

## RELIGIOSITY– A MARKETING PERSPECTIVE

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### **Abstract:**

*Religiosity represents one of the most valorized personal realities of humans. The purpose of this research is to find the peoples' perspective on their own Religiosity. The main objective was to identify the most important benefits and the biggest cost or sacrifice that believers perceive in performing in a religious way. A descriptive, cross-sectional study was conducted, based on a quantitative questionnaire, with face-to-face directly collected answers, applied on high-school students. The results were analyzed using Microsoft Excel application. The conclusions reveal that religiosity is seen as a practice with benefits rather at a personal level, than a social or transcendental level.*

**Key words:** Religiosity, benefits of Religiosity, costs of Religiosity, inter-confessional, believers' perspective

**JEL classification:** M31, Z12

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

During the history of humankind, the idea of a superior force was always present in people's lives. It was regarded either as a collection of gods with various powers or as a single god in the center of their beliefs-religions. In the course of religion development, people entitled themselves with distinct roles which main aim was to connect the common people with the Gods or God, thus enabling the appearance of psychological, sociological, theological, and lately marketing elements in the relation of man with his (so called) 'Creator'.

The importance of Religiosity in people's lives is highlighted by the fact that well-known psychologists (such as James Fowler, Pascal Boyler, Allport, Ross, Batson, Schoenrade, Genia) and sociologists (like Emil Durkheim, Karl Marx, Max Weber) analyzed the dimensions of this phenomenon [1]. Psychology studies the internal echo of the phenomenon while Sociology investigates mutual implications and interconnections between Religiosity and society. Thus, a series of tests and questionnaires were elaborated with the purpose of quantifying the elements involved in religious experiences, dogmas and beliefs [2]. The nowadays importance of religious phenomenon is also supported by the involvement of modern sciences like neurology-neuroimaging, which try to offer a more in-deep picture with a biochemical, imaging and physiological approach to this matter. Neuroimaging reveals the organic substrate of the religious experience and all the functional changes that accompany it [3]. On the other hand, theology is focused on the sacramental-administrative aspects and deals with missionary and pastoral activities that, at a certain degree, imply elements of modern marketing. On the other hand, deeply understood and actively adapted to the current global context, Religiosity can be one of the most available and affordable resources, which allow us to cope with the everyday challenges. That is the reason for including in the Research and Innovation Framework Program of the European Union, Horizon 2020, the CULTCOOP- 05-2017 Religious diversity in Europe - past, present and future [4].

Marketing, unlike all of the above-mentioned disciplines that study Religiosity, has an original approach from a distinct perspective. Marketing is the discipline entitled to study the phenomenon itself, as a product or service, meant to satisfy real needs, involving all 7 defining elements: product, price, placement, promotion, people, physical evidence and process.

There are three directions of analysis in this general field: direct marketing of religions, faith-based marketing and marketing based on religious techniques. Nowadays, marketing is mostly present and consistent in the online environment. Apart from the traditional Vatican Radio that is broadcasting since 1931, a series of modern electronic applications are available in religions' field: web pages, applications for iOS, Android or Windows, online blogs, Facebook, Twitter or Pinterest pages, online Bibles [5]. Likewise, on-line presence is a reality in Romania, many cults having and managing their own Facebook groups, blogs, etc.

The most consistent faith-based marketing is the religious tourism, which according to statistical data has more than 300 million consumers worldwide per year and has a turnover of more than \$18 billion, according to official data [6]. Either as an obligation (visiting the city of Mecca for Muslims) or an optional activity (Jerusalem or Rome for Christians) as spiritual practice, at secondary level, the religious tourism involves authentic forms of marketing. Religious literature, religious art (iconography, music, etc.), objects of worship, fundraising activities, charity actions, etc., all integrating and highlighting the economic aspect of this activity.

The idea of studying Religiosity from the marketing perspective is not a reductive approach. The marketing analysis of religiosity does not entail a demythisation or desacralisation of the phenomenon, but does a research with specific means. It tries to draw pertinent conclusions in order to allow a better understanding of the phenomenon. Eventually, it would help Churches/Cults to adapt their strategies. Nowadays, in the area of religiosity the market is a highly competitive one. On one side, the traditional Churches see their position threatened both by newly emerging cults and by secular trends of society. On the other side, new cults seek to increase their membership communities, often taking advantage of the stiffness of traditional churches and the new social context.

Considering the global social context, the main objective of this study was to identify the perception of the religious people on Religiosity itself, in terms of benefit and sacrifice/cost. To the authors' knowledge, up to date this is the first study that addressed this perspective on the topic, thus adding value to the present research.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

In a first phase of the research, over 40 people were asked the following two open questions: *What is the greatest present or potential benefit of being religious*, and *What is the greatest sacrifice you do for being religious*. Their responses have been systematized and used to create the final questionnaire, with 21 items. This final form used closed questions and suggested answers. A number of 12 possible answers were provided for the benefit question and 13 for the sacrifice one. This questionnaire was applied in all 5 high-schools from Turda, Cluj county. A total number of 383 students answered, from the 9th grade to the 12th grade, with ages between 14 and 25 years.

The questionnaire included multiple demographic variables: confession, relationship with the Church, thoughts regarding a potential change of their religion or confession, single child or not, the death or the divorce of the parents, how often do they practice prayer, what do they value most: faith or rationality, how often do they attend the religious services of the Church, age, gender, monthly income level.

The answers were collected directly, during a face-to-face interview. A descriptive statistics was applied on the results, using Microsoft Office Excel application.

Due to the fact that the identity of the respondents remained anonymous, the approval of Ethics Committee of Babes-Bolyai University was not considered as mandatory.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

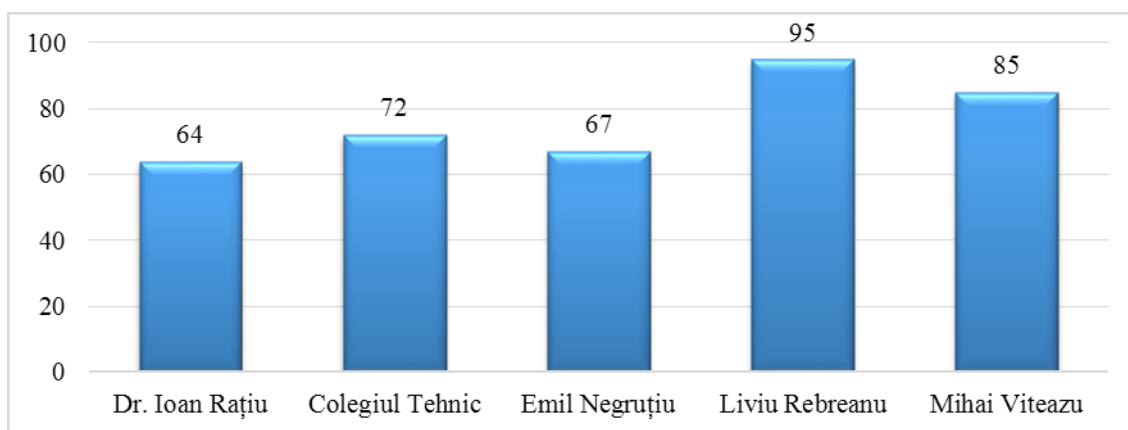
#### 3.1. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INCLUDED SUBJECTS

A total number of 383 subjects responded to the questionnaire. Part of the demographical characteristics are mentioned in the Table no. 1.

**Table no. 1. Demographical characteristics of the group**

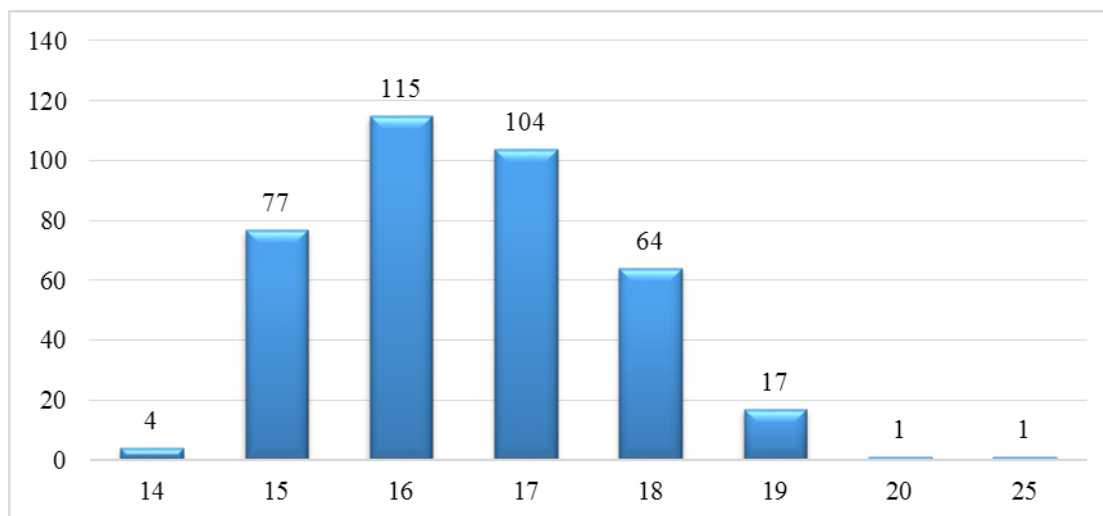
| Gender |        | Residence |       | Family (type) |        | Siblings |       | Orphan |         |
|--------|--------|-----------|-------|---------------|--------|----------|-------|--------|---------|
| Male   | Female | Urban     | Rural | Divorced      | United | Yes      | No    | Yes    | No      |
| 155    | 228    | 261       | 122   | 79 (21%)      | 304    | 129      | 254   | 21     | 362     |
| (40%)  | (60%)  | (68%)     | (32%) |               | (79%)  | (34%)    | (66%) | (5.5%) | (94.5%) |

The answers were collected from all five existing high-schools in Turda. The number of respondents from each institution is mentioned in Figure no. 1.



**Figure no. 1. Distribution of the respondents based on high-school**

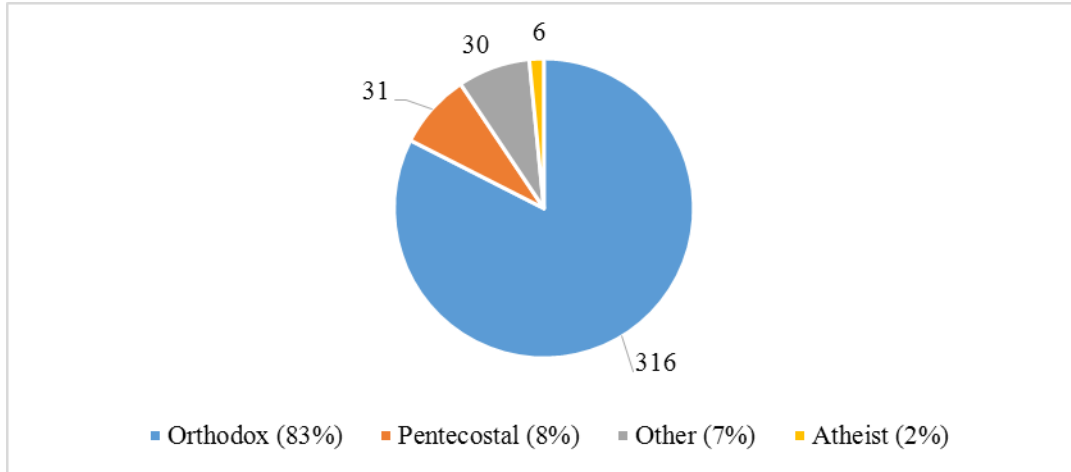
The age of the respondents was from 14 to 25, with an average age of 16.5 years. The median was 16, the mode was 16 also, and the range of the group was 11 (Figure no. 2).



**Figure no. 2. Distribution of the respondents based on age**

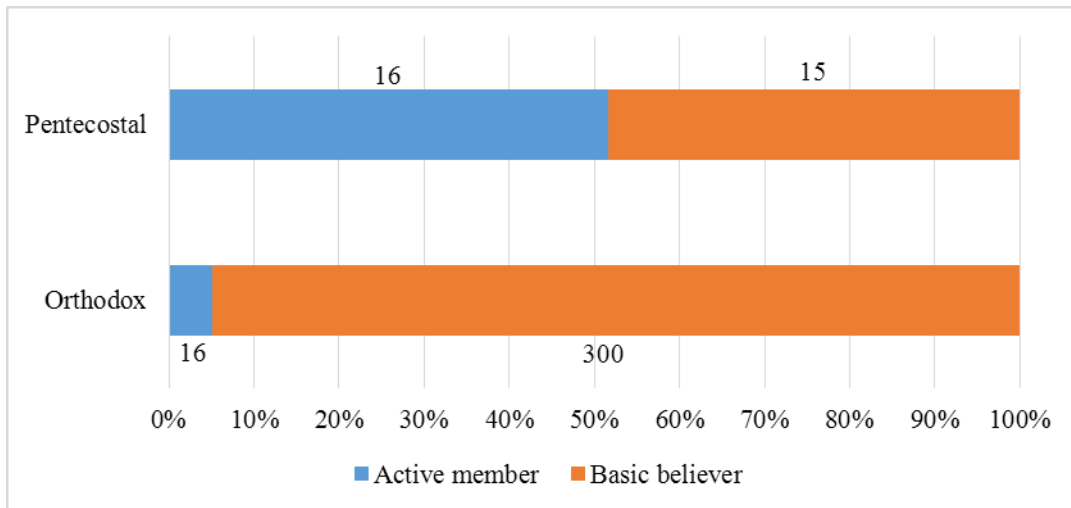
### 3.2. RELIGIOUS CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INCLUDED SUBJECTS

Regarding the confession of the respondents, two main groups were observed. The biggest one is the Orthodox one, with a 83% from the total. The second one, with 31 subjects (8%) is the Pentecostal one. All other confessions (Greek Catholic, Baptist, Adventist, Jesus Witness, and Catholic) summed 30 subjects, representing 7%. An atheist group of 6 (2%) was also present (Figure no. 3).



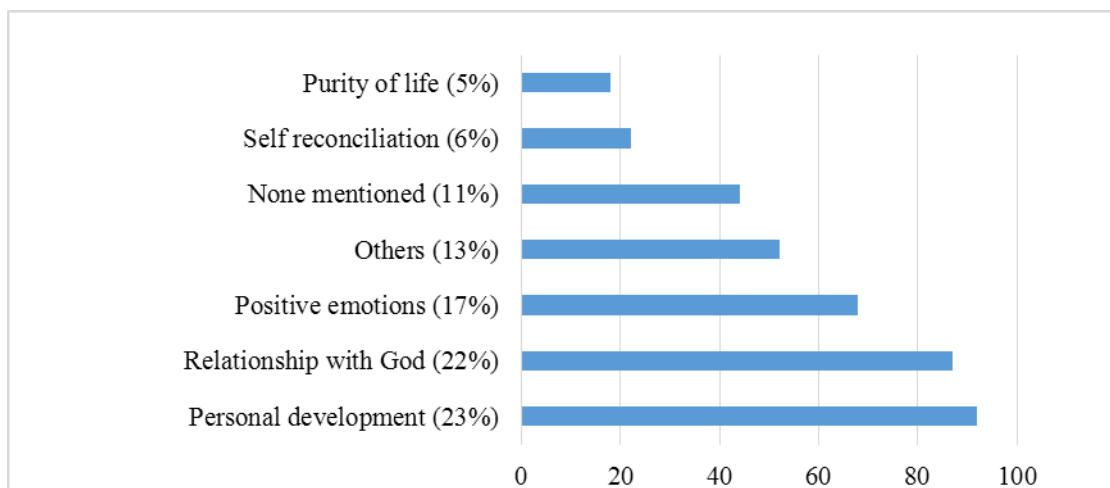
**Figure no. 3. Confession of the respondents**

Regarding the relationship of the respondents with the Church, two distinct groups were noticed: the basic believers and the active members, those involved in associations, foundations, choirs, orchestras, etc. As a general description of the whole group, just 10% of the respondents considered themselves as active members. A difference between Orthodox and Pentecostal group was observed (Figure no. 4).



**Figure no. 4. Relationship with the Church**

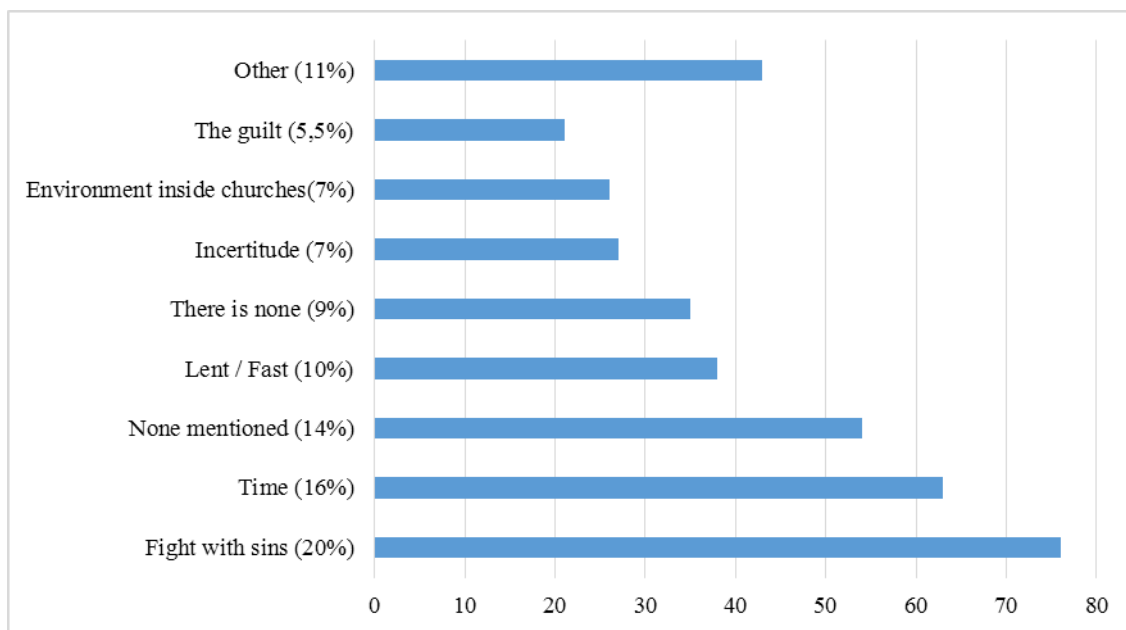
The answers to the question *What is the greatest present or potential benefit of being religious* are summarized in Figure no. 5.



**Figure no. 5. Biggest Benefit**

The most frequent answer was an unreligious one. The idea of personal development through Religion/Religiosity might be explained by the age of respondents. It is important to notice the fact that relationship with God is also perceived as a major benefit. Technically, from a theological point of view, the possibility of soul salvation represents the biggest benefit. Psychological aspects were also valued, in form of positive emotions and self-reconciliation.

The perceived costs, or the involved sacrifices, are described in Figure no. 6.



**Figure no. 6. Biggest Sacrifice**

As it can be observed, the price is more divers and with a more uniform distribution. The moral aspect as fight with sins and the guilt are the main direction (25.5%), followed by rational aspects: the time involved, the environment that churches provide (23%). The practice of lent / fast represent for 10% of the respondents the main price, while 9% of them consider that there is no sacrifice or cost is practicing your Religiosity.

**4. CONCLUSIONS**

As a result of this study, we may say that Religiosity is a reality in high-school students' life, with personal and specific echoes. It is perceived mainly as a way of personal development or a way of achieving personal wellness. The theological dimension (connection to God) or the social

one are not balancing the psychological faces of the phenomena. The inner peace and the positive emotions are rather felt as benefits, than the chance of coming closer to God and saving the soul, or being part of a social group.

Taking into consideration these conclusions, it is mandatory that the Churches adapt their pastoral and missionary strategies to fulfill the expectations of their younger followers.

## ENDNOTES

[1] Martikainen, T., Gauthier, F. (2013)

[2] Saroglou, V. (2014)

[3] Lindstrom, M. (2010)

[4] [http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/wp/2016\\_2017/main/h2020-wp1617-societies\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/wp/2016_2017/main/h2020-wp1617-societies_en.pdf)

[5] <http://www.thechurchapp.org/apps>

[6] Stielstra, G., Hutchins B. (2009)

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