Religiosity and Store Choice Criteria: Exploring Christian Consumers' Apparel Shopping
Behavior in the United States

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__Background and Purpose__. Religiosity is "the degree to which a person adheres to his or her
religious values, beliefs, and practices, and uses them in daily live" (Worthington et al., 2003,
p.85). As a key element of culture, religion not only affects a society's value system and
provides conduct code to its believers, but also affects consumers' consumption and shopping
behavior (e.g. Bailey and Sood, 1993). It is a relatively new subject in marketing and consumer
behavior research. Limited studies have investigated the effect of religiosity on retail patronage
behavior; even fewer have focused on the US markets. However, the United States is a highly
religious country with 76% of US adults being Christians (US Census, 2012). Therefore,
religiosity might have been an important affecting factor in US markets.

Retail store choice criteria have been an important topic in retail patronage research.
However, few studies have investigated the role of religiosity on store choice criteria. McDaniel
and Burnett (1990) found religious consumers emphasized more on shopping effectiveness, sales
personnel friendless/assistance, and product quality when selecting a department store. Mokhlis
(2008) discovered that religious Malaysian consumers viewed merchandise criteria (quality,
brand, selection, and price) and store reputation as important, but not store attractiveness.
Khraim et al. (2011) found that religious Jordanians emphasized merchandise criteria (price,
variety and availability), service, visual display and location. Some inconsistence exists among
these findings. Consumers' store choice criteria differs by shopping context, product category,
and consumer characteristics. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the relationship of
American Christian consumers' religiosity and their apparel store choice criteria.

__Methodology__. An online survey was developed to measure consumers' religiosity, apparel store
choice criteria, and demographic characteristics. The study used Religious Commitment
Inventory (Worthington et al., 2003) for religiosity and adopted 27 items from previous studies
for salient apparel store attributes. Undergraduate students from a major state university in the
southwestern United States recruited potential participants using social media such as Facebook
over a two month period. A total of 668 respondents participated in the study, resulting in 333
usable responses of Christian respondents used for this study. Overall, the sample characteristics
reflected the college student population of the local university community.

__Results__. An exploratory factor analysis was conducted to identify underlying factors of
respondents' store choice criteria. The maximum likelihood analysis with a Promax rotation with
Kaiser Normalization (Costello and Osborne, 2005) revealed three factors with an eigenvalue of
one or greater for store choice criterion: (1) merchandise and convenience, (2) shopping
environment, and (3) fashion image. Those factors were then used as endogenous variables for
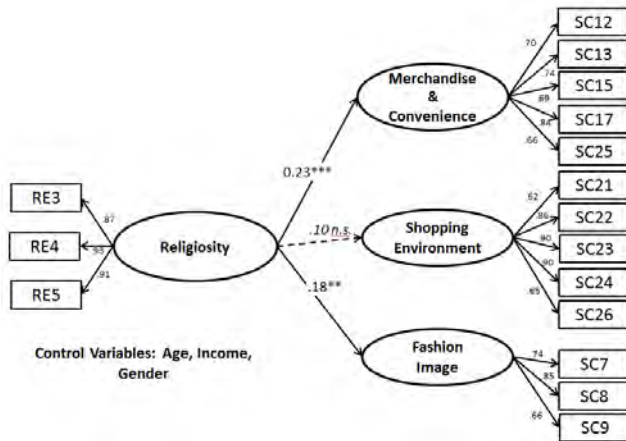further investigation.

Figure 1 Structural Model Results
Note: ***p < .001, **p <.01

Structural Equation Modeling--
Confirmative Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to test the convergent and discriminant validity of the measurement model. Controlling respondents' age, gender and income, the structural model results demonstrated a good model fit: $\chi 2$ (df= 134) = 353.28 (p<.001), CFI = 0.93, TLI = .91, SRMR = 0.056, RMSEA = 0.071. Standardized parameter estimates (β) are shown in Figure 1. The results suggest that religiosity has significant direct effects on merchandise and convenience (β=.23, t = 3.72, p <.001) and fashion image (β=.18, t = 2.72, p <.01), but not shopping environment (β=.10, t = 1.59, *n. s.*).

Conclusion and Implications. The findings of this research reveal that religiosity significantly affect American Christian consumers' store choice criteria when they shop for apparel. More religious Christians focused more on merchandise (e.g. price and size), shopping convenience, and fashion image of the store. However, religious US Christian consumers did not emphasize in-store shopping environment, which is similar as religious Malaysian consumers (Mokhlis, 2008). The findings confirmed the importance of investigating the effects of religiosity on consumer patronage behaviors in the US apparel market. Apparel retailers, especially those that serve markets with high concentration of Christians may want to focus more on merchandise features and shopping convenience.

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