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Shopping for Salvation: A Comparative Appraisal of the Place of Worship and Marketplace in South Africa

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Recently South Africa has been experiencing accelerated challenges on a spiritual level relating to 'place of worship' and spiritual pilgrimage. This has been one of the biggest challenges facing religious activities in South Africa. Arising from that, this paper examines possible connections between salvation seekers and consumers (in the marketplace). To this end, this paper seeks to understand the assertion of 'distance to travel not being a limitation in the spiritual realm' (Adeboye, 2014), where some Christians claim that at a certain place there is a blessing waiting for them and that they cannot find that blessing at any other location. The act of shopping for tangible products within a given 'marketplace' and shopping for 'salvation' (including the selling and promotion of merchandise and services at churches) are compared using a qualitative methodology involving informal conversation interviews, focus groups, semi-structured interviews, observations, and researcher self-reflection. Accordingly, empirical findings show that places of worship show a great variety of blessings for Christians who associate themselves with any denomination without considering time, distance, and place. In addition, the results reveal that spirituality, belief, and religion are major factors promoting pilgrimage i.e. consumers travelling to explore the religious spiritual destination and shopping for associated products and services. The study found that a marketplace is not the same as a spiritual place rather, the spiritual place is considered to be a venue for worship and spiritual distribution of church products.

Key Words: shopping, marketplace, spiritual place, worship, marketing

Introduction

Marketing and communications have become part of church activities in order to gain the attention of congregations. It has become clear that church activities and marketing activities are interrelated (Adebayo, 2015). Adebayo (2015) further asserts that the church can also apply the service marketing mix through the '7P's' with a view to achieving its social mandate i.e., spirituality (product), communication (promotion), delivery/distribution (place), exchange (price), employee involvement in service delivery (people), the mechanisms via which the service is delivered (process), and the environment in which the services are delivered (physical environment). However, this paper does not attempt to fully discuss marketing from the perspective of marketing mix or services marketing mix, but merely discusses 'place' as one of the marketing mix components and seeks to trace the link between marketplace and place of worship, and how these two conceptualisations shape congregants' spiritual consumption patterns and therefore pilgrimage choices. According to the Chartered Institute of Marketing (2009), 'place' is where customers buy a

product. This implies that the product must be available in the right place, at the right time, and in the right quantity, while keeping storage, inventory, and distribution costs to an acceptable level. A place is a location where a product can be displayed to customer groups. This could be in a shop window, but it could also be via the internet. From an understanding of the traditional commercial marketing mix (tangible product for example), it appears that place describes the way that the product is made accessible to the consumer (Kotler & Armstrong, 2008). Place / Distribution decisions also include warehouses, trucks, salesforce, retail outlets where the product is sold, or places where it is given out for free (Weinreich, 2010; Strydom, 2011). For an intangible product, place refers to decisions about the channels through which consumers are reached with a particular service or information.

In South Africa, there has been an accelerated problem relating to 'place of worship' during the past two years. According to Kgatle (2017), there have been unusual practices within some neo-Pentecostal churches that include, among other things, the eating of grass, eating of snakes, drinking of petrol, spraying of insecticide

on the congregants, and other practices like drinking of pineapple juice and fizzy soft drinks, with claims that these things can help the congregants to experience miracles and healings. This has been a challenge to Christians who are practising biblical faith. One of the responses to this challenge has come from Meshoe (2015) of the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) of South Africa who has called on ministers of the gospel who have received theological training and have been in the ministry for more than 30 years (from before some of these self-styled prophets were even born) to reprimand these out-of-order individuals who are making a mockery of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This scenario is facilitating the rapid secularisation of Christian spirituality and it seems to be seeking publicity for publicity's sake and as such, is seen to make a mockery of the Christian faith.

Another phenomenon is pilgrimage by South African Christian spiritual seekers to foreign religious sites such as a particular Christian church in Nigeria, the Synagogue of All Nations where the founder, Prophet TB Joshua, exerts a strong influence through healing, the use of holy water, and his ability to 'accurately' predict future events (Amanze, 2013). This may be a reflection on the spiritual life of South African Christians who are seeking experiences and services which they cannot find locally or are not yet commensurate with those offered by prophets elsewhere in Africa. The criticism is that the practice of Christianity as described above is deviating from the intrinsic fundamentals of the faith. For instance, it seems that 'false' ministers, prophets, evangelists, and sundry clergy-people are increasing in number, vending 'individually framed, and false imaginations' in place of divine revelations and a passion for Christ (Ottuh, 2015).

According to Koçyiğit (2016), many factors affect tourist flows to countries or resorts. Such flows are dependent on destination characteristics such as climate, scenery, services, religious and cultural attributes, and amenities. Linking this to service marketing, the place influences the service buyer's satisfaction and offers a particular value (utility) to the consumer (Kar, 2010). This could mean, for instance, that geographical proximity to the consumer will result in a higher probability of sales. However, in terms of a place of worship, proximity is not crucial; distance does not debar spiritual seekers from attaining spiritual help from any spiritual place of worship.

According to Collins-Kreiner (2018), a pilgrimage to a spiritual place of worship should primarily be motivated

by one's religious beliefs, which leads one on a sacred journey. In services marketing, the place could be where your services are offered, and where you have a presence. The bottom line is that service providers must ensure that services are successfully delivered to customers. According to Boshoff and Du Plessis (2009), a distinction must be made between the various levels of interaction between service providers and their customers, followed by a discussion on the options available for the service delivery derived from the interaction.

The same principles of making access easy also apply to social marketing. These issues of convenience are also relevant in relation to the subject of this paper, the church. Lamb, Hair, and McDaniel (2013) state that a key factor influencing the selection of a service is convenience. Thus, an organisation needs to decide whether to distribute services to end-users directly or indirectly through other firms, i.e., decide regarding the supply chain (Strydom, 2011). Furthermore, Donovan and Henley (2010) provide evidence that consideration of place often overlaps with partnerships, in that partners are frequently chosen because they can provide access to various target groups in either physical locations or via memberships with accessibility by direct mail, email, or online. In some cases, intermediaries are collaborators and in other cases they are simply used as delivery channels. Therefore, social marketing must take distribution systems, in all forms and expressions, as seriously as the messages and creative products it produces (Lefebvre, 2011).

Conceptualising Marketplace and Place of Worship

According to Kotler and Keller (2009), the marketplace is physical, such as a store you shop in, as well as digital, as when you shop on the internet. A place of worship, on the other hand, literally means a designed structure (with a specific symbol) or consecrated physical space where individuals or a group of people such as a congregation can come to perform acts of devotion, veneration, or religious study (Brenner, 2008). According to Desa (2013), most places of worship (temples, mosques, churches, holy sites, and so forth) have one thing in common; regardless of religious affinity they are understood and experienced as sacred sites. Spiritual seekers find spiritual value in a wide range of places, which is what makes a site or location a 'place of worship'.

For this paper, Christian churches are considered a place of worship. However, natural or structural landscapes may also be considered as places of worship, and for believers or religionists, it can be considered holy. The Ganges River is an example of this in Hinduism while sacred mountains / lands (holy land) can be considered for prayers / worship by some Christians, and Mecca is an example of a holy site in the Muslim tradition (Brett, 2010). Suri and Rao (2014) add that the number of people that visit religious places such as Rome, Varanasi, Mecca, Medina, Kashi, etc. are increasing every year. In addition, Rowe (2008) expresses that places of worship are some of the most significant buildings in our towns, our suburban neighbourhoods, and in our countryside. Such buildings stand as symbols of faith and hope and spiritual values in a secular world.

Thus, there is an assertion that 'distance to travel is not being a limitation in the spiritual realm' (Adeboye, 2014), where some Christians claim that certain blessings are meant to locate one at a place. Suri and Rao (2014) mention that the aspect of religiousness and spirituality is so strong that it can cause people to travel for days, months and even years to reach a sacred place. This paper is of the opinion that Christian places of worship are varied but all provide an opportunity for participants that do not associate themselves with a denomination, shopping / seeking without considering time, distance and place.

According to Lotenberg (2010), place refers to channels of distribution and can be a powerful force for behaviour change. A marketplace can provide an opportunity to act, to increase (or decrease) the convenience of taking that action and differentiate competitors' offerings by delivering different bundles of benefits. Seeking healings and miracles are part of the church today as many congregants have found themselves in situations that require divine intervention (Adebayo and Zulu, 2019). The biblical concept of a place of worship is similar to the concept of the marketplace and is often considered as a place of encounter where there are tangible and intangible connections between spiritual shoppers and God.

Product Positioning and Religious Differential Strategy

According to Engelland (2014), a majority of the world's population belong to one of the major religions (e.g., Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism etc.) and many others embrace indigenous traditional

religions, Confucianism and secular humanism, non-religious systems of thought centring on human values, capacities, and self-worth. These religious and non-religious world-views differ in substantive ways and, accordingly, adherents of one system often have difficulty understanding the adherents of other systems. In marketing terms, this is often a result of building strong brands and the ongoing development of positioning strategies. Creating a compelling, well-differentiated brand position requires a keen understanding of consumer needs and wants, company capabilities and competitive actions (Dover, 2006). According to Kotler and Keller (2012), all marketing strategy is built on segmentation, targeting, and positioning (STP). A company discovers different needs and groups in the marketplace, targets those it can satisfy in a superior way, and then positions its offerings so the target market recognises the company's distinctive offerings and images.

From a marketing point of view, South African religious differentiation is centred on a cultural value system as the specific component of the religious differentiation process (Beyers, 2017). Many faiths follow the same cultural process, for instance, Baptists, Catholics, Pentecostals, Methodists, Full Gospel, Lutherans, etc., provide a value system that fits and is shared by all - denominations may be considered to be a differentiating factor. Recently, spiritual practices, beliefs, and systems, known collectively as New Religious Movements, have emerged across the African region with various themes and areas of specialisation such as healing, wealth, blessing, prosperity, and worship (Adebayo & Zulu, 2019). One could argue that the New Religious Movements juxtapose the concept of cultural value associated with religious differentiation in South Africa. According to Amanze (2013), the new Pentecostal-charismatic churches, which are part of this New Religious Movement, can perform 'miracles' and 'predict' future events more effectively than in the mainstream traditional Churches. However, Baptists, for instance, do not try to perform miracles or predict future events. Thus, new Pentecostal-charismatic churches may be more effective and attractive for spiritual tourists than the traditional orthodox churches.

Religious Marketing and Spiritual Tourism: International Marketing Perspectives

Iyer, Velu, and Mumit (2014) have developed an interesting analysis of marketing and religious organisation. They see that religious organisations behave similar to commercial firms in that they provide a

range of services to attract potential adherents, and they have branches (even across borders) in order to provide spiritual services for their congregants. Buyers (the individuals) and sellers (the religious organisations) meet in a marketplace in which supply and demand dictate allocations of believers across religions. While most religions preserve their core teachings, they innovate in terms of how they provide services or secure resources from members, increasing their efficiency in competing for members. This claim by Iyer, Velu, and Mumit (2014) has been taken into consideration by this paper, which posits that the coming together of believers is more than just providing services or securing resources; it is an act of worshipping the Lord, embracing the breadth and content of the message of salvation, embracing the attributes and purpose of God for humankind, the redemptive work of Christ and the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Religious marketing, in terms of Lotenberg's (2010) study, is more likely to identify the best intervention points if it starts with a planning process that considers place. Lotenberg further articulates that many times people are not sufficiently motivated to make the behaviour change one wants them to make, but one can use place strategies to increase motivation by making the experience deliver benefits which they value. In this way, a place can influence religious pilgrimage / mobility. It should be made clear here that pilgrimage to another place of worship or mobility outside South African's spiritual context could be an intervention point to finding solutions to people's needs. Here we note that biblical spirituality is different in one place compared to another, and then it is different inside one country as well, from city to city. Therefore, meeting the needs of the faithful (spiritual seeker) on pilgrimage and the destination where the shrine (place of worship) is located, has led to the development of special forms of religious tourism (Kocigit, 2016).

Recent historical and sociological analyses of spirituality calls attention to the place of worship and mobility of spiritual seekers in South Africa. According to Suri and Rao (2014), spirituality, belief, and religion are major reasons for travelling. The search for spirituality has always been and will remain a major motivator for people to travel to and explore religious and spiritual destinations. Understanding the motives of their visit is an important factor to be considered in this paper. 'Spiritual' healing and deliverance programming might draw individuals from various religious traditions in

religiously diverse countries, but the churches with that type of programming have not escaped criticism (Benyah, 2018; Adebayo & Zulu, 2019) concerning the authenticity of their ministries. The rapid shift of people's interest towards spirituality and health has caused an impact on a number of industries (Koenig 2012). The reason for that is the way spirituality has been marketed as a self-actualisation product and as a social phenomenon related to personal well-being, but the industry most affected by this interest in spirituality is tourism (Brownstein, 2008).

The Research Problem

This paper concurs with the point made by Pizzinatto, Filho and Filho (2010) that although a brand may change according to its power and market value, certain factors are paramount in market positioning:

- Brands must be well known by the majority of consumers;
- Good level of brand knowledge;
- High degree of brand acceptance;
- High degree of brand preference; and
- High degree of brand loyalty.

However, considering these scales, the heart of this paper is to understand the South African perspective, either to assume that South African Christian churches' brand is social action, moral renewal, and social transformation. However, the central point in this paper is about miracles and prophecy, which in fact is a narrow focus and affects primarily Pentecostal churches. Notwithstanding this, the paper is challenged to understand if there is, in fact, good knowledge of South African churches (brand recognition) by the consumers (congregations), and are they well placed to play a spiritually constructive role and exercise a prophetic mandate. Brown (2011) suggests that business leaders, marketers, and market researchers can play an incredibly important role in building a sustainable future for humankind in at least two ways: make businesses and brands sustainable and inspire consumers to adopt more sustainable behaviour. The same could be said of religious brands, where churches are taking on marketing characteristics. This paper makes a cautious comparison between the type of prophecy or worship and most importantly, self-help brand, and social-action brand churches that are found in South African and in neighbouring countries or among other brands around the world.

The pragmatic-oriented marketing perspective should include a good level of brand knowledge. Cladea (2018) states precisely that in a competitive marketplace firms tend to develop customer-oriented strategies and stay compatible with the customers' knowledge. However, this paper agrees with Pizzinatto, Filho, and Filho (2010) that brands need to change according to their power and market value, therefore changing circumstances in South Africa require changes in order to survive. Ukah (2007) argues that constantly negotiating change is a reality for religious institutions in a globalising world, a factor of living in a modern, but uncertain, society. For the 'End Times Disciple Ministry' in Soshanguve, South Africa, for example, divine revelation is not static: it does not exclude change and what is seen can be considered as an earthly revelation. As a matter of fact, most of the recent shifts in doctrines and practices have been premised on fleshly, magical, and psychologically transmitted revelations as the guiding principle for action and survival in the new world order, of the church including rituals / behaviours such as commanding congregants to eat grass and snakes.

The degree of brand acceptance, preference, and loyalty of some South African church congregants may be difficult to assess due to cultural and social forces that are pre-eminent in defining the acceptance of religion and individualisation of spirituality. Hill *et al.* (2000) state that cultural and social forces are at work in defining the sacred; thus, the individualisation of spirituality (and some forms of religiousness) occurs in a culture that allows and encourages privatisation. Culturally, both spirituality (spiritual product) and tangible products (marketing) involve a search process for brands. In other words, the sacred is always sought for (shopping) but it does not necessarily impose itself on the individual who seeks it. Many religious traditions and contemporary approaches to spirituality emphasise the responsibility, even the struggle, of the individual to seek that which is sacred (Hill *et al.*, 2000).

Motivation and Objectives of the Study

The initiation of this study was inspired one weekday after hearing reports about the collapse of a guesthouse of SCOAN's on 12 September 2014 in Lagos, Nigeria killing at least 115 people, 84 of them being South African spiritual tourists (Oladeinde, 2014). This tragic event twinned with a number of reported incidents in the Southern African Development Community (SADC)

which is spotted with unconventional practices of spirituality linked to miracle, healing, deliverance, inner peace and salvation, provided motivation for the paper.

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- To understand if there are activities in the marketplace similar to those that occur at a place of worship;
- To understand the assertion that distance to travel is not a limitation in the spiritual realm (Adeboye, 2014);
- To study the experience of spiritual pilgrimage to different places of worship (shopping for salvation) and the search / product searched for;
- To understand why congregants (consumers) prefer Pentecostal churches with a focus on performing 'miracles' and 'predicting' future events.

Research Methodology

Area of Study

On the one hand, the purpose of this study is to analyse empirically the differences between a place of worship and a marketplace in South Africa; both carry a high value for marketing strategy among Christian spiritual seekers and consumers of convenience products. In this paper, an increasing number of spiritual places (churches) with varieties of spiritual product (scriptural or non-scriptural) can be observed in South Africa. This paper focuses on some local spiritual places such as End Times Disciples Ministry, Enlightened Christian Gathering Church in South Africa, and across the border, the Synagogue of All Nations, and Christ Embassy located in Nigeria. On the other hand, the aim presented in this paper is to find out what factors influence the decision making of congregants when they shop for spiritual places or destinations. A further aim is to provide insight into the churches' community work, miraculous activities, spiritual guidance, and contributions to society.

Sampling Technique

The data were collected through convenience sampling. Adebayo (2015) states that convenience sampling involves the selection of the most accessible subjects. It is the least costly to the researcher in terms of time, effort, and money. More specifically, a convenience sample is not a complete enumeration of all the possible units of the population, a census, or a careful, scientific sample. According to Megan (2013), a convenience sample is a non-probability or opportunity sample, i.e. a sample is drawn without any underlying probability-

based selection method.

Based on convenience sampling, a 80 participants were selected from Pentecostal churches, drawn without any underlying probability-based selection method. The Pentecostal churches were randomly selected to generalise different denominations for the findings. About thirty-six (36) Pentecostal Pastors were interviewed with the inclusion of local and foreign pastors. Most of them are 48 to 60 years of age, while fourteen (14) elders (age 60 to 72) were randomly selected and interviewed, making a total number of fifty (50) qualitative interviews. In addition, five (5) focus group discussions, consisting of six participants each (30 participants all together), were conducted with selected Pentecostal church members.

Collection of Data

Qualitative research focuses on a phenomenon that occurs in natural settings, and the data are analysed without the use of statistics. Jackson (2011) adds that when using qualitative methods, researchers are typically not interested in simplifying, objectifying, or quantifying what they observe. Instead, when conducting qualitative studies, researchers are more interested in interpreting and making sense of what they have observed. Primary and secondary data collection methods were used to collect the data. Primary data were collected through structured interviews; the interview schedule had 16 research questions with sub-questions along with unstructured questions which were based on the objectives of the study. Secondary data were collected through journals, published research papers, and websites.

A Brief Comparison of Factors for Shopping (Salvation, Healing, and Message) and Consumer Behaviour (Habit, Healing & Message)

This paper seeks to understand why congregants (consumers) prefer some Pentecostal churches with the ability to perform ‘miracles’ and ‘predict’ future events (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012). Consumer behaviour is all the activities that influence people to behave in particular ways when obtaining, consuming and disposing of products and services. Consumer behaviour means how individuals make decisions to spend their available resources like time, money and effort on the consumption of different products and services. It includes what they buy, why they buy it, when they buy it, where they

buy it, how often they buy it, and how often they use it (Jisana, 2014). Understanding the way people think, what motivates them, their decision-making processes, and post-purchase behaviour are key factors in ensuring successful marketing. Consumer behaviour issues including perception, decision making, information search, attitudes, beliefs, categorisation, consumer research methods, learning, motivation, memory, culture, subculture, and the diffusion of innovation (Kotler & Armstrong 2012:160). Applying the above points to congregants, one can see that they apply to the ‘search process’ of some Pentecostal congregants so they too are consumers with certain shopping habits within the spiritual market. The study notes that Pentecostal charismatic churches place their products or services and present spiritual values that consumers (congregants) are seeking.

Some of the products and services on offer are healing the sick, deliverance from evil oppression, blessings against poverty, preaching the message, word and prophecy, etc. There may be occasions when prophets are consulted by people seeking a divine message, wanting to know whether or not the prophets had a message for them from God to advance their lives or predict the future as seen in 1 Kings Chapter 17 verse 1. In a marketplace (religious or otherwise) strategy, tactics, and positioning play an important role. One can ask whether the churches play the spiritually constructive role and prophetic mandate that congregants want.

Kotler and Armstrong (2012) list four major factors of consumers that can be responsible for shopping behaviour:

Cultural factors (buyer’s culture, buyer’s sub-culture, buyer’s social class)

Social factors (reference groups, family, roles and status)

Personal factors (age and life-cycle stage, occupation, economic situation, lifestyle, personality, and self-concept)

Psychological factors (motivation, perception, learning, beliefs, and attitudes)

Interestingly, recent occurrences show that many of the above mentioned major factors that could be responsible for behaviours in the marketing environment are taking place in the new Pentecostal-charismatic churches.

The four major factors that could be responsible for Christians' shopping behaviour (causing some of them to even travel abroad to 'shop') are:

Typology of Prophecy - Predicting the future, the revelation of future occurrences, speaking into the life of an individual, manifestation of the spoken words, divine guidance, etc. According to Amanze (2013), it appears that in the history of the people of Israel, prophets had different functions. These included, among others, rebuking kings for their immoral behaviour (2 Sam. 12:1-12; 1 Kings 18:15-19; 1 Kings 21:17-24); helping people to discover lost property (1 Sam. 9:1-20); acting as military advisers to the king (1 Kings 22:1-28; 2 Kings 3:11-19); fomenting *coup d'états* by deposing one king and choosing and consecrating another (2 Kings 9:1-13); acting as miracle workers (2 Kings 6:1-7); healing the sick (2 Kings 5:1-14); predicting the future (1 Kings 17:1) and raising the dead (1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:8-37).

Working of Miracles - Raising the dead (Klett, 2019), giving birth in an unusual way, etc. bring about spiritual experiences and are factors that can influence shopping habits, causing congregants to visit spiritual destinations across the border. This could influence individuals or groups and bring about satisfaction or dissatisfaction that leads to a post-purchase decision in consumer behaviour. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2014), the consumer will be satisfied or dissatisfied after purchasing the product and will engage in post-purchase behaviour that a marketer will be interested in. Whether a buyer is satisfied or dissatisfied with a purchase depends on the relationship between the consumer's expectations and the product's perceived performance.

Healing / Deliverance - Healing is one of the major reasons why people shop for churches. Healing from illness of disease, misfortune, evil and immoral behaviour were noticed to be evident even in the early churches. However, healing with the use of objects, animals, etc. are mostly found in some independent and Pentecostal churches in South Africa. While some oppose the use of objects, some embrace them so this has significantly changed the shopping habits towards healing and deliverance in South Africa and has encouraged both domestic and international shopping as well.

The Message / Word - In South Africa, the nature of the message that the churches deliver to their people may be couched in divine messages and address personal / individual needs, particular groups, family and social contexts, and environmental predicaments. Perhaps, the congregants believe that the understanding of faith, salvation, or witnessing is not common in the message or the word 'saved' is yet to be fully understood by the congregants. A message targeting the needs of people is paramount in the Pentecostal churches. Thus, a life-changing message and / or a message tailored towards living a life pleasing to God as against 'worldly things' is to be pursued or searched for.

Findings and Discussion

A church venue is a place of worship and spiritual distribution (marketplace) of church products and is, therefore, a major component of their marketing strategy. Respondent 1, indicated that the focus on the word of God as a source of abundant spiritual power was sparse in some of their churches, therefore preventing them and other congregants from having an opportunity for spiritual nourishment and strength. Respondent 2 added that:

One must always seek the truth [and that] one's thirst for the truth will determine one's ability to achieve certain goals in the spiritual realm

Respondent 3 asserts that:

Seeking to know the heart of God for your life is important as well as finding solutions to so many problems of one's life. What God has created [for] you must be accomplished and not be wasted. So, searching for truth is an act of faith and we must work towards it wherever we can find it in the world. Searching for the truth of God is the act of a reflective heart that wants to embrace and please God [by] all means.

Respondents 4, 5, and 6 (elders of the church) traced this spiritual distribution back mainly to two of the factors mentioned above, namely, social factors and personal factors. Life satisfaction or lifestyle, as characteristics of social and personal factors, has the capacity to impact behaviour and form daily practice. Respondent 7 supports that:

There are always people's curiosity and devotion to spirituality. God calls one to a good life that is perfect and sound, a life that brings happiness and satisfaction to yourself and the

people around you. It is important that one keeps searching for the word of God and desired blessings until you are satisfied.

Thus religion, through a powerful system of symbols, can be argued to be so persistent and pervasive that it could influence behaviour and shape daily practice as well (Taru & Settler 2015). According to respondent 8, social issues ranging from sickness, fear, ignorance, poverty, loneliness, occultism, or mediocrity can cause dissatisfaction in lifestyle. This dissatisfaction could be what makes people search for ('shop' for) God's abundant goodness and blessing. This should be enjoyed, sought for (shopping) and utilised by those who discipline themselves, become decisive, bold, adventurous, believing, daring, risking, and determined (Ogunlusi, 2018).

This study found that the practical-oriented function of religion, as reflected in Africa's economy of faith, makes religion a kind of an economic good / service that can be expected to deal with existential needs and targets. This study noted that some spiritual seekers are particularly attracted to and have an appetite for both local and foreign spiritual products. The findings suggest that there are activities in places of worship that are similar to a marketplace. About 5 respondents, (9, 10, 11, 12, and 13) retorted in a similar way as follows:

In South Africa, we noted that there is rising mobility of those who are relatively poor, sick, and wealth seekers to where sermons inspire congregants to interpret faith as a source to enable an escape from poverty through the belief that material wealth is a reward for faith in God.

This, according to objective two, implies that distance to travel is not a limitation in the spiritual realm. Thus, the necessary distance to travel is not a limitation if there is a spiritual goal or benefit to acquire. Travel, in a holistic way, is a model that encompasses both traditional religious pilgrimage and modern secular journeys that create other journeys such as for trade, cultural exchanges, entertainment, and political movements (Collins-Kreiner, 2018). Marketing activities are built around rational choice, and as the above excerpt demonstrates, people choose where to go based on where they think they have the best chance to escape poverty, where the message in this regard is most convincing. So, in order to attract these congregants, messages are packaged as products in a competitive marketplace (Benyah, 2018).

Another finding is related to the fact that some of the spiritual product seekers are not loyal to any particular denomination, there is an emotional / psychological / spiritual need that drives people to travel for spiritual reasons, not just for curiosity and pleasure which is generally the case for secular travel (Collins-Kreiner, 2018). Due to these more psychological factors (motives, perceptions and beliefs of people), their desire for a spiritual experience (most especially, the working of miracles) drives spiritual seekers to places of worship that offer them the best product (satisfaction), even if it is an object (such as a handkerchief, water, etc.) not of any particular denomination. This is reflected in the following extracts:

Many people are not committed to any denomination or even Christian tradition and are open to a wide variety of churches. Many don't even begin by looking (shopping) at the churches of their 'home' denomination even if they have one (Respondent 14).

In order to remain in the marketplace and to balance our biblical faithfulness, we puzzle on what people in our culture are looking for (their needs) and how we could best welcome (by satisfying their needs) them to our church. We are always looking for a balance between engaging visitors (in a relationship) to make them feel welcome and giving them space so they don't feel pressured (Respondent 15).

We have our website and Facebook showing our mission and vision and our service days and time for an unchurched to choose a church. We are on Radio and on TV channels (DSTV) for messages to meet them where they are (Respondent 16).

As a result of the strategies mentioned above, a physical place is considered important as a site for spiritual worship. According to Greenbaum (2016), a non-sectarian, nondenominational ambience is required in places of worship that serve visitors, staff, and other users of public institutions. Liturgical furnishings and representative art can be supplied but must be moveable to accommodate all users, cultures, and religions. At the same time, the architectural qualities which imply a religious or spiritual intention, including light, colour, and higher than conventional vertical spaces, should be also provided and celebrated.

Regarding the above, the heightened nature of the place of worship is shown in the following responses by respondent 17 and 18 respectively:

The fact remains that you are committing to something outside of just yourself, to the cause of the Gospel, you should look to find a place you can be invested in. I think people should have an attitude of wanting to find a real home, not just a hotel room for the night, a place where they can say, 'this is my family, my home, where I protect and defend and where I invite people to also'.

Having responsibility as a potential church-goer is not just weighing a church that suits you, where you will be spiritually fed, but also a place where you can impact the church, a place where you can have a role, just like John F Kennedy said: 'Ask not what your church can do for you but what you can do for your church'. You don't just want to be a consumer.

One of the objectives of this paper was to understand why congregants (consumers) prefer Pentecostal churches with the potential for 'miracles' and 'predicting' future events. Respondent 19 indicated that typical features / practices of Pentecostal / Charismatic churches that are attractive include healing, prophecy, speaking in tongues (glossolalia), visions and divine revelations, as well as the emphasis on being 'born again' as a requirement for access to these features. These points are supported in the following excerpts by respondent 20, 21, and 22 respectively:

There is the claim on the need for one to be 'born again' and experience the blessings, change, empowerment, success, and prosperity associated with the 'born again' experience which could be largely articulated and more evident in healing and deliverance'.

I believe in the Holy Ghost and the power of revelation. I prefer teaching that emphasises biblical verses on health and wealth to make the point that God wants me to prosper; to release intended blessings, and that I must have unwavering faith and practice certain principles, such as donating one-tenth of my income (tithing) to my church.

We believe in prophesy, which we do at Pentecostal church. It is an unprompted word spoken in worship settings believed to be inspired by the Holy Spirit; at times, a prediction of a

future event as the term is commonly understood and one of the spiritual gifts recorded in 1 Corinthians 12.

According to respondents 23, 24, and 25, congregants are looking for an opportunity to experience the presence of God and the fullness of joy arising from that, as stated in Psalm 16:11 which says: 'In His presence, there is the fullness of joy'. This is reflected in the following responses by respondents 26 and 27:

Some worshippers do feel comfortable in the church when they see us (preachers) face-to-face rather than watching TV or listening to the radio. To them, the presence of God puts more joy and gladness into them than anything else can do; but as yet their joy is not full; but it will be when they shall enter into the joy of their Lord, into the presence of God in the other world then everlasting joy will be upon their heads. Also, that is seen in Acts 2:28 – 'You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.

In His presence, there is the fullness of joy' it means a lot to me. It is believed to be a Spirit-led expression of joy, in which the believer receives spiritual gifts, connection to God, and empowerment, often through dancing, singing, and clapping, while you are in His presence (church, or any place of worship).

Thus, it can be said that promotion or communication, as reflected in the documentary evidence, causes a change in the denomination as seen in the following extract from respondent 28:

When a church shopper (not an active member) hears of a special programme in a particular church referencing his / her own situation (i.e. healings, blessing or breakthrough, etc.) or showing where the cool band is, the cool preaching, and the relevant music, could change. Not minding what place is preaching the Gospel, what church is all about Jesus Christ and His crucifixion?

Following a response from respondent 29, this paper found contradistinction from the above as seen in the following extract:

Structuring a church on miracles makes the church a supermarket: people come and shop for their miracles (spiritual products) and leave. Structure a church on healing makes the church

a hospital: people come to be healed and leave. If you build the church on the prophetic, your church is a psychic and divination centre: people will come to be read and leave. However, if you build a church on the 'word' and make the church 'a word-based church', every other thing people seek will be added and happen naturally.

For the church, a place can be considered as a venue for a spiritual product, and spiritual distribution becomes a vital element as far as the church is concerned. There are claims and counterclaims that true worship takes place on the inside, in the heart or spirit of the worshipper (as seen in Psalm 45:1 and Psalm 103:1-2). In addition, the claim adds that worship pleasing to God must be unfeigned and transparent, offered with a humble and pure heart (Psalm 24:3-4 and Isaiah 66:2). The empirical evidence shows that the spiritual significance of places of worship is given by the intent of the congregant. This is supported by respondent 30, who said that

a believer who operates at a very high spiritual voltage level would flow and overwhelm in every place.

The book of 2 Corinthians 2:14 says 'Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the saviour of his knowledge by us in every place'.

It is natural for spiritual seekers to look for a church, a place of worship because this is the place where congregants (consumers) can deal most directly with the spiritual products and services they are seeking. Kotler and Lee (2008) state that place is where and when the target market will perform the desired behaviour, acquire any related tangible objects, and receive any associated services. Because spiritual product seekers are not loyal to any denomination, churches are having to innovate and find alternative channels of distribution to reach out to their existing and new members. Churches are acquiring technology to enable direct distribution in order to have a new spread of information through the population and to network goods (products).

From the results of this study, it is evident that a physical place is considered as being important. Distribution of service (church service) seems complex as far as the church is concerned because the product is intangible. Therefore, churches get more creative in attempting to attract new members with catchy websites and more relaxing programs. Sunday services are changing as fast

as culture changes, offering a blend of church forms - music (from the latest praise music to ancient forms), developing programming for kids, and many, many more options. The results reveal that all of this affects the decision making regarding a place of worship (church), thereby leading to spiritual tourism.

The distribution activities of both marketing (product distribution) and the church (spiritual distribution) were found to be very similar. For marketing, the importance of physical distribution is typically associated with the type of product and the degree to which it produces customer satisfaction. Distribution for the church is strategically staging services in various locations to support the call found in the bible (Mark 16:15 - 'And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature') to move the service (Gospel of Jesus), and to be successful in dynamic markets.

Conclusion

From the above-mentioned discussion, it seems doubtful that neo-Pentecostal churches in South Africa can today be termed as Pentecostal evangelistic charismatic churches, and that they are able to provide answers or solutions to people's problems in a particular place (church). The paper has examined the factors that have led to shopping and increasing growth in the distribution of spiritual products in South Africa. The paper found that there is such a thing as 'spiritual tourism'. The reason is that there is a shift in people's interest and attention to spirituality, leading to a growth of Pentecostal churches, and their healing / miracle producing ability.

The paper finds that there are two different types of religious shopping / tourism in South Africa. One is the faith, beliefs, motivation of domestic shoppers / tourists who have a spiritual attachment with the use of objects (such as a handkerchief, water, oil, etc.) (i.e. Enlightened Christian Gathering Church (ECGC) - Pastor Shepherd Bushiri; End Times Disciples Ministries - the Snake Pastor); others are South African religious shoppers / tourists who belong to different Christian churches, regions or countries and are exploring spiritual diversity in churches (i.e. South Africans visiting Synagogue Church of All Nations (SCOAN) in Nigeria). The paper found that apart from the growth and development of these neo-Pentecostal churches, other marketing characteristics associated with consumer behaviours are also used. Such characteristics include satisfaction,

dissatisfaction, and complaining behaviour and how they are developed into a valuable approach and opportunity for these Pentecostal churches' business decision-making processes. It also includes evaluation of alternatives from both satisfaction and dissatisfaction, with special groups of consumers / shoppers, and how dissatisfaction can lead to spiritual tourism (domestic and international).

Looking for particular experiences is another factor that influences spiritual shoppers to visit spiritual destinations / churches. The experience of these spiritual shoppers should determine post behaviour and satisfaction levels about spiritual destinations / churches. Satisfaction depends on various experiences (typology of prophecy, working of miracles, healing, the message, etc.) and facilities that are provided which are then publicised and communicated by word-of-mouth. In some cases, marketing promotion, advertisement, and referral methods play a significant role in influencing shopping for spirituality or salvation. This paper, therefore, concludes that South Africa Pentecostal churches have a rich culture to bring about salvation, but the packaging is not that remarkable. However, only the appropriate connection with the Holy Spirit and good publicity and authentic services are going to attract 'shoppers'.

Suggestions from the Findings and Conclusions

Salvation experience, which is the focus of this paper, is regarded as central to the message and purpose of South African Pentecostal churches. Arising from the above findings and conclusions, the following suggestions may be helpful for local and international Pentecostal spiritual places:

- Salvation experience is lacking in the advertising and marketing promotion of South African Pentecostal churches; the real spiritual places do not get enough publicity. To gain more local spiritual shoppers South African spiritual places must make more of an effort to publicise themselves.
- The quality of service in South African spiritual places is not up to standard. To enhance the experience of spiritual shoppers, to know and accept the brand, brand preference, brand loyalty, and in order for them to visit again, South African spiritual places need to increase their spiritual standard.
- The South African government needs to regulate extreme practices among some self-acclaimed pastors and Pentecostal churches. A firm effort is required from the side of the government to scrutinise some Pentecostal churches.
- The satisfaction of the customer is key to the success of every organisation. To achieve customer satisfaction the organisation needs to know what the customer wants. The first priority of shopping for spirituality should be salvation.
- The evidence is that healing and deliverance services at some South African spiritual places involve potentially dangerous practices (e.g. drinking petrol, eating snakes, and feeding the 'faithful' frogs, worms and tentacles) because of toxicity and hygiene. These should be given serious attention by the South African Government and religious bodies.

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