday shopping and Sunday outshopping, and the percentage of retail purchases made on Sunday; consequently, the religiosity of the local community should be formulated into the marketing strategies of the retail trade. The higher the religious commitment of the local trade area, the less likely the community residents are to shop or outshop on Sunday. Thus, the need for retail establishments to open on Sunday is moderated by the religiosity of the surrounding community.

This study also underscored the importance of examining the religious affiliation of the community. In general, Catholics expressed a lower religious commitment than Protestants, were involved in more Sunday shopping, and travelled greater distances for Sunday shopping opportunities. Retailers can examine the religious affiliations of their trade area to gain an understanding of weekend shopping patterns and optimal times for weekend operating hours. Moreover, religious affiliation appears to serve as a valid variable in segmenting the retail market.

REFERENCES

- McDaniel, Stephen W. and John J. Burnett (1990), "Consumer Religiosity and Retail Store Evaluative Criteria," Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 18 (Spring), 101-112.
- Wilkes, Robert E., John J. Burnett and Roy D. Howell (1986), "On the Meaning and Measurement of Religiosity in Consumer Research," Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 14 (Spring) 47-56.