

UNDERSTANDING CONSUMER TRANSCENDENCE AMONG MILLENNIALS: A NEW CONSTRUCT AND SCALE

Stefan Linnhoff, Murray State University

Lawrence Murphy Smith, Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi

Katherine Taken Smith, Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to develop a better understanding of Millennials as consumers, specifically, their religiosity, which past research shows affects consumer attitudes toward companies, their products and services. Understanding consumer religiosity facilitates relationship marketing, thereby enabling development of customer loyalty and long-term customer commitment. Public opinion and some research suggest that Millennials are a generation that is individualistic, more nonreligious than earlier generations. In an effort to go beyond the common dichotomous characterizations of “to be or not to be religious or spiritual,” a new construct is developed, called “consumer transcendence,” which captures more sublime, indirect spiritual views. This exploratory scale of consumer transcendence was developed, using a sample of Millennials, the resulting Consumer Transcendence Scale (CTS) offers a unique research avenue and methodological lens for evaluating complexities of spiritual views. Understanding spiritual or transcendence perspectives is beneficial to effectively market to Millennials and other generational groups.

Keywords: Consumer marketing, Religiosity, Transcendence, Millennials, Scale Development

INTRODUCTION

Following the reports of news outlets over the past decade (Gabbatt, 2023; Burge, 2019; Grossman, 2015; Lipka, 2015) and research publications (Pew Research Center, 2022, 2015) there seems to be a tendency to label the Millennial generation, or at least a sizeable portion of it, as individualistic (Steffy, 2023; Twenge et al., 2015; Raphelson, 2014), unreligious, and even unspiritual (Pew Research Center, 2022, 2015; Cooper-White, 2015; Leonhardt, 2015; Markoe, 2012). For Millennials, some studies suggest that religion has not even been surrogated by spirituality but rather both have been diminished and somewhat replaced by social and environmental concerns (Downing Chee, 2015; Benderev, 2014). Yet, other studies suggest that Millennials still exhibit significant religiosity (Sharpe, Grossman, Smith, & Smith, 2015).

An important question is as follows: Are Millennials really unspiritual? Or are there more sublime, indirect spiritual views ranking below evident references to the divine? These views are linked to a classic concept, called “transcendence,” that has been vividly discussed since ancient times in the realm of philosophy and theology. The purpose of this exploratory study is the

development of a novel consumer transcendence construct as well as the initial validation of a scale to lend credibility to its operationalization ability.

A consumer “transcendence” construct can lead to better understanding of consumer religiosity, thereby facilitating development of customer loyalty and long-term customer commitment, which is part of relationship marketing (Mishra, 2016; Sahi et al., 2018). Transcendence might be utilized as means to delineate attitudes toward products, such as “green” products like organic food. Lacking a transcendence scale in the business literature and the highly convoluted history of transcendence characterized by intricate theological and philosophical debates since ancient times, a novel transcendence scale would provide a useful tool for research. In view of the promising use of a helpful research tool, as well as the ongoing debate regarding characteristics of the Millennial generation, the authors expect that this study will add to the research stream regarding the Millennial generation and relationship marketing.

Having defined the domain, the construct development methodology prescribes the creation of a valid and reliable instrument (Lewis, Templeton & Byrd, 2005). The common provisions for scale development ask for a set of studies composed of at least one exploratory pilot and one follow-up conclusive research study (Gerbing & Anderson, 1988; Churchill Jr, 1979), both of which ideally rely on two separate samples of 500 to 1000 respondents (MacCallum et al., 1999, 2001). This research represents an initial study employing a smaller but nevertheless commonly acceptable sample size ($n=107$).

This study was driven by the recent call by the literature and journal editors to consider conceptual or empirical research for submission dealing with new constructs, specifically a construct “that is important but has not been considered in our field despite its clear potential for generating new insights” (Deighton et al., 2010, p. vi). Indeed, the contemporary literature encourages a stronger emphasis upon novel conceptual and interdisciplinary approaches as they are considered an indispensable cornerstone for knowledge generation and the renewal of the business disciplines, namely the management field (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013) and marketing field (Yadav, 2015).

In alignment with MacInnis’ framework for conceptual contributions to marketing (MacInnis, 2011), this research has the goal of “envisioning” a novel perspective – here upon the analysis of Millennials - by introducing an new construct to the business literature (MacInnis, 2011, p. 136, 143). The term transcendence has been utilized in the business literature before but, as will be shown below, with a different accent and within a different context.

Some of the ongoing debates about the Millennial generation seem to be somewhat one-sided. The Pew Research Center characterizes Millennials as very likely to identify as “nones”, i.e. “atheists or agnostics, or that their religion is “nothing in particular” (Lipka, 2015). Instead of the dichotomous dispute whether Millennials are religious, spiritual or rather “nones,” this study proposes an alternative approach: both religiously or spiritually inclined as well as disinclined Millennials (and also members of other generations) could be influenced by transcendent views. To the authors’ knowledge “consumer transcendence” has not been considered yet in the business literature.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: THE TRANSCENDENCE CONSTRUCT

Transcendence is derived from the Latin word *transcendere* meaning “to surpass, step over, to cross over to. Thus *transcendence* means the surpassing, the “going beyond.” The term transcendence has been utilized in the business literature before but with an emphasis distinct

from the notion of consumer transcendence employed in this research. The two prominent areas in which the term transcendence occurs in the business literature are in the context of Maslow's hierarchy of needs and in discussions dealing with self-transcendence as a personality trait (Maslow, 1943).

Consumer transcendence

There have been multiple studies regarding the relationship between religiosity and marketing. One study found that a person's religiosity has a moderating effect on consumer skepticism and satisfaction. Religiosity lowers skepticism and enhances satisfaction, improving patronage intention (Deb et al., 2021). Modern businesses, "in efforts to embrace diversity, accommodate cultural factors such as religiosity, particularly so in multinational operations where diverse religions will be encountered" (Russell et al., 2023, p. 394). Higher levels of religiosity, specifically Judeo-Christian ethicality, were found to be significantly related to a more sustainable business culture, specifically, higher economic activity, more economic freedom, better social progress, lower corruption, and improved gender equality (Russell et al., 2023).

Moral virtues inherent in religiosity, such as Judeo-Christian ethicality, provide society with a foundation of trust in which business activity can flourish (cf., Basu and Miroshnik (2021); Joines (2019); Mele and Fontrodona (2017)). In a study of consumers, those with higher religiosity were more trusting of things they cannot see, which included AI applications such as chatbots. This trusting nature leads to a greater trust in brands (Minton et al., 2022). Research regarding transcendence also encompasses the tourism industry. People visit tourist destinations in natural surroundings as a means for experiencing transcendence (Wang et al., 2023). Research has shown that spiritual beliefs impact a consumer's behavior and needs (Arli & Tjiptono 2022).

Maslow's eminent model is based on the rationale of "pre-potency" (Maslow, 1943, p. 22, 23) which means that it is indispensable for lower need levels to be satisfied before humans consider striving for the satisfaction of higher level needs. Needs at the bottom of the pyramid are physiological in nature, namely food and water. Once these needs are satisfied, humans seek safety (physical, economic, and mental comfort), belonging (social, family), esteem (respect for other people and entities) and self-actualization (desire to reach one's full potential) (Maslow, 1967). In his original work and for most of his lifetime Maslow positioned self-actualization at the peak of the hierarchy of needs. Interestingly, the 1946 edition of Maslow's book displays the pyramid model encompassing the aforementioned five types of needs, whereas the cover of the 2013 edition only shows a mountain peak labeled self-actualization, offering eloquent visual testimony for the ultimate role Maslow ascribed to it.

A year before his death, Maslow proposed self-transcendence to be added as a factor ranked above self-actualization (Maslow, 1969). The original five "need" categories are characterized by a strong ego-centered undercurrent: I need food, I need shelter, I need the "feeling of being liked or loved" (Maslow 2013, p. 30), I need to be what I can be (Maslow, 2013). In contrast, Maslow described self-transcendence as "the striving for identity, meaning, and purpose *beyond the self*" (Myers, 2011, p. 301; emphasis added by authors). In the book in which he proposed self-transcendence, Maslow focused upon justifying transcendence as not being contrary to scientific thought but accentuating the altruistic gist of self-transcendence.

Maslow neither sought to provide an operational construct for transcendence nor did he offer particular suggestions for measurement (Primeaux & Vega, 2002). Self-transcendence

rather appears as a later afterthought to his foundational model. This is also why self-transcendence with its altruistic tendency does not quite seamlessly fit into the overall model. Perhaps it is due to this “odd ball” status of self-transcendence, many undergraduate business books leave it out when they cover Maslow’s pyramid (Cf., Kerin and Hartley, 2016).

This study extends Maslow’s work regarding transcendence. First, this research aims to develop a sufficiently contoured and thus operational construct. Secondly, transcendence is expressly devised as a consumer attitude. Consequently, transcendence relates to general holistic, altruistic notions but also stands for an attitude integrating respectful, empathetic perceptions towards nature as well as the environment and to views about products (and potentially also organizations). Thirdly, unlike Maslow’s approach, the transcendence construct was developed against the backdrop of classic philosophy.

The expression self-transcendence is also applied as a personality trait (Haase et al., 1992). In psychological terms self-transcendence is a component of the transpersonal. As such it is used in conjunction with “non-ordinary states of consciousness” (Corsini, 1999, p. 1018). Although a uniform definition does not exist, the various approaches to (self-) transcendence show common characteristics: on the one hand, the term reflects the interaction between patients and their caregivers, the patient perspective as well as altruistic endeavors on behalf of the caregiver. Self-transcendence is used from a psychiatric point of view. In this manner it refers in general to patient spirituality and well-being (Gaskamp, & Meraviglia, 2006) and specifically to potentially pathological states that e.g. may be linked to cases of losing touch to reality such as extrasensory perception (spiritual acceptance), feeling connected to the universe (transpersonal identification) and losing oneself in an experience (self-forgetfulness) (Huguelet & Koenig, 2009). In this study, transcendence is not conceptualized as a personality trait but as a type of consumer view, ranking below direct references to the spiritual or religious.

The transcendentals

In view of the multitude of complex contexts, the term “transcendent” has been utilized in philosophy, theology and other areas, the construct was identified in light of the traditional triad of beauty, goodness and truth. These transcendentals have been sufficiently contoured by ancient Greek, medieval scholastic and classic modern philosophy, namely Aristotle, Plato, Socrates, Thomas Aquinas, and Immanuel Kant. Modernist, often eclectic and hard to profile perspectives on transcendence, such as far-eastern spirituality and New Age did not become part of the construct building. However, the works of prominent modern scholars like Peter Kreeft and highly esteemed writers such as C.S Lewis and G.K. Chesterton, which are known for their appreciation for traditional and classic modern philosophy, were reviewed and catalyzed both construct development and operationalization (Cf., Kreeft, 2009, 2016, Lewis, 2002, 2004, Chesterton, 1986, 2006).

Based on the cited literature it can be stated: all human beings naturally long for beauty, goodness and truth. These transcendentals are inextricably intertwined phenomena that are perceivable by every human being. According to Kreeft (2016) and others, the search for beauty, goodness and truth represents the imprint of the divine creator in everything that exists, including the discerning human. Although not a direct manifestation of the divine, notions such as the appreciation of selflessness, the longing for justice (goodness), the appeal of rational arguments (truth) and the feelings beauty elicits are all reflections of the divine being the absolute goodness, beauty and truth (Brand, 2015).

Transcendence is differentiated from religion by characterizing it as lacking a direct reference to the divine. Once the divine is added, one enters the religious realm. In this sense transcendence is a necessary but insufficient condition for religious thought, i.e. a spirituality expressly implicating the existence of God. Furthermore, transcendence does not revolve around the individual but expresses relations to others and nature (Feder, 2010).

The transcendence construct was shaped utilizing the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale (DSES) as a contrasting benchmark. Contrary, to what has been claimed about the DSES, this scale does not per se measure the “relationship with the transcendent” (Underwood, 2011, p. 45). The CTS measures are distinct from religious notions albeit related to spirituality, but tendentiously more in a figurative sense, whereas the DSES more straight-forwardly refers to religious experiences expressing relationships between individuals and God.

METHODOLOGY

After the literature review, a summary of relevant articles and themes was devised. Topics were prudently left out that appeared too unspecific to be of little help for item generation. The remaining information then served to compile a series of item drafts that were continuously reviewed in light of the transcendence construct. For instance, the book title “Natural Swimming Pools: Inspirations for Harmony with Nature” (Littlewood, 2005) led to inclusion of the item “Certified organic food production is in harmony with nature”.

Articles and themes were omitted that appeared too unspecific or of little help for item generation. However, the original plan to ignore direct relations between nature and spirituality for the data collection instrument was modified: since quite a few authors have pointed to the interplay between (neo-) pantheism and secularization in Western countries against the backdrop of the emergence the green movement (Dobel, 2005; Shipton, Coetzee & Takeuchi, 2013) and in context with green consumption including organic food production (Radkau, 2014; Tokar, 2008), it was decided to add some survey items as control measures reflecting concepts of pantheism.

This process led to a tentative list of 80 items. As a rule of thumb, the literature commonly recommends the generation of an initial item pool that should consists of about three times the number of items to be eventually utilized in the final scale (MacCallum et al., 2001). This process resulted in 23 items. Hence, this prerequisite was met. Subsequently, an in-depth interview with a professional in theology holding a graduate degree in Catholic theology was conducted to refine the set of measures. To facilitate a multi-perspective analysis, the items were later reviewed and checked for face validity by a panel of business faculty from different disciplines. In addition, a group of business undergraduate students attending a junior-level marketing research class were tasked to check the items for redundancy and comprehensibility.

All items were devised as 5-point Likert scales (anchored at 1 = “strongly disagree” and 5 = “strongly agree”). A pretest in a marketing class ensued and resulted in the elimination of four items regarded as unduly pantheistic (“I worship nature”, “Nature is God,” and “Certified organic food production respects the divinity of nature”) or strong religious connotations (“I appreciate certified organic food because I am a spiritual person”). The 23-item scale was then subjected to scale purification utilizing the data generated by this study.

Sample Selection

To obtain data for the study, a self-administered online survey was devised and disseminated among college students in 2014. Qualtrics served as the survey platform. Students taking classes at a Midwestern US university were identified as a suitable population. The birth year span for Millennials is typically 1981 to 1996 (Smith, 2011). The sample consisted of 107 respondents born between these years and members of the same demographic cohort known as Generation Y or Millennials. The expectation is that members of this group share common characteristics per generational theory established by prior research (Howe & Strauss, 2009). The ratio between the sexes was somewhat skewed toward female respondents: males: 34.6%; females: 65.4%. Data were analyzed employing SPSS 19.0.

Common Method Bias

A customary procedure is to probe survey data for potential common method bias (Field, 2013). Common method bias represents variance that cannot be attributed to the operationalized constructs but to the method of measurement (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The transcendence items were included in an unrotated factor analysis in SPSS with a forced extraction to only one single factor. If the unrotated factor analysis indicates that less than 50% of the variance stem from one item (component), then there is no significant level of common method bias. The results for this research were 28.99% and thus contraindicative for common method bias.

Skewness and Kurtosis

All items and aggregate values were scrutinized for skewness and kurtosis. In terms of kurtosis, 20 values were found to be approximately normal or excellent, three acceptable and one suboptimal. The results are overall acceptable considering firstly, skewness values are all within approximately normal or excellent (twenty-two) and acceptable (two values) range, and secondly, kurtosis is susceptible to sample size (Field, 2013).

One Sample T-Test

One sample t-tests were performed on the 23 transcendence items and 11 DSES items to analyze if responses to the survey items were different from “3”, representing the neutral point on the 5-point Likert scale. The results provided in Table 1 indicate generally significant values. However, insignificance existed for transcendence item #16 (“Buying certified organic food shows respect for nature”) and item #18 (“Certified organic food production is in harmony with nature”). Although items #16 and #18 rendered suboptimal results, their values nevertheless exceeded 3.0. In view of the exploratory nature of the study it seemed justifiable to retain these items.

Table 1: One Sample T-Test Results

		Test Value = 3		
Transcendence items		M	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
1	Nature gives meaning to life	3.67	7.256	.000*
2	Nature is holy	3.47	4.819	.000*
3	Nature is spiritual	3.30	2.902	.005*
4	I experience a connection to all of life.	3.35	3.643	.000*
5	I am spiritually touched by the beauty of nat.	3.41	3.999	.000*
6	We should treat nature with respect	4.29	16.905	.000*
7	Nature goes beyond what we can see	3.97	12.292	.000*
8	Nature is more than we can comprehend	3.74	7.837	.000*
9	There are invisible aspects of nature we depend on	3.83	9.725	.000*
10	There are invisible elements of nature our visible world rests on	3.83	9.725	.000*
11	The state of the environment makes me sometimes feel sad	3.71	7.886	.000*
12	The state of the environment makes me sometimes feel guilty	3.81	9.114	.000*
13	I feel a selfless caring for others.	3.71	7.278	.000*
14	Buying COF ² is an expression of one's concern for nature	3.56	5.685	.000*
15	Buying COF shows respect for nature	3.12	1.165	.247 ¹
16	COF production fits nature's good & beauty	3.24	2.541	.012**
17	COF production is in harmony with nature	3.12	1.184	.239 ¹
18	COF production helps to preserve nature's balance	3.29	3.149	.002*
19	COF production helps to protect "mother earth"	3.33	3.423	.001*
20	Buying COF means to preserve the beauty of nature	3.21	2.223	.028**
21	Nature is more than meets the eye	4.03	14.512	.000*
22	It is reasonable to say we cannot really control nature	3.84	8.857	.000*
23	It is irrational to think we can really control nature	3.74	7.760	.000*
DSES				
1	I am religious.	3.56	4.549	.000*
2	I worship frequently (usually once a week or more).	3.34	2.687	.008*
3	The most important thing in my life is faith in God.	3.39	3.174	.002*
4	I find strength in my religion or spirituality.	3.81	7.706	.000*
5	I feel God's love for me directly.	3.66	5.851	.000*
6	I feel God's love for me through others.	3.66	6.107	.000*
7	I feel deep inner peace or harmony.	3.51	6.249	.000*
8	I desire to be closer to God or in union with the divine	3.71	6.095	.000*
9	I find comfort in my religion or spirituality	3.79	7.164	.000*
10	I see God's power reflected in nature	3.93	8.645	.000*
11	I see nature as a visible sign pointing to the divine	3.52	5.500	.000*

Notes:Significance levels: * $p \leq 0.01$ ** $p \leq 0.05$ ¹ Although items #15 and 17 rendered suboptimal results, their values nevertheless exceeded 3.0. In view of the exploratory nature of the study these items were retained.² COF = certified organic food

Internal consistency of the transcendence scale

Table 2 shows the inter-item correlations for all 23 items. None of the inter-item correlations exceed 0.85 being contraindicative for multicollinearity (Kline, 2011). Out of 276 unique correlations (i.e. without the 1.0 diagonal values) only 27 rendered insignificant results. A high alpha of 0.925 implied a high average inter-item correlation and thus strong reliability. A look at the item-total statistics showed that deletion of any of the 23 items would not lead to any significant increase in reliability. The corrected item-total correlations (benchmarks: ≥ 0.4 (Ware & Gandek, 1998) or ≥ 0.3 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994)) rendered suboptimal results for items# 23 and 24. But since their deletion would not benefit the alpha value, their results seemed acceptable.

Table 2: Transcendence scale - Item total statistics

		Item-Total Statistics			Assessment
		Item-Total Correlation ¹	Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.925$		
				Cronbach's α if Item Deleted ²	Difference
1	Nature gives meaning to life	0.7	0.921	-0.004	Small decrease, i.e. items warrant the current level of reliability
2	Nature is holy	0.5	0.923	-0.002	
3	Nature is spiritual	0.7	0.920	-0.005	
4	I experience a connection to all of life.	0.5	0.924	-0.001	
5	I am spiritually touched by the beauty of nature	0.6	0.922	-0.003	
6	We should treat nature with respect	0.5	0.923	-0.002	
7	Nature goes beyond what we can see	0.5	0.923	-0.002	
8	Nature is more than we can comprehend	0.6	0.922	-0.003	
9	There are invisible aspects of nature we depend on	0.5	0.923	-0.002	
10	There are invisible elements of nature our visible world rests on	0.6	0.921	-0.004	
11	The state of the environment makes me sometimes feel sad	0.6	0.922	-0.003	
12	The state of the environment makes me sometimes feel guilty	0.5	0.923	-0.002	
13	I feel a selfless caring for others.	0.5	0.924	-0.001	
14	Buying COF ³ is an expression of one's concern for nature	0.7	0.921	-0.004	
15	Buying COF shows respect for nature	0.7	0.920	-0.005	
16	COF production fits nature's good & beauty	0.7	0.920	-0.005	
17	COF production is in harmony with nat.	0.5	0.923	-0.002	
18	COF production helps to preserve nature's balance	0.6	0.922	-0.003	
19	COF production helps to protect "mother earth"	0.7	0.921	-0.004	
20	Buying COF means to preserve the beauty of nature	0.7	0.921	-0.004	
21	Nature is more than meets the eye	0.6	0.923	-0.002	
22	It is reasonable to say we cannot really control nature	0.3	0.926	0.001	Negligible increase does not give cause to delete the items
23	It is irrational to think we can really control nature	0.3	0.926	0.001	

Notes:

¹ Benchmarks: ≥ 0.4 (Ware & Gandek, 1998) or ≥ 0.3 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994); higher values are desirable. Suboptimal results for item # 23 and 24. But since their deletion would not benefit the alpha value, their results seem acceptable.
² Deletion does not lead to any significant increase in reliability. ³ COF = certified organic food

Consumer Transcendence Scale (CTS)

The Consumer Transcendence Scale (CTS) had been established as a scale of 23 items, as shown in Table 3. The scale is composed of five closely intertwined facets that have been labeled “beauty, awe & inter-connected-ness with nature” (5 items), “Invisible facets of nature” (6

items), “Empathy- altruism & nature” (3 items), “Product preference & nature” (7 items). Although the analysis spoke against higher order factors, the 5 dimensions can at least descriptively be subsumed under the classic triad of the transcendentals beauty (aesthetical, emotional; factor 1 and 2), goodness (good deeds, compassion; factor 3 and 4) and truth (reason, intellect; factor 5).

Table 3: Consumer Transcendence Scale (CTS)

Item #	Transcendentals	Scale Dimensions	Scale Items ¹
1	Beauty (aesthetical, emotional)	Beauty, awe & inter-connectedness with nature (5 items)	Nature gives meaning to life.
2			Nature is holy.
3			Nature. is spiritual.
4			I experience a connection to all of life.
5			I am spiritually touched by the beauty of nature.
6		Invisible facets of nature (6 items)	We should treat nature with respect.
7			Nature goes beyond what we can see.
8			Nature is more than we can comprehend.
9			There are invisible aspects of nature we depend on.
10			Nature is more than meets the eye.
11			There are invisible elements of nature our visible world rests on.
12	Goodness (good deeds, compassion)	Empathy-altruism & nature (3 items)	The state of the environment makes me sometimes feel sad.
13			The state of the environment makes me sometimes feel guilty.
14			I feel a selfless caring for others.
15		Product preference & nature (7 items)	Buying _ [product x] _ is an expression of one’s concern for nature.
16			Buying _ [product x] _ shows respect for nature.
17			_ [Product x/ Production of product x] _ fits nature's good & beauty.
18			_ [Product x/ Production of product x] _ is in harmony with nature.
19	_ [Product x/ Production of product x] _ helps to preserve nature's balance.		
20	_ [Product/ Production of product x] _ helps to protect "mother earth".		
21	Buying _ [product] _ means to preserve the beauty of nature.		
22	Truth (reason, intellect)	Nature is arcane & unknowable (3 items)	It is reasonable to say we cannot really control nature.
23			It is irrational to think we can really control nature.

5-point Likert items, anchored at “strongly disagree” and “strongly agree”; middle point: “neither agree nor disagree”.

Notes:

It is hypothesized one could also employ the following expressions for:

Item # 15 and 16: _[Product x from organization xyz]_

Item # 17-20: _[Product x from organization xyz]_

¹ The scale is preliminary and will be subject of a future conclusive study with a larger sample.

The outcomes of the analyses neither distilled more distinctive first order factors nor indicated the existence of higher order factors, but this is not problematic for the CTS scale. On the contrary, it fully matches the philosophical and religious tradition of goodness, beauty and truth as indistinguishable elements of one unified entity that finds its expression in everything that “is”, in religious terms: God.

Based on the one sample t-test results mentioned before (shown earlier in Table 1), all but two of the 23 items showed means that were significantly higher than “3”, i.e. the “neutral” scale point. The only two measures that did not render significant results nevertheless exceeded the neutral mark (“Buying certified organic food shows respect for nature”, $M=3.12$, $p=0.247$; “Certified organic food production is in harmony with nature”; $M=3.12$, $p=0.239$). Especially noteworthy are the positive results for the CTS variables “I feel a selfless caring for others” ($M=3.71$, $p\leq 0.01$) and “I experience a connection to all of life” ($M=3.35$, $p\leq 0.01$). The composite scores for CTS ($M=3.56$, $p\leq 0.01$) and DSES revised ($M=3.64$, $p\leq 0.05$) were significantly higher than the neutral point.

CONCLUSIONS

While some prior research shows that Millennials are a generation that is individualistic, unreligious or unspiritual. Going beyond the common dichotomous characterizations of “to be or not to be religious and/or spiritual,” this study advanced a new related but different construct, called “consumer transcendence,” to capture more sublime, indirect spiritual views. Using a sample of Millennials, an exploratory scale was developed, the Consumer Transcendence Scale (CTS). The CTS was tested via exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Findings indicate that transcendence can be demarcated from measures of evident spirituality and religiosity.

Results of this study indicate that the sample of Millennials lean both toward transcendence as well as religious spirituality. Transcendence is conceptualized as tending to be group-centered and altruistic. The findings indicate that Millennials as a whole do not fit the common characterization as being individualistic and egocentric. In fact, Millennials tend to be concerned about others in society, as well as concerned about social issues. In fact Millennials on average are transcendent/spiritual and are not so individualistic and egocentric as some past studies suggest.

The Consumer Transcendence Scale offers a promising research avenue and methodological lens for evaluating complexities of the indirect spiritual views of the millennial generation. Such views affect how goods and services, and the companies that provide them, are regarded by Millennials. Understanding Millennials’ views is essential to carry out effectively relationship marketing to this very large market segment.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The techniques presented in this study have inherent limitations because they are exploratory in nature. For the analysis in this study, the sample was sufficient, but a future study might incorporate a larger a sample size, which would facilitate confirmatory factor analysis (Norušis, 2012; Comrey & Lee, 1992). Future research could examine in detail the differences between transcendent and ethical consumer attitudes. Transcendence is regarded as more precise than general ethical notions. Future research can use the scale developed in this study to measure the transcendence levels of different people groups, such as students, general public, or other

group, which might be analyzed demographically, such as by gender, age, or other demographic. Future research could help clarify exactly how transcendence differs from general ethical notions.

REFERENCES

- Alvesson, M., & Sandberg, J. (2013). Has management studies lost its way? Ideas for more imaginative and innovative research. *Journal of Management Studies*, 50(1), 128-152. doi:10.1111/j.1467-6486.2012.01070.x
- Arlı, D., & Tjiptono, F. (2022). Selfishness and consumer ethics: Does (non)religiosity matter? *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 27(4), e1751. <https://doi.org/10.1002/nvsm.1751>
- Bartkowiak, Anna. (1991). How to reveal the dimensionality of the data. *Applied Stochastic Models and Data Analysis*, 55, 64.
- Bassham, G., & Bronson, E. (2003). *The lord of the rings and philosophy: One book to rule them all* (Vol. 5). Open Court Publishing.
- Basu, D., & Miroshnik, V. (2021). *Ethics, morality and business: The development of modern economic systems, volume II: Modern civilizations*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer Nature.
- Benderev, C. (2014). Millennials: We Help The Earth But Don't Call Us Environmentalists, October 11, 2014, Retrieved 3 October 2023 from <http://www.npr.org/2014/10/11/355163205/millennials-well-help-the-planet-but-dont-call-us-environmentalists>.
- Brand, C. (2015). Spiritualität ohne Gott, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung (NZZ)*.
- Burge, R. (2019). Growth and Decline in American Religion over the Last Decade. *Religion in Public*. Retrieved 4 October 2023 from <https://religioninpublic.blog/2019/07/09/growth-and-decline-in-american-religion-over-the-last-decade/>.
- Cangelosi, Richard., & Goriely, Alain. (2007). Component retention in principal component analysis with application to cDNA microarray data. *Biology direct*, 2(2), 1-21.
- Cattell, Raymond B. (1966). The Scree Test for the number of factors. *Multivariate Behavioral Research*, 1(2), 245-276.
- Chesterton, G. K. (1986). *The collected works of GK Chesterton* (Vol. 20). Ignatius Press.
- Chesterton, G. K. (2006). *The autobiography of GK Chesterton*. Ignatius press.
- Churchill Jr, G. A. (1979). A paradigm for developing better measures of marketing constructs. *Journal of marketing research*, 64-73.
- Comrey, A. L., & Lee, H. B. (1992). *A first Course in Factor Analysis*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Cooper-White, Macrina (2015). Millennials Are The Least Religious Generation Yet, And Here's The Surprising Reason Why, *The Huffington Post*, Retrieved 1 October 2023 from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/05/27/millennials-less-religious_n_7452998.html.
- Corsini, R. J. (1999). *The dictionary of psychology*. New York, NY: Psychology Press.
- Courtney, M. G. R., & Gordon, M. (2013). Determining the number of factors to retain in EFA: using the SPSS R-Menu v2. 0 to make more judicious estimations. *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, 18(8), 1-14.
- Deb, M., Sharma, V.K., & Amawate, V. (2021). CRM, skepticism and patronage intention-the mediating and moderating role of satisfaction and religiosity. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 29(4), 316-336.
- De Gaál, Emery (2010). *The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI: The Christocentric Shift*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Deighton John, Debbie MacInnis, Ann McGill & Baba Shiv (2010). Broadening the Scope of Consumer Research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 36(6), v-vii.
- Dinno, A. (2009). Exploring the sensitivity of Horn's parallel analysis to the distributional form of random data. *Multivariate behavioral research*, 44(3), 362-388.
- Dinno, A. (2009b). Implementing Horn's parallel analysis for principal component analysis and factor analysis. *Stata Journal*, 9(2), 291.
- Dobel, J. Patrick, Stewards of the Earth's resources, in: Huchingson, J. E. (Ed.). (2005). *Religion and the Natural Sciences: The Range of Engagement*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers pp. 350-357
- Dombrowski, S. C., Watkins, M. W., & Brogan, M. J. (2009). An exploratory investigation of the factor structure of the Reynolds Intellectual Assessment Scales (RIAS). *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*, pp. 494-507

- Downing Chee, Beth (2015). The Least Religious Generation: Researchers led by SDSU's Jean M. Twenge find millennials are by far the least religious generation. Retrieved 2 October 2023 from http://newscenter.sdsu.edu/sdsu_newscenter/news_story.aspx?sid=75623.
- Farrell, Andrew M., & Rudd, John M. (2009). Factor analysis and discriminant validity: A brief review of some practical issues. Australian & New Zealand Marketing Academy (ANZMAC), Melbourne. Nov 30-Dec 2, proceedings, p. 148.
- Feder, Kenneth L. (2010). *Encyclopedia of Dubious Archaeology: From Atlantis to the Walam Olum: From Atlantis to the Walam Olum*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO.
- Field, Andy (2013). *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics*. Sage.
- Frontier, S. (1976). Étude de la décroissance des valeurs propres dans une analyse en composantes principales: Comparaison avec le moddle du bâton brisé. *Journal of Experimental Marine Biology and Ecology*, 25(1), 67-75.
- Gabbatt, A. (2023). Losing their religion: why US churches are on the decline. *The Guardian*. Retrieved 4 October 2023 from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/jan/22/us-churches-closing-religion-covid-christianity#:~:text=Protestant%20pastors%20reported%20that%20typical,compared%20with%2075%25%20before%20the>.
- Gaskamp, Carol D. and Martha G. Meraviglia (2006). "Spirituality", in: *Encyclopedia of Nursing Research*, Joyce J. Fitzpatrick, Meredith Kazer (eds.) (pp. 482-484), New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company.
- Gerbing, D. W., & Anderson, J. C. (1988). An Updated Paradigm for Scale Development Incorporating Unidimensionality and Its Assessment. *Journal Of Marketing Research (JMR)*, 25(2), 186-192.
- Goldberg Lewis (2015), Doing it all Bass-Ackwards: The development of hierarchical factor structures from the top down. *Journal of Research In Personality* [serial online]. August 2006;40(4):347-358. Available from: PsycINFO, Ipswich, MA. Accessed July 13, 2015.
- Grossman, Cathy Lynn (2015). Losing their religion: More women join the unspiritual set, *The Washington Post*, February 29, Retrieved 3 October 2023 from http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/religion/losing-their-religion-more-women-join-the-unspiritual-set/2015/02/20/c41a7e14-b935-11e4-bc30-a4e75503948a_story.html.
- Haase, J. E., Britt, T., Coward, D. D., Leidy, N. K., & Penn, P. E. (1992). Simultaneous Concept Analysis of Spiritual Perspective, Hope, Acceptance and Self-transcendence. *Image: The Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 24(2), 141-147.
- Horn, J. L. (1965). A rationale and test for the number of factors in factor analysis. *Psychometrika*, 30, 179-185.
- Howe, N. & Strauss, W. (2009). *Millennials rising: The next great generation*. New York: Vintage.
- Huguelet, P., & Koenig, H. G. (2009). Religion and spirituality in psychiatry. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK.
- Jackson, Donald A. (1993). Stopping rules in principal components analysis: a comparison of heuristical and statistical approaches. *Ecology*, 2204-2214.
- Joines, V. S. (2019). Transactional analysis, the Judeo-Christian tradition, and religious values. *Transactional Analysis Journal*, 49: 158–66.
- Jolliffe, Ian (2002). *Principal component analysis*. 2nd ed. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Kerin, R., and S. Hartley (2016). *Marketing*. Mexico: McGraw Hill.
- Kline, R.B. (2011). *Principles and Practice of Structural Equation Modeling*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Kreeft, P. (2009). *Back to virtue: Traditional moral wisdom for modern moral confusion*. Ignatius Press.
- Kreeft, Peter (2016). *I Burned for Your Peace: Augustine's Confessions Unpacked*. San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press.
- Ledesma, R. D., & Valero-Mora, P. (2007). Determining the number of factors to retain in EFA: An easy-to-use computer program for carrying out parallel analysis. *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, 12(2), 1-11.
- Legendre, P., & Legendre, L. F. (2012). *Numerical ecology* (Vol. 24). Oxford, UK: Elsevier.
- Leonhardt, David (2015). The Rise of Young Americans Who Don't Believe in God, *The New York Times*, Retrieved 3 October 2024 from: <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/13/upshot/the-rise-of-young-americans-who-dont-believe-in-god.html>
- Lewis, B., Templeton, G., & Byrd, T. (2005). A methodology for construct development in MIS research. *European Journal of Information Systems*, 388-400.
- Lewis, C. S. (2002). *The complete CS Lewis signature classics*. Zondervan.
- Lewis, C. S. (2004). *The Collected Letters of CS Lewis, Volume 3: Narnia, Cambridge, and Joy, 1950-1963* (Vol. 3). Zondervan.

- Lipka, Michael (2015). Millennials increasingly are driving growth of 'nones', FactTank-News in the Numbers, Pew Research Center, May 12, Retrieved 4 October 2023 from <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/12/millennials-increasingly-are-driving-growth-of-nones/>.
- Littlewood, M. (2005). *Natural Swimming Pools: Inspirations for Harmony with Nature*, Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing.
- Liu, J., Wu, S., & Zidek, J. V. (1997). On segmented multivariate regression. *Statistica Sinica*, 7(2), 497-525.
- MacArthur, R. H. (1957). On the relative abundance of bird species. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 43(3), 293.
- MacCallum, R. C., Widaman, K. F., Zhang, S., & Hong, S. (1999). Sample size in factor analysis. *Psychological methods*, 4(1), 84.
- MacCallum, R. C., Widaman, K. F., Preacher, K. J., & Hong, S. (2001). Sample size in factor analysis: The role of model error. *Multivariate Behavioral Research*, 36(4), 611-637.
- MacInnis, Deborah. J. (2011). A Framework for Conceptual Contributions in Marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 75(4), 136-154.
- Markoe, Lauren (2012). Young 'Millennials' losing faith in record numbers, *The Washington Post*, Retrieved 2 October 2023 from https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/on-faith/young-millennials-losing-faith-in-record-numbers/2012/04/19/gIQA9QoxTT_story.html.
- Maslow, A. H. (1943). "A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*. 50 (4): 370–396.
- Maslow, A. H. (1967). A Theory of Metamotivation : The Biological Rooting of the Value-Life. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*. 7 (2): 93–26.
- Maslow, A.H. (2013). *Toward a psychology of being*. Start Publishing LLC.
- Maslow, A.H. (1969). *The Psychology of Science: A Reconnaissance*. South Bend, Indiana: Gateway Editions.
- Melé, Domènec, & Fontrodona, Joan. (2017). Christian ethics and spirituality in leading business organizations: Editorial introduction. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 145: 671–79.
- Merriam Webster Online (2015). Respect, in: Merriam Webster Online, Retrieved 1 October 2023 from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/respect>.
- Minton, E. A., Kaplan, B., & Cabano, F. G. (2022). The influence of religiosity on consumers' evaluations of brands using artificial intelligence. *Psychology & Marketing*, 39(11), 2055-2071.
- Mishra, A. A. (2016). The role of customer gratitude in relationship marketing: moderation and model validation. *Journal of Strategic Marketing* 24(6), 529-549.
- Myers, David G. (2011). *Psychology*, 10th ed., London, UK: Worth Publishers.
- Norušis, M. J. (2012). *IBM SPSS statistics 19 statistical procedures companion*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Nunnally, Jum C., and I. H. Bernstein, I.H. (1994). The assessment of reliability. *Psychometric Theory* 3(1), 248-292.
- O'Connor, Brian. P. (2000). SPSS and SAS programs for determining the number of components using parallel analysis and Velicer's MAP test. *Behavior Research Methods, Instruments, & Computers*, 32, 396-402.
- O'Connor, Brian. P. (2015). SPSS, SAS, MATLAB, and R Programs for Determining the Number of Components and Factors Using Parallel Analysis and Velicer's MAP Test, University of British Columbia – Okanagan, retrieved 2 October 2023 from: <https://people.ok.ubc.ca/briocconn/factors/nfactors.html>.
- Pew Research Center (2022). Modeling the Future of Religion in America. Retrieved 4 October 2023 from <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2022/09/13/modeling-the-future-of-religion-in-america/>.
- Pew Research Center (2015). America's Changing Religious Landscape, 3 October 2023, Retrieved 4 October 2023 from <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/#factors-behind-the-changes-in-americans-religious-identification>.
- Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Podsakoff, N. P., & Lee, J. Y. (2003). The mismeasure of man (agement) and its implications for leadership research. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 14(6), 615-656.
- Polit, D. F., & Beck, C. T. (2008). *Nursing research: Generating and assessing evidence for nursing practice*. Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.
- Primeaux, Patrick and Gina Vega (2002). Operationalizing Maslow: Religion and Flow as Business Partners, *Journal of Business Ethics*, 38(1/2), 97-108.
- Proyer, R. T. (2012). A psycho-linguistic study on adult playfulness: Its hierarchical structure and theoretical considerations. *Journal of Adult Development*, 19(3), 141-149.
- Radkau, Joachim. (2014). *The age of ecology*. Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons.

- Raphelson, Samantha (2014). Getting Some 'Me' Time: Why Millennials Are So Individualistic, Retrieved 2 October 2023 from <http://www.npr.org/2014/10/14/352979540/getting-some-me-time-why-millennials-are-so-individualistic>.
- Russell, H.M., Ariail, D., Smith, K.T., & Smith, L.M. (2023). Religiosity and Risk: Association of Judeo-Christian Ethicality with a Sustainable Business Environment. *Journal of Risk and Financial Management*, 16(9), 394.
- Sahi, G. K., Gupta, M. C., & Lonial, S. C. (2018). Relating strategic market orientation and market performance: Role of customer value types. *Journal of strategic marketing*, 26(4), 318-338.
- Schmid, J., & Leiman, J. N. (1957). The development of hierarchical factor solutions. *Psychometrika*, 22, 53-61.
- Sarstedt, Marko & Mooi, Erik (2015). A Concise Guide to Market Research. 2nd ed., Chapter 8 – Factor Analysis, Supplemental Materials, retrieved 2 October 2023 from: http://www.guide-market-research.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=23&Itemid=37.
- Sarstedt, Marko & Mooi, Erik (2014). *A Concise Guide to Market Research*. 2nd ed. New York, NY: Springer.
- Sharpe, M., Grossman, A., Smith, K.T., & Smith, L.M. (2015). Investigating How Religiosity, Ethics, and Other Factors Relate to Future Accounting and Business Professionals' Views on Work-Life Balance. *Journal of Accounting, Ethics & Public Policy*, 16(4): 653-689.
- Shipton, W., Coetzee, E., & Takeuchi, R. (2013). *Worldviews and Christian Education: Appreciating the Cultural Outlook of Asia-Pacific People*. Singapore: Partridge Publishing
- Smith, K.T. (2011). Digital Marketing Strategies that Millennials Find Appealing, Motivating, or Just Annoying. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 19(6, October), 489-499.
- Steffy, K. (2023). Habits of the Millennial Heart: Individualism and Commitment in the Lives of Young, Underemployed Americans. *Sociological Focus*, 56(2), 226-245.
- Tokar, Brian (2008). "Green Politics," in: Encyclopedia of religion and nature (Vol. 2), Taylor, B. (2008). New York, NY: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Twenge, Jean M., Exline, Julie J., Grubbs, Joshua B., Sastry, Ramya, & Campbell, W. Keith (2015). Generational and time period differences in American adolescents' religious orientation, 1966–2014. *PLOS One*, May 11, Retrieved 2 October 2023 from <http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0121454>.
- Underwood, Lynn G. (2011). The daily spiritual experience scale: overview and results. *Religions* 2(1), 29-50.
- Velicer, W.F. (1976). Determining the Number of Components from the Matrix of Partial Correlations. *Psychometrika*, 41(3), 321-327.
- Wang, S., Blasco, D., Hamzah, A., & Verschuuren, B. (2023). Tourists and 'philosophers': Nature as a medium to consciousness and transcendence in spiritual tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 99, 103543.
- Ware, John E., Gandek Barbara (1998). Methods for testing data quality, scaling assumptions and reliability: The IQOLA Project Approach. *Journal of Clin Epidemiol* 1998, 51(11), 945-952.
- Wolff, Hans-Georg & Katja Preising (2005). Exploring item and higher order factor structure with the Schmid-Leiman solution: Syntax codes for SPSS and SAS. *Behavior Research Methods*, 37(1), 48-58.
- Wood, J.M., Tataryn, D.J. & Gorsuch, R.L. (1996). The effects of under- and overextraction on principal axis factor analysis with varimax rotation. *Psychological Methods*, 1, 354-365.
- Yadav, Manjit S. (2015), The Decline of Conceptual Articles and Implications for Knowledge Development. *Journal of Marketing* [serial online]. January 2010; 74(1):1-19.