



## **The Role Of Church Promotional Activities In Influencing New Converts' Intention To Change Their Behaviour.**

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### ***Abstract***

*As long as the human society exists, social vices will remain inevitable. These social vices include cultism, thuggery, kidnapping, sexual abuse, fraudulent behaviours among many other vices. Given that the church has done her part in helping the society as a social change agent, there is scarcity of research on how effective the work of the church has been in developing nations especially in Nigeria. It is on this premise that the objective of this study is set to determine the role of church promotional activities in influencing a new convert's intention to change his/ her behaviour. The population of study was One hundred and twenty five newly converted Christians. This is a complete enumeration method (Census method) of three provinces that were involved in the believer's foundation classes as at the time the research was conducted. It was discovered that, the church's promotional activities play a significant role in*

*influencing new believers' intention to change behaviour. In order to successfully change the behaviour of people, churches must ensure that the social environments of these new converts are engaged in the process to ensure a long lasting change in behaviour of the newly converted Christians.*

*Keywords: church, promotions, behavior, change agent, and social marketing.*

## **1.1 Introduction**

Pepper, Jackson, and Uzzell, (2011) described religion to be a kind of social network that has the potential to shift the behaviour of people in a direction that is more sustainable with respect to environmental restrictions, to promote social justice and to foster well-being. This means that religious organizations for example, the church serves as a social entity which helps people shift behaviour and identity. This shift in behaviour is usually a shift to a positive identity.

The church has long been a major solution provider to socio-economic problems to the needy in Nigeria (Oladipo, 2000). Although the issue of marketing is sensitive when it comes to religious organizations, positive results can be achieved when it is applied (Angheluta, Strambu-Dima, & Zaharia, 2010). In an attempt to meet the needs of several market segments, the church must ensure that they remain faithful to their ideologies and theological teachings while at the same time embracing the changes that are necessary to remain healthy in a progressive environment (Wrenn, Shawchuck, Kotler, & Rath, 1995).

Church marketing is a subset of social marketing since both concepts have a common goal of achieving the societal concept, which is to help the society as a whole. Social marketing uses the ideologies and applications of basic marketing to achieve noncommercial goals (Grier, & Bryant, 2005). According to Serrat, (2017), social marketing draws from a large pool of knowledge such URL: <http://journals.covenantuniversity.edu.ng/index.php/cjbss>

as psychology, communication theory, sociology with practical roots in market research and advertising in order to influence a set of people to accept or reject a behaviour for the benefit of the society as a whole.

The church's promotional activities like evangelism and distribution of tracts or hand bills can be used to attract people to the church in order for them to have a turn-around in lifestyle. The church provides messages in the form of sermons that help new believers change their mentality and mindset on social issues. In a world riddled with different social vices, the church provides moral compass in which the people use to navigate their world. The church also plays an important role in the lives of the people that belong to the society while religion helps provide direction or moral compass for the people.

Ajzen (1991) stated that three belief constructs affect the behavior: the belief about consequences, expectations of important others and things that may support or prevent the behaviour. Numerous researchers have looked into the science of influencing behaviours for good for example (Kotler, & Lee, 2008; Cugelman, Thelwall, & Dawes, 2011; Hoek, & Jones, 2011). These behaviours include practising safe sex, stopping the use of alcohol while driving, stop texting while driving, improving diet, increasing exercises among many other behaviours (Gordon, McDermott, Stead, & Angus, 2006). Due to moral and economic corruption, coupled with the failure of the leaders, the Nigerian society is best described as a failed state (Adedibu, 2018). He further stressed that the void created by the Nigerian government due to the failure of statutory agencies in the federal and state arms to provide basic, economical and infrastructural amenities to its citizens has made churches to stand in the gap thereby filling the void in order to help surrounding communities.

Several factors affect the successful change in behaviour from being a non-believer to a born again Christian. These factors range from the environment of the target, the family members, the friends that surround him or her and what the target perceives to be in his or her control. The church is seen as a community that helps people navigate difficulties of the social world (Smith, 2004). The church provides easily accessible means in which the sermons preached can reach the new converts and thereby lead to a change in lifestyle in the long-term.

## **1.2 Statement of Research Problem**

As long as the human society exists, social vices would continue to come up in different forms (Ojo, Ugochukwu, Olumuyiwa, & Oliver, 2013). The authors argued that the rate at which social vices have escalated in Nigeria is beyond that which a writer can put to words. These social vices include cultism, thuggery, kidnap, sexual abuse, fraudulent behaviours among many other vices. Smith (2004) argued that although there is a rise in Pentecostal churches and born again Christians in Nigeria. Nigeria still remain one of the countries in the world ridden with lots of social problems for example poverty, corruption, crime and other immoral behaviours.

The church as the server of the community (Oladipo, 2000) and the provider of solutions to social problems (Angheluta, et al, 2010) has played the role of a religious institution trying to curb all these social vices.

Given that the church has done its part in helping the society as a social change agent, there is scarcity of research on how effective the work of the church has been in developing nations especially in Nigeria. This work looks at the church as a non-profit organization and a social change agent by analyzing the role the marketing activity of promotion plays in influencing the new convert's intention to change behaviour.

## **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to determine the role of church promotional activities in influencing a new convert's intention to change his behaviour.

## **1.4 Research Questions**

- i) What roles do the church promotional activities play in influencing a new convert's intention to change his behaviour?

## **1.5 Research Hypotheses**

- i)  $H_0$ : Church promotional activities do not play a significant role in influencing a new convert's intention to change behaviour.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 CONCEPTUAL REVIEW**

## **Church Marketing as a branch of Social Marketing**

Kotler and Zaltman, (1971 p. 5) conceptualized social marketing as “the design, implementation, and control of programs calculated to influence the acceptability of social ideas and involving considerations of product planning, pricing, communication, distribution and marketing research”. This definition leads to an early confusion as problems with what social marketing should focus on became the argument of the day (Andreasen, 1994). In order to clear the confusion surrounding the definition of social marketing. Andreasen (1994) proposed a definition that made behaviour change the bottom line of social marketing. He defined social marketing as the “adaptation of commercial marketing technologies to programs designed to influence the voluntary behaviour of target audiences to improve their personal welfare and that of society of which they are a part” (Andreasen, 1994 p. 3). The definition explains social marketing to be the application of commercial marketing technologies on social programs in order to change human behaviour.

Stevens, (2006, p. 77) defined church marketing as “the analysis, planning and management of voluntary exchange between a church or religious organization and its constituents for the purpose of satisfying the needs of both parties”. According to this definition, church marketing deals with the satisfaction of the needs of identified target audience through the design of products and services that are delivered at the right time and place (Mulyanegara, Tsarenko, & Mavondo, 2010). Horne, and McAuley (1999) describes church marketing to be the creation, understanding, communication and the delivering of values which are related to the consumers.

Angheluta, Strambu-Dima, and Zaharia, (2010) stated that in order to improve loyalty, increase loyalty, and increase church attendance, certain marketing techniques should be applied. They also mentioned that adopting certain behaviours or preventing some could be the subject of religious marketing campaigns. Abreu, (2006) explains that religious products deals with social behaviour while religious organizations’ duty is to satisfy the needs of the people and improve the well being of the society.

Stewart (1989) claims that for churches to be able to survive the continuously changing environment, the basics of marketing must be applied to the church’s activities. Angheluta, et al., (2010) concludes that for church marketing to have a strong structure, there must be cooperation between religious leaders and marketing specialist.

## **Social Promotions in church marketing**

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This is the part of the social marketing mix activities that most resembles that of commercial marketing (Peattie & Peattie, 2003). Promotion involves evangelism, sharing of handbills, word of mouth, among other efforts the church involves in to get people to come to the church. According to Au (2000), promotion is the most used marketing mix element and it is considered to have positive image with the public and religious institutions.

### **Theory of Planned Behaviour**

The theory briefly states that attitude towards an act, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control are indirectly linked to behavior through intention (Forward, 2009). The theory of planned behavior predicts the intention of an individual to engage in a behavior (Aladejebi, 2018).

**Behavioural Beliefs:** These are beliefs about the consequences of a behavior (Ajzen, 2006). In this case living a better life through a change in beliefs about a religion. A belief in praying, reading the bible and going to the church, which will result in a change of lifestyle through a change in the moral compass.

**Attitude towards the Behaviour:** This refers to the evaluations of the proposed behavior which could be good or bad (Forward, 2009). This is the perception of the target of going to the church, reading the bible and praying regularly.

**Subjective Norms:** This is the perceived pressure from others to engage in the behavior (Ajzen, 2006). This pressure can come from the colleagues, friends and family.

**Intention:** This can be turned into action depending on the level of motivation (Forward, 2009). The intent to read the bible can result in reading the bible depending on other factors.

**Perceived Behavioural Control:** This is the perceived level of difficulty seen by the target who wants to engage the behavior (Ajzen, 2006). It involves the level of difficulty it takes to pray and read the bible every day.

## **2.2 THEORETICAL REVIEW**

The theoretical underpinning of this study is founded on the Marketing Mix Theory and The Theory of planned behaviour.

### **Marketing mix theory**

According to Kotler, et al., (1991), the marketing mix theory is the most dominant thought in modern marketing because it gives the marketer a structure in which marketing tools can be controlled in order to compete in the market place. The marketing mix theory is credited to Jerome McCarthy (1960) who reduced the twelve components provided by Borden (1953) to four elements which are; Products, Price, Place and Promotion (Constantinides, 2006; Goi, 2009). Marketing mix refers to the variables that the marketing manager can use to influence the market share (McCarthy, 1996). According to Chong (2003), the marketing mix originated from a single P, which stood for price in the microeconomic theory. The marketing mix has been very significant in the advance of both marketing philosophies and practice Möller, (2006).

### **THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOUR**

According to Ajzen, (2006), three considerations guide the human behaviour. These are the behavioural beliefs which is the belief one holds about the likely consequence of a behaviour; the normative behaviour which are the beliefs about the normative expectations of others and finally the control beliefs which explains the presence of factors that might aid the enactment of a behaviour or obstruct it.

The theory of planned behaviour is one of the most widely researched intention model (Aladejebi, 2018). A person's attitude towards behaviour, subjective norm, and perception of behavioural control leads to formation of behavioural intention (Ajzen, 2006). The theory is a model that predicts a person's intention to engage in a behaviour. The behavioural intention depicts the individual's motivation to perform a certain behaviour. Attitude towards a behaviour is the degree of feelings (positive or negative) a person has towards the behaviour of interest. The subjective norm deals with the individual's view of the environment surrounding the behaviour. Perceived behaviour control deals with the confidence the individual has about performing the behaviour.

### **2.3 EMPIRICAL REVIEW**

Dumanig, David, and Dealwis, (2011), researched on conversion narratives and the construction of identity among Christians in Malaysia. In their work, they explain that newly converted Christians share their experiences in a pattern of before, how, and after receiving Christ as their lord and personal saviour. Qualitative method was adopted in this study. The authors analyzed 15 conversion narratives delivered in 15 Sunday services and other church gatherings in a selected church. Their findings reveal that two distinctive identities are created. That is, an identity before  
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and an identity after; and that after the conversion, a more positive and acceptable identity is usually projected. Although this study provides an outlook into the change in identity among newly converted Christians, it does not provide an outlook into marketing activities of the church. The study solely focused on testimonies given by the newly converted Christians without looking at various factors surrounding their decision to change for the better.

Pepper, Jackson, and Uzzell, (2011) examined Christianity and socially conscious and frugal consumer behaviours. In carrying out this examination, the researchers distributed questionnaire to different households in socioeconomically diverse areas and different churches. Quantitative research method was adopted in this research. The study tried to look at the shopping pattern of consumers and their religion in the United Kingdom. The authors found out that Christianity has a positive but weak influence on sustainable consumer behaviours. The focus of this research is on the economical behavior of Christians. The study failed to look at the change in behavior of the respondents.

### **3.0 RESEARCH METHOD**

The research method for this study focuses on the use quantitative approach. Specifically, the use of questionnaire will be adopted to facilitate the benefits of quantitative approach in research.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

Descriptive research was adopted in this study to test specific hypotheses and to examine the relationships between these hypotheses. Single cross-sectional design was used since only one sample of respondents is drawn from the target population and the information obtained from the sample was collected once.

#### **3.2. Population of the Study**

The population of study was One hundred and twenty five newly converted Christians using complete enumeration method (Census method) from three provinces that were involved in the believer's foundation classes as at the time the research was conducted.

#### **3.3 Sources of Data Collection**

The study made use of primary data. Copies of Questionnaire were distributed to newly converted Christians from Living Faith Church Worldwide that are undergoing believers' foundation class at the three provinces selected (province 1, province 2, province 3). The data

gathered were analyzed through the use of descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

### 3.4 Research Instruments

The research instruments are apparatus employed to gather data for study and given answer to research questions Ojo, (2003). The research instrument used for this research work is structured survey, which was administered to respondents. The questionnaire was divided into Section A (Bio-data) which consists of information pertaining to the Gender, Age, Marital Status, Highest Educational Qualification, New birth period, period spent in church and the tribe they belong to. Section B and C consist of statements related to the study and used a modified four-point Likert scale (4-Strongly Agree, 3-Agree, 2-Disagree, 1-Strongly Disagree) to determine the level to which respondents are in line with each statement in the questionnaire.

## 4.0 DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULT

This section deals with the analysis, presentation, interpretation of the results of findings of data obtained from the field using primary data.

### Descriptive statistics of Promotion

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
PRM1	2.8737	.93675	-.139	-1.173
PRM2	2.84211	.93758	-.389	-.722

Table 7 shows the descriptive statistics of how the respondents view the promotion of the church. From table 7, it can be seen that the most emphasized view of the church's promotion mix was evangelism activities of the church (PRM2, mean = 3.1263) while the distribution of hand bills (PRM3, mean = 2.84211) was the least emphasized view of the promotional activity surveyed by the respondents.

### Descriptive statistics of Behavioural Intention and Change

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
I1	3.5684	.49792	-.281	-1.963
I2	3.4421	.49927	.237	-1.986
I3	3.2737	.64317	-1.057	3.019

. From this table, it can be seen that the respondents intend to increase the number of times they attend church services in a week (I1, mean = 3.5684).

### **Regression Analysis of the behavioural change of newly converted Christians: juxtaposition of social marketing theory and theory of planned behaviour.**

Hypothesis Tested	Unstandardized Coefficient	Standardized Coefficient	T	R2	F	Sig	Remark
PRM→IT	.178	.242	2.406	.059	5.791	0.018	Reject H0

PRM: Promotion      IT: Intention

Table 10 revealed the relationship between the church's promotion mix and the new converts' intention to change behaviour with R-Square being 0.059 which indicates the percentage of variance in the dependent variable explained by the independent variable. The value of 0.059 indicates that there is a variance of 5.9% between promotion mix and intention to change behaviour. From the results, the model in this table is statistically significant at 0.018 which leads to the decision to reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, church promotional activities do play a significant role in influencing a new believer's intention to change behaviour with a F-statistics value of 5.791.

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

This research was carried out to analyze the behavioural change among newly converted Christians. Through the use of questionnaire, primary data was obtained from born again Christians that are undergoing bible foundation class from Living Faith Worldwide Church. The purpose of data analysis is to interpret the data collected from the respondents and to know if the hypotheses stated in the work should be accepted or rejected.

### **Objective One**

To determine the role of church promotional activities in influencing a new convert's intention to change his behaviour.

From the analysis, it was deduced that the church promotional activities play a significant role in influencing new believers' intention to change behaviour. The promotional activities involve the use of handbills, evangelism, personal referrals, television programs and several operational activities to entice people and encourage them to come to the church (Joseph & Webb, 2000). This hypothesis accepted is supported by the work of Shamout, (2016) which stated that promotional tools play an important role in stimulating the actions of people towards carrying out the behaviour the promotional activity is geared towards.

### **Contributions to knowledge**

This work has contributed to both scholarly theory and work place practice in the field of social marketing by providing a model in which the social organization's activities and the desired behaviour for change can be predicted.

This work also contributes to the literature on church marketing in terms of providing a direction for religious organizations on what activity they should focus on. As seen in this study, the promotional activities played a significant role in influencing the intention to change for the better for the newly converted Christians. This means more effort (both financially and labour wise) should be applied to promotional activities of these religious organizations.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The research outcome shows that promotional activities of churches play a significant role in the intentions of new converts to change behaviour from the sinful life to a lifestyle of a born again Christian. In order to successfully change the behaviour of people, churches must ensure that the social environments of these new converts are engaged in the process to ensure a long lasting change in behaviour of the newly converted Christians.

The authors recommend that this study can also be replicated with the use of other religious sects for example Islam, Buddhism and the rest in order to help know the extent in which these institutions affect the society as change agents.

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## Appendix 1

### Keys to Research Variables

PRM1	A friend persuaded me to come to the church
PRM2	I was aware of the church through the handbills that were distributed.