

ROUTLEDGE INTERPRETIVE MARKETING RESEARCH

# Consumption and Spirituality

DIEGO RINALLO, LINDA SCOTT,  
AND PAULINE MACLARAN



# Consumption and Spirituality

# **Routledge Interpretive Marketing Research**

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**Edited by Diego Rinallo, Linda Scott,  
and Pauline Maclaran**

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# Foreword

## For What We Are About to Receive . . .

For as long as I can remember, I've been a consumer of spirituality. As a blue-collar kid, brought up in a very religious household—fundamentalist, in fact—I spent most of my slumdog childhood consuming old-time religion. Dragged along by my holy-roller mother, who was catholic in her taste if not Catholic in her theology, I traipsed from mission hall to meeting house, from Sunday school to Sally Army, from Genesis to Revelation (and back again), in an unrelenting cycle of spiritual overconsumption. Whether it was listening to firebrand preachers, watching people speaking in tongues, witnessing miracle cures of the halt and lame, attending to personal testimonials of the I-was-lost-but-now-I'm-found variety, or singing along with stirring songs of praise like “Deep and Wide,” “Fishers of Men,” “Way, Far Beyond Jordan,” and “Jesus Wants Me for a Sunbeam,” I had religion rammed down my throat on a daily basis, plus several times on Sundays. It was a deathless diet of fiery furnaces, lions' dens, burning bushes, graven images, Our Fathers, imminent Ends, days of judgment, tablets of stone, sloughs of despond, lakes of fire and backsliding down slippery slopes to Sodom and Gomorrah, or someplace equally purgatorial.

Ah, happy days . . .

Anyway, after fifteen years or so of sitting on hard wooden benches, doing time in draughty tents and tabernacles, taking part in putative revivals and short-lived great awakenings—while praying that the power of prayer would help me make the miraculous transition from sinner to saved—I'd pretty much had my fill of signs and wonders, trials and tribulations, and ever-nourishing hellfire and brimstone. And, unlike Lot's petrified wife, I never looked back.

Nor am I especially unusual. As James Twitchell shows in *Adcult USA*, consumption and spirituality have long been closely intertwined. If not quite the Cain and Abel of Western capitalism, they are definitely its Samson and Delilah. Many pioneers of the advertising/marketing profession—F. W. Ayer, Bruce Barton, Marion Harper, Claude C. Hopkins, Helen Lansdowne, Theodore MacManus, Rosser Reeves, Dorothy L. Sayers, to name but a few—were children of the manse or raised in evangelical circumstances. Numerous scholarly commentators, not least those associated with

the iconic Consumer Odyssey, have noted strong parallels between selling soap and saving souls. The apocalyptic linguistic construction “you’re doomed, unless” is a constant refrain in marketing and advertising, where the “unless” is usually followed by “you buy our cure for . . . halitosis . . . heartburn . . . baldness . . . bloating . . . trapped wind . . . bingo wings . . . or whatever the latest marketer-invented, socially-incapacitating condition happens to be.

Lest you think that I’m making marketing mock—oh ye of little faith!—I should acknowledge that I myself have employed “spiritual” selling tactics throughout my academic career, such as it is. I’ve co-edited a book called *Marketing Apocalypse*; I’ve organised conferences on devotional themes; I’ve written several scholarly essays that employ religious motifs or use the Bible as their point of departure; I’ve spent much of the past fifteen years yelling “ye must be born again” to unimpressed audiences of my academic peers. I guess I’m the marketing equivalent of that sad old man with a sandwich board and megaphone, who wanders round the town centre on Saturday afternoons shouting “Repent. Repent. Repent.” I know exactly what crying in the wilderness feels like.

I also know what crying “Hallelujah” feels like. And I can’t deny that the H-word was repeatedly uttered on reading this volume. Not only does it feature many of the academic luminaries who have previously graced the Interpretive Marketing Research series—thus providing a wonderful tribute to the late, lamented Barbara B. Stern, whose *Representing Consumers* inaugurated this series back in 1998—but *Consumption and Spirituality* is a testament to the wonder-working power of great writing. All of the contributors are esteemed literary stylists and, at a time when students are increasingly reluctant to read the dreary academic articles that clog our journals, Diego, Linda, and Pauline remind us that all is not lost, that scholarly salvation is still possible, and that in the beginning was the Word. Praise the Lord and pass the iPad.

Stephen Brown  
Series Editor, Interpretive Marketing Research

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Linda Scott  
Pauline Maclaran





# 1 Introduction

## Unravelling Complexities at the Commercial/Spiritual Interface

*Diego Rinallo, Linda Scott, and Pauline Maclaran*

Spirituality *and* consumption? Really? This book brings together two topics that in the eyes of many go uneasily together. Spirituality is sublime. It smells of incense and everything that is good in humans. Consumption is instead mundane, materialistic, and ultimately soulless. The idea of spiritual consumption may thus be considered an oxymoron, a contradiction in terms. For sure, it triggered negative reactions from some of our informants (not to mention colleagues). Why would business school professors be interested in studying spirituality? Shouldn't this topic be left to more respected disciplines? Do we really need to frame humanity's spiritual search as consumption? Is there something to gain from calling spiritual seekers consumers? These were some of the questions we were asked. We believe that these reactions arise from a cultural tension that is at the centre of both age-old speculation in philosophy, theology, and social science, and the life of countless individuals in postmodern societies: the difficult relationship between matter and spirit, sacred and profane. And yes, we also believe that, as marketing and consumer researchers, we may add something to the debate that would be missed by sociological, cultural, or anthropological analyses of spirituality. Before defending this assertion, which might be easily dismissed as disciplinary colonialism, let us introduce briefly what we mean by spirituality and the way the concept is treated in the disciplines that have it as a subject of study.

### SPIRITUALITY VS. RELIGION

Spirituality is not the same as religion. This affirmation would have sounded odd a few decades ago. Experiences that would now be considered spiritual were labelled as religious in influential work such as William James' (1902/1982) *The Varieties of Religious Experiences* and Rudolf Otto's (1917) *The Idea of The Holy*. With the counterculture of the 1960s, this began to change. Already in 1964, Abraham Maslow suggested that spirituality can be found outside of institutionalised churches. According to the founder of humanistic psychology, experiences such as "the holy; . . .

humility; gratitude and oblation; thanksgiving; awe before the mysterium tremendum; the sense of the divine, the ineffable; the sense of littleness before mystery; the quality of exaltedness and sublimity; the awareness of limits and even of powerlessness; the impulse to surrender and to kneel; a sense of the external and of fusion with the whole of the universe; even the experience of heaven and hell” (Maslow, 1964, p. 54) can be felt by the religious and the non-religious alike. In the decades that followed, many observed that “religion is giving way to spirituality” (Heelas and Woodhead, 2005). The divorce of spirituality from religion can be ascribed to two distinct but related phenomena: the secularisation of society and the postmodern behaviour of spiritual seekers, who mix and match from different sources to customise their spiritual beliefs and practices.

According to theories of secularisation (Hammond, 1985; Wilson, 1969), modernisation of society would inexorably lead to the demise of religion. One can easily trace an antecedent of this body of work in Max Weber’s (1922/1978) disenchantment thesis, according to which the scientific revolution and the Protestant Reformation in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries resulted in a rationalisation and intellectualisation of individual and social life and in a corresponding decline in religious beliefs and practices. After enjoying decades of unchallenged supremacy, the more extreme versions of the secularisation thesis were empirically disconfirmed. Studies show that some European countries are indeed becoming more secular, whereas in the United States religion is on the rise (Berger, Davie, and Fokas, 2008). The American religious market is a competitive arena where different institutions and groups invest to maintain and develop their membership, resulting in greater overall demand for religious services. Europe is instead still characterised by quasi-monopolistic religious markets as in many countries the once state religions still enjoy a dominant position. As a consequence, institutionalised religions have reduced incentives to market themselves, resulting in reduced participation rates (Finke, 1997; Finke and Stark, 1988; Iannaccone, 1991; Stark, 1997; Stark and Bainbridge 1985; Stark and Finke, 2000; Warner, 1993). Studies from other regions of the world suggest that religion is as alive today as it ever was (Berger, 1999). This is true also for countries where state atheism was enforced and organised religions had to go underground, including former Eastern Bloc countries and China.

Clearly, the secularisation of Europe is the exception rather than the rule. A much more defensible aspect of secularisation theory highlights the loss of authority of religious institutions on various spheres of public and private life. Social functions that used to be ascribed to religion are now dealt with by specialised institutions (Luckmann 1967; Wilson 1982), which are governed according to their own specific logic. Over the centuries, with its institutional separation from the state, science, medicine, education, art, economy, etc., religion has thus lost its ability to morally overarch all of society in a sort of “sacred canopy” (Berger, 1967).

Starting from the 1960s, the reduced authority of institutionalised religions has led to an increased individual freedom to create beliefs based on a variety of competing (but from an individual point of view complementary, at least to a certain extent) spiritual resources (Roof, 1999). Such degree of freedom is unprecedented, as in most periods of human history spiritual innovators, unless successful in creating new religions, have been marginalised and sometimes physically suppressed. Globalisation has been a trigger of this spiritual mix and match at least from the early nineteenth century, where the British Empire was instrumental to the first contacts between Westerners and ‘exotic’ spiritualities (Owen, 2004). Today these trends continue, as multicultural societies are increasingly tolerant of alternative, emerging, and foreign religions and spiritualities. Creativity in the spiritual domain is however often seen as intrinsically incoherent (e.g., do-it-yourself religion, Baerveldt, 1996; pick-and-mix religion, Hamilton, 2000) and often denigrated as it is largely based on the exchange of goods (books, DVDs, crystals, divinatory tools) and services (courses, workshops, retreats, therapy and counselling sessions) for money (e.g., spiritual supermarket/marketplace, Lyon, 2000; Roof, 1999; religious consumption à la carte, Possamai 2003; religious consumerism, York, 1995).

Secularisation and the spiritual bricolage of consumers (we do not of course share the negative connotations that critics ascribe to the phenomenon) have thus contributed to disconnecting spirituality from institutionalised churches. Not only has religion a much-decreased impact on the various social and cultural domains it once dominated; it has also lost its monopoly on religious beliefs and practices as consumers create their own spirituality and new religious movements, which often lack a priestly caste and avoid institutionalisation. Moreover, as consumer researchers have occasionally noted, even mundane brands such as Harley Davidson or Star Trek may assume sacred qualities and stimulate spiritual breakthrough (more on this below).

Based on these theoretical developments, social scientists have attempted to obtain operational definitions of religion vs. spirituality (Emmons and Paloutzian, 2003; Gorsuch, 1984; Hill, 2005; Hill et al., 2000; Moberg, 2002; Pargament, 1999; Turner et al., 1995; Zinnbauer and Pargament, 2005; Zinnbauer et al., 1997, 1999). Despite extensive theoretical and empirical work, there is not widely accepted operationalisation of the two terms (Moore, Kloos, and Rasmussen, 2001). Religion is often seen as community-oriented, formalised, organised, and consisting of an organised system of beliefs, practices, and rituals designed to facilitate closeness to God. Spirituality is instead more individualistic, less formal, and institutionalised to a reduced degree, and it is considered a subjective, personal quest to understand the ultimate questions about life, meaning, and the sacred. Interestingly, religion (e.g., Zinnbauer et al., 1999) is often associated with “negative” qualities (e.g., it is dogmatic and may lead to fundamentalist behaviours), whereas spirituality is more positively connoted (e.g., it may lead to expanded self-awareness).

## SPIRITUALITY IN SOCIAL SCIENCE

As hinted above, over the last few decades spirituality emerged as a topic of study in a variety of disciplines (see Holmes, 2007, for a brief review). *Psychology* has recently moved beyond its initial negative views on religion and spirituality. According to Freud (1927/1961), religion was an expression of individual neuroses. The father of psychology dismissed mystical experiences as regression to primary narcissism (Freud, 1930/1989). Following his lead, spiritual experiences were usually considered pathological, even psychotic (Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry, 1976; Horton, 1974), forcing the discipline to find criteria to distinguish spiritual experiences from psychopathology (Caird, 1987; Hood, 1976; Jackson and Fulford, 1997). Many schools of psychology, including humanistic, Jungian, and transpersonal, now recognize that spirituality is an important aspect of psychological development and wellbeing. Beyond psychology, in the *health sciences*, interest in spirituality has skyrocketed (Gorsuch, 2002; Prasinos, 1992; Young-Eisendath and Miller, 2000). Moreover, there is growing empirical research on the impact of spirituality and religiosity on various measures of mental and physical health (Koenig, 2001; Koenig et al., 2001; Mueller et al., 2001). Other studies also focus on the effect of specific practices, such as prayer (e.g., Masters and Spielmans, 2007) or meditation (e.g., Ospina et al., 2007).

*Anthropology* has a long tradition of studying and providing thick descriptions of “other” spiritualities (for a general introduction, see Morris, 2006). However, the insider-outsider boundary and fear of “going native” often led to situations where “extraordinary” experiences observed or even personally experienced by the fieldworker would be explained away or even subjected to self-censorship (Turner, 1994; Young and Goulet, 1994; see also Favret-Saada, 1980; Stoller, 1987, for significant exceptions). Critiques of the imperialistic past of the discipline together with ethical considerations have led to the acceptance of methods and representation styles more respectful of the legitimacy of other cultures’ spiritual practices and belief systems (Arweck and Stringer, 2002).

In *Sociology* debates on spirituality are usually situated within broader analyses of religions, with key subjects being secularisation and related themes (fundamentalism, religious revivalism), globalisation, and the de-institutionalised (or post-institutionalised) nature of new religious movements, like the New Age or Neo-Paganism. Spirituality per se, given its ‘subjective’ nature, has received more limited attention (see, however, Flanagan and Jupp, 2007), even though several key thinkers in sociology are arguably relevant to make sense of spirituality under the conditions of postmodernity (think of Giddens [1991] on the substitution of traditional authority with self-authority, or Foucault’s [1988] technologies of the self as a framework for interpreting spiritual practices).

Getting closer to the topic of this book, *management* and *organisation studies* are also devoting some attention to organisational spirituality (Benefiel,

2003; Biberman and Tischler, 2008) and spirituality in the workplace (Biberman and Whitty, 2000; Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2002; Mitroff and Denton, 1999), and to the related issue of including spirituality into management education (Barnett et al., 2000; Bento, 2000; Delbecq, 2000, 2005; Epstein, 2002; Harlos, 2000; Neal, 1997). Similarly to research in psychology and health sciences, this stream of research has attempted to measure the impact of various measures of spirituality on organisational performance. The question typically asked is: “Would organisations be more productive and innovative, and individuals be able to live more satisfying lives, if they felt inwardly connected to their work, fellow workers, and workplace?” (Sheep, 2006, p. 357). Also, business leadership is said to benefit from spiritual values and practices (Benefiel, 2005; Miller, 2000; Reave, 2005; Vaill, 2000). Despite criticism based on instrumentality and negative consequences of workplace spirituality (Boje, 2008; Lips-Wiersma et al., 2009), enthusiasts propose that organisation studies are experiencing a “spiritual turn,” which is saluted as a response to the crisis of meaning in organisations (Drive, 2007).

To sum up, in social science, there is growing interest on the subject of spirituality and its impact on culture, society, and individuals. Let us now turn to examine relevant debates in consumer research, which have been influenced by these developments in social science and have, in turn, influenced marketing theory and practice.

## SPIRITUALITY AND CONSUMER RESEARCH

In consumer research, spirituality per se has attracted limited explicit attention. Notable exceptions are Hirschman (1985), on the spiritual significance of consumption objects; Holbrook (1999), on spirituality as a typology of consumer value; Gould (1991), on spiritual self-awareness as a goal for the management of energy through product use; and Moisio and Beruchashvili, 2010, on the model of wellbeing proposed by contemporary support groups, which is spiritual and therapeutic at the same time. Spirituality is, however, an element of the liberatory postmodernist quest to re-enchant human life (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995). Moreover, it is inherent, albeit in an implicit manner, in two influential and debated streams of research: (1) materialism, and (2) the sacred (as opposed to profane) aspects of consumer behaviour. Other relevant streams of research (not reviewed here) regard superstition (which is, however, negatively connoted as excess of belief, gullibility; see Kramer and Block, 2008; Mowen and Carlson, 2003) and magical thinking (Arnould et al., 1999; Fernandez and Lastovicka, 2011; St. James et al., 2011) in consumer behaviour.

### Materialism

Materialism is the idea that everything is made of matter. Such a view is in direct contraposition with the religious or philosophical belief that

the material universe has a spiritual fundament (Vitzhum, 1995). Most religions see the Divine as transcendent, that is, dwelling outside of creation rather than immanent in it. Put differently, the creator is separated from the physical creation, which is often considered a distraction to the soul's spiritual journey, when not intrinsically evil. Accordingly, excessive pursuit of material goods is criticized as a hindrance to spiritual pursuits (see Belk, 1983).

In consumer research, materialism is conceived as the search for happiness through consumption (Belk, 1984, 1985; see also Burroughs and Rindfleisch, 2002; Richins, 1991; Richins and Dawson, 1992). If the physical world is all that there is, the implication is that happiness can only be experienced during one's lifetime. Whether one can actually find happiness in material possessions is open to debate. Happiness through consumption is, at most, transient (Belk et al., 2003). Growing evidence suggests that higher levels of materialism lead to reduced happiness and life satisfaction (Richins and Dawson, 1992; Burroughs and Rindfleisch, 2002; Emmons, 1999; La Barbera and Gürhan, 1997). Conversely, individuals with more spiritual strivings are more satisfied with their life (Emmons, 1999) and are less materialistic (Burroughs and Rindfleisch, 2002; Pace, 2012; Stillman et al., 2012).

However, it would be naive to conclude that materialism and spirituality oppose each other. Religious and spiritual beliefs are reified in material culture (McDannell, 1995; Morgan, 1999; Moore, 1995) in the form of sacred images, devotional and liturgical objects, buildings and other places of worship, works of art, mass-produced consumption goods and entertainment products, and the practices surrounding these material objects (rituals, ceremonies, prayer, mediation, display, pilgrimage, worship, magic, study, etc.). Such consumption is not, however, exempt from critiques, ranging from bad taste (e.g. in the case of Catholic kitsch) to the more extreme accusation of spiritual materialism, particularly frequent in the case of the New Age movement (Rindfleisch, 2005; Trungpa, 1973).

Gould (2006) warns against conflating spirituality with spiritual materialism. He defines the latter as "the coopting of spiritual meanings and practices in the service of the material life of the self and then conflating them by rationalising that one is engaging in spirituality. For instance, one may use spiritual practices to reduce tension so one can get along better in the world as opposed to using them to seek some sort of spiritual fulfilment or enlightenment" (Gould, 2006, p. 65). Based on a Buddhist perspective, Gould (1992, 2006) suggests that spirituality can fruitfully engage with matter in ways different from asceticism. For example, alcohol, whose abuse is condemned by ascetic religious paths, may be employed under the right circumstances for spiritual transformation, like experiencing altered states of consciousness that might accelerate one's spiritual pursuits. From this perspective, consumption of goods, services, and experiences can indeed provide the material means to achieve spiritual goals.

## Sacred and Profane in Consumer Behaviour

In 1989, Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry argued that consumption may be a vehicle for experiencing the sacred. Drawing from Émile Durkheim (1915) and Mircea Eliade (1959), in their groundbreaking article, Belk et al. (1989) proposed that two processes are evolving in contemporary societies. One is the increased secularisation of society and institutional religions (at the time they were writing, the secularisation thesis had already been the subject of ample debate in the sociology of religion). The other is the sacralisation of the secular in the spheres of politics, science, art, and consumption. Belk et al. (1989) further described the consumer behaviour processes inherent in sacralisation (e.g., ritual, pilgrimage, gift-giving, collecting, inheritance), the perpetuation of sacredness (e.g., separation of the sacred from the profane, ritual, bequests, tangibilised contamination), and desacralisation (lack of separation of the sacred from the profane, rationalisation and routinisation of ritual, intentional divestment rituals, loss of sacred object or of people taking care of them). These themes are also reflected in related research by Belk and his colleagues (Belk et al., 1988, on divestment rituals that enable the sale of once-sacred possessions at a swap meet; O'Guinn and Belk, 1989, on the sacralisation of the secular in a religious theme park; Belk and Wallendorf, 1990, on the sacred meanings of money; see also Hirschman, 1988).

Interestingly, the work of Belk et al. was influenced by sociological theory at a time when the interest on spirituality was yet to come. In their discussion of the sacred, spirituality is hardly mentioned. Since the Belk et al. (1989) publication, the sacred has become a frequently invoked conceptual category to refer to those aspects of consumer behaviour that go beyond the satisfaction of functional needs, including those that do not necessarily involve transcendent or ecstatic experiences. As sharply observed by Iacobucci (2001), consumer research can fruitfully distinguish the sacred (in the lower case) inherent in exceptional experiences from the Sacred (upper case) “involving an individual's experience with religion, spirituality, worship, and God” (p. 110). However, the work of Belk and his colleagues suggested that the sacred aspects of consumer behaviour “can be clinically described and interpreted, thereby enhancing our understanding of consumer behavior” (Belk et al., 1989, p. 2), helping the legitimisation of metaphors and constructs based on religion, spirituality, and magic in subsequent consumer research.

For example, Fournier (1998) draws on theories of animism to develop brand-consumer relationship theory; others have conceived certain types of brand-consumer relationship as based on devotion (Pichler and Hemetsberger, 2007; Pimentel and Reynolds, 2004). Reference to the sacred, re-enchantment, and transcendence is also frequent in studies of extraordinary consumer experiences as different as river rafting (Arnould and Price, 1993; Arnould et al., 1999), consumer gatherings such as the mountain



men rendezvous (Belk and Costa, 1998) and the Burning Man event (Kozinets, 2002; Kozinets and Sherry, 2003; Sherry and Kozinets, 2003, 2007), skydiving (Celsi et al., 1993), and mountain climbing (Tumbat and Belk, 2011). Spiritual elements are also present in experiences that immerse consumers in artificial, marketer-made consumptionscapes, such as disco clubs (Goulding et al., 2002, 2009), art exhibitions (Chen, 2009), and retail spaces (Borghini et al., 2009; Dion and Arnould, 2011; Kozinets et al., 2002, 2004; Sherry, 1998; Sherry et al., 2009).

Brands (and the communities forming around them) are also sometimes described by scholars (and experienced by consumers) in spiritual or even religious ways. In their ethnography of Harley Davidson bikers, Schouten and McAlexander (1995) observe that the “Harley consumption experience has a spirituality derived in part from a sense of riding as a transcendental departure from the mundane”, linked to several aspects including “the increased closeness to nature, the heightened sensory awareness, the mantric throbbing of the engine, the constant awareness of risk and the concomitant mental focus, and, in group riding, the consciousness of oneself as an integral part of a larger group or purpose” (p. 50). Muñiz and Schau (2005), in their analysis of the brand community centred on the Apple Newton, identify several supernatural, religious, and magic motifs in their informants’ narratives. Belk and Tumbat (2005) develop the notion of brand cult and identify the sustaining myths that underlie the religious aspect of Macintosh consumption. Also popular management books are now available with suggestions on how to create brand cults and turn customers into “true believers” (Atkin, 2004; Ragas and Bueno, 2002).

Spiritual elements are perhaps even more prominent in entertainment brands based on science fiction, fantasy, and horror genres (e.g., X-Files, Kozinets, 1997; Star Trek, Kozinets, 2001; Star Wars, Brown et al., 2003), which are often based on the commercial exploitation of stories set in the same narrative universe through a variety of media and products (books, movies or television shows, comic books, role playing games, videogames, action figures, merchandising, etc.; see Jenkins, 2003, 2006, on transmedia storytelling). By introducing “fantastic” elements, these brands familiarize their audiences with supernatural beings (e.g., angels, vampires, fairies, aliens) and phenomena (e.g., magic, miracles) that are not supposed to exist from a secular, atheist standpoint. Although criticized as further steps in the secularisation of religion, these mass-produced entertainment products can reinvigorate faith and make religious messages nearer to younger generations, as suggested by theological work on popular culture (Ostwalt, 2003). Entertainment brands, however, can introduce their audiences to alternative histories, mythologies, cosmologies, and theologies in ways that traditional religions might find threatening. This is evident in religious organisations’ opposition to the Da Vinci Code for its representation of Mary Magdalene as Jesus’ wife, to Harry Potter for popularizing sinful magic, and even to Hello Kitty for being a current-day incarnation of

pre-Christian cat goddesses, believed to be devils in disguise. Rather than being worshipped *per se*, these entertainment products can, however, shape sacred consumption practices and, more importantly, transcendent experiences (Rinallo, 2009a).

### Going Beyond Current Debates

As a whole, consumer research has mostly been concerned with the sacralisation of the secular (Iacobucci, 2001). The objective of this book is not only to revisit and expand such scholarship, but also to look at the commodification of the spiritual in the context of both organized religion and “do it yourself” spirituality. The numerous contributions in the book look at how a variety of agents—religious institutions, spiritual leaders, marketers, and consumers—interact and co-create spiritual meanings in a post-disenchanted society. From a marketing perspective, the book examines not only religious organizations, but also brands and market systems and the way they infuse, whether intentionally or not, their products, services, and experiences with spiritual meanings that flow freely in the circuit of culture and can be appropriated by consumers even without purchase acts. In this respect, our approach is to a certain extent similar to work that has examined religious themes and fakery in popular culture and the way it may inspire authentic spiritual experiences (Chidester, 2005; Forbes & Mahan, 2000). However, as a whole, the chapters in the present collection, which are mostly authored by marketing scholars, show a finer-grained understanding of the mechanisms of cultural production in a globalized, capitalistic marketplace.

<i>Marketers</i>		Sacralisation of the mundane	Commodification of the spiritual
	<i>Main Agents</i>		
		Spiritual meanings in consumption	Consumption of spiritual goods
<i>Consumers</i>			
		<i>Material</i>	<i>Spiritual</i>
		<i>Main Context</i>	

Figure 1.1 The consumption and marketing of spirituality: An overview.

## THE CONSUMPTION AND MARKETING OF SPIRITUALITY: MAPPING THE FIELD

As anticipated above, our two inter-related themes are the “commodification of the spiritual” and the “sacralisation of the mundane.” When deciding how to organize the many contributions we received, we resorted to a traditional “business school” 2 x 2 matrix (see Figure 1.1). Although many studies in this volume look at both marketers and consumers, in most cases they privilege either the supply or demand side. As a result, our categorisation of each contribution in one of the figure’s four cells is not as arbitrary as it could appear. In addition, a final section will look at issues of method and representation when studying consumers’ spiritual experiences.

Part I, titled “Marketers’ Sacralisation of the Mundane,” explores how marketers and brands call on spiritual meanings to enhance the value of their products, services, and experiences. This theme has received scant attention in marketing and consumer research (see, however, Thompson, 2004; Thompson and Coskuner-Balli, 2007, on the socio-historical patterning of spiritual and magical aspects of the natural health’s and community-supported agriculture’s marketplace mythologies). Chapter 2 by Diego Rinallo, Stefania Borghini, Gary Bamossy, and Robert V. Kozinets looks at a highly provocative example of marketplace appropriation of religious symbols: Dolce & Gabbana’s launch of a collection of rosaries as fashion accessories. These high-priced religious emblems are typically worn around the neck to direct onlookers’ gaze to the wearer’s body as an object of beauty, a trend started initially by the pop star Madonna. Exploring the contested meaning of this practice, Rinallo et al. show that although many consumers stigmatise fashion designers for being vain, ignorant of the “real” meaning of the rosary, or even blasphemous, other consumers see instead branded rosaries as objects devoid of religious significance, “just decorative objects” whose provocative nature enables wearers to stand out in a crowd. Perhaps the most interesting group, however, are those consumers for whom branded rosaries have a dual nature, sacred and profane at the same time: they partake of the transformative power of fashion but at the same time they draw consumers near to God.

A different type of marketplace appropriation is discussed by Elif Izberk-Bilgin in Chapter 3 on the ways in which the halal movement in Turkey forges a faith-based market. There has been a recent surge of interest in Islamic marketing with notable scholars (Izberk-Bilgin, 2012; Jafari, 2012; Sandıkçı and Ger, 2010; Sandıkçı and Rice, 2011) highlighting how marketers have ignored the complexity of economic, political, and socio-cultural forces shaping the Islamic marketplace. In a similar vein, Izberk-Bilgin’s study counters previous claims that Islam is anti-modern and anti-market, and it shows how Islamic ideology is negotiated and made compatible with the modern capitalist marketplace.

In contrast to this example of institutionalised religious marketplace appropriation, the final chapter in Part I, Chapter 4 by Mary Johnstone-

Louis, examines the commercialisation of New Atheism, a 21st-century anti-religious movement that positions atheism as a brand and constructs unbelief as a commodity. This fascinating study, somewhat ironically creating belief around non-belief, illustrates how New Atheism popularises its message using a range of marketing tools and techniques to establish its authority and develop a devote community of followers. Emphasizing one of the key underpinning themes of our book, this chapter powerfully illustrates the diversity of religious practices that exists today and how new types of marketplace mediators arise—mediators that are different to traditional religious institutions.

Part II, “Consumers’ Search for Spiritual Meanings in Consumption of the Mundane,” discusses how consumers infuse their everyday consumption patterns with spiritual meanings and how they transform the profane into the sacred. In this respect, we are honored to have a contribution (Chapter 5) from the leading pioneer of the sacred and profane in consumer research, Russell V. Belk. His early work on the sacralisation of the secular (e.g., Belk et al., 1989) did a tremendous job of illustrating how the human need for spirituality and transcendence can be found in popular culture and consumption activities. Just over twenty years ago, he and his colleagues showed how consumers can sacralise not only objects and people, but also places, experiences, and times. In his current chapter, Belk turns attention on a mythic figure associated with Christmas, namely, Santa Claus, a figure that was, of course, popularised by Coca-Cola as fat and jolly with a red suit and white beard. Belk argues that this quasi-commercial Santa myth has become as sacralised as the original Christian story on the birth of Christ and, indeed, that Santa provides an alternative ‘religious’ myth that in many cases is more powerful and pervasive for contemporary consumers than the story of Jesus.

Another mythic figure in Western culture is the vampire, most recently revived for contemporary popular culture through the TV series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and the *Twilight* novels. Focusing on *Twilight*, Margo Buchanan-Oliver and Hope Jensen Schau (Chapter 6) provide a topical and timely analysis of spirituality in popular culture by exploring how the consumption of this media narrative provides spiritual and moral instruction. They show how the vampire myth questions normative social and sexual roles, thereby enabling consumers to act as ‘mythic bricoleurs’ in their identity projects while enacting what Buchanan-Oliver and Schau refer to as the commodification of mass worship.

Switching to another contemporary media narrative, Stephen Brown (Chapter 7) engages us with his usual indomitable style by bringing to life the dynamics of spiritual consumption through his tale of a family visit to the *Wizarding World of Harry Potter* in Orlando, Florida. Using his widely recognised literary mode of representation, he vividly conveys the heightened emotions and antagonisms that can occur during this commercialised pilgrimage and act of brand worship. Reflecting Ritzer’s (2005)

thesis on how the enchantment found in theme parks and shopping malls ultimately succumbs to increased rationalisation and ultimately annihilates itself, Brown's tale humorously illustrates how the quasi-spiritual nature of brands can equally enable them to fall from grace. Taking Dante's *Inferno* as his departure point, he recounts a less than spiritual encounter with this iconic cultural brand.

The final chapter in Part II (Chapter 8) is by Alan Bradshaw, who offers us an overlooked theoretical lens with which to better understand the sacred in consumer culture, Colin Campbell's (2008) *Easternization of the West* thesis. Better known for his *Romantic Ethic*, this later work by Campbell has been little acknowledged to date by consumer researchers. In it Campbell argues that a shift in worldview has taken place and that we are now in an era of Easternization, a cultural change that has permeated all facets of our lives and especially religion. As part of his thesis, Campbell undertakes a systematic analysis of the contingencies of the sacred and the devotional, locating manifestations of the sacred in consumption as part of this worldview. Thus, Bradshaw argues, he provides consumer culture theory (CCT) with the missing explanatory link for the sacralisation of the mundane.

Part III, "The Commodification of the Spiritual," looks at how religious institutions and spiritual leaders market their products and services. Religious pluralism has stimulated the rise of the so-called economics of religion approach (Finke, 1997; Finke and Stark, 1988; Iannaccone, 1991; Stark, 1997; Stark and Bainbridge 1985; Stark and Finke, 2000; Warner, 1993), which applies economic concepts such as supply and demand to model the religious behaviours of individuals and groups. According to such an approach, competition among religious institutions stimulates greater "marketing" efforts to attract and/or keep their members, resulting in increased rates of religious participation. The work of these scholars finds a parallel in those contributions that have examined the promotional practices currently adopted by religious institutions, which are increasingly similar to those of market-oriented multinational corporations (Shawchuck et al., 1992). These texts, which often have evocative titles (e.g., *Shopping for Faith*, Cimino and Lattin, 1999; *Shopping for God*, Twitchell, 2007; *Brands of Faith*, Einstein, 2008; *Jesus in Disneyland*, Lyon, 2000; *Consuming Religion*, Miller, 2005; *Selling God*, Moore, 1995; see also Sargeant, 2000; Twitchell, 2004) often provide vivid case studies of the increasingly sophisticated marketing practices currently adopted by religious institutions. The theme of religious marketing has also surfaced in marketing journals (Belk, 2000; Bonsu and Belk, 2010; a recent special issue of the *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing* [2010, Vol. 15, n. 4]; and numerous articles in the *Journal of Islamic Marketing*). Interestingly, the use of overtly commercial marketing strategies by religious organisations may be negatively perceived by consumers (Attaway, Boles, and Singley, 1997; Kenneson and Street, 1997; McDaniel, 1986; McGraw, Schwartz, and Tetlock, 2012).

The first chapter in Part III by Robin Croft (Chapter 9) suggests that the commodification of the spiritual is not necessarily a modern phenomenon. Croft tracks how relics of saints and other holy people have formed a significant role for many centuries in religious rites of many cultures, elevating profane possessions to sacred status. Using a case study of Glastonbury Abbey in the medieval period, he shows how monks at the abbey centred the spiritual and commercial bases of the community on what was England's largest relic collection and created a thriving pilgrimage business that relied on various marketing techniques (and manipulations!) to sustain it.

Moving to contemporary times, Mara Einstein (Chapter 10) discusses how major religious institutions are using branding to re-confirm or, in some cases, re-establish an identity. As she highlights, the use of branding and other marketing techniques is an increasing imperative if these institutions wish to remain part of the cultural conversation or be chosen as cultural resources for identity projects. Using two recent advertising campaigns as case studies—"I'm a Mormon" for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and "Inspired by Muhammad" for Islam—Einstein demonstrates how religious branding is being used not only to gain more followers, but also to enhance the religion's image and create a stronger sense of "corporate" identity.

The final chapter in Part III by Catherine Dolan (Chapter 11) explores how single women represent a promising market segment for Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity in Kenya. Her richly detailed study of 'Single Women Ministries' that commodify the private sphere and present marriage as spectacle, illustrates the blurring of boundaries among religion, commerce, and entertainment. Dolan argues that these charismatic spectacles counter Christianity's concept of marriage as a sacred sphere outside the marketplace and reframe marriage as a means for material success and happiness. Taking a more critical stance, this study also shows that as this 'gospel of prosperity' extends into ever more domains, it is not only blurring the distinction between the sacred and secular, but also calling into question the nature of intimacy and marriage itself.

Part IV, "The Consumption of Spiritual Goods," looks at the proliferation of spiritual goods and the rich ways in which they are consumed. The sacred is often mediated through material objects, goods, and places. All three chapters in Part IV focus on specific places that are conducive to spiritual experiences. Much CCT research has dealt with sacred places (Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry, 1989) that might play multiple roles for consumers: cultural epicenters (Holt, 2002), pilgrimage sites (O'Guinn and Belk, 1989), liminal contexts where self-experimentation and personal transformation are possible and where meaningful relationships are built (Arnould and Price, 1993; Belk and Costa, 1998; Kozinets, 2002), and temporary retreats where a mythical past is reconstructed and the disenchantment and commercialisation of everyday life is resisted (Belk and Costa, 1998; Kozinets, 2002; Maclaran and Brown, 2005).