

Research shows how Christians can fall prey to consumerism

August 23 2011

(PhysOrg.com) -- Research at Bath shows how advertising can lead some Christians to feel they are justified in ignoring core beliefs.

The study found that although many Christians believed it was wrong to be materialistic, they were still willing to acquire material wealth if they were convinced of a product's functional value.

The researchers surveyed more than 400 people living in the UK who were shown an advertisement for a watch that was either advertised as being an item of desire and public recognition, or as an item of functional value.

Half of the people surveyed identified themselves as being Christian and believing that materialism was wrong. The results showed that non-religious consumers did not prefer one advert over the other. However, the religious consumers were 25 per cent more likely to purchase the watch if they saw the advert that didn't portray it as a materialistic item.

Dr Avi Shankar from our School of Management and his colleague Dr Ekant Veer from the University of Canterbury, New Zealand, say the results of the study help to explain how many Christians acquire and store materialistic items for themselves and their family, despite many Biblical teachings that discourage hoarding wealth.

Dr Avi Shankar said: "It's a really interesting case of being torn between the consumer-driven world that encourages material wealth and one's

religious beliefs.

“We found that expensive luxury watches that were advertised as being showy or an item of envy were frowned upon by religious consumers. However, when the same item was advertised as being high quality and enduring, rather than having materialistic value, the religious consumers were significantly more willing to purchase the product.”

Dr Ekant Veer added: “Although we focused our research on [Christians](#), the results could explain the behaviour of many different religious and non-religious consumers. For example, it can help us understand how some mothers are able to justify spending more than they can realistically afford on baby equipment, such as prams, because they are convinced that it is a high quality item, rather than to show off. Or how purchasing a new car can be justified as necessary for practical reasons rather than just to keep up with the Joneses, which could be the real underlying reason.”

The researchers say that the results can be used by marketers, advertisers and sales forces to drive sales up.

“It’s important to know what type of person you’re dealing with,” said Dr Shankar. “If you are talking to someone who is clearly not averse to being materialistic, then it doesn’t really matter what you say. But, if you’re targeting a high-end, expensive, flashy product to people who are put off by materialism, then you need to change your approach.”

It is expected that the results of the research can benefit advertisers in terms of creating messages to better target such consumers, but could also enlighten consumers who did not realise how easily they could be swayed by a simple argument that goes against their religious beliefs.

Provided by University of Bath

Citation: Research shows how Christians can fall prey to consumerism (2011, August 23)
retrieved 25 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2011-08-christians-fall-prey-consumerism.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.