

Scott K. Powell  
Doctor of Business Administration in Marketing  
Falls School of Business  
Anderson University

## ABSTRACT

### TRUE COLORS OR CHAMELEONS? MATERIALISM, WELL-BEING, RELIGIOUS ORIENTATION AND THE PURCHASE OF CHRISTIAN PRODUCTS

The purpose of the study was to build upon the consumer behavior literature pertaining to *materialism* and *well-being* by investigating how they, along with *religious orientation*, relate to consumers' purchase decisions. More specifically, the study examined whether or not materialism, well-being and religious orientation were significant predictors concerning the purchase likelihood of "Christian products" (music, apparel, jewelry, and other items that feature explicitly Christian messages or symbols).

Are such purchases the result of a non-materialistic expression of faith or a more materialistic pursuit of association or identity-fixing? To help answer that question, 1044 students enrolled at nine Christian colleges and universities were surveyed regarding their purchase likelihood for Christian products. Multiple regression and cluster analyses suggested that materialism, well-being and religious orientation *were* significant predictors of purchase likelihood and that *both* purchase motivations were common. Four distinct clusters of consumers were identified — two groups reported *high* purchase likelihood (but disparate buying motivations), and two groups reported *low* purchase likelihood (again, for ostensibly different reasons).

The study sheds new light on an important *topic* (materialism) and provides insight into the purchase motivations of a large but understudied *market segment*

(Christians) and *product category* (Christian products). While this is a relatively narrow topic, findings are important and should be of interest to consumer behavior researchers and marketers in general. There is reason to believe that the *consumer types* (e.g., “True Colors” versus “Social Buyers”) and *motivations* (desire to “live out” intrinsic values versus extrinsic desire to “fit in”) identified in the study also exist in other markets — particularly those involving products which evoke intense commitment (e.g., environmentally friendly/“green,” cause-related or sports-themed products).