

**89 - THE SOCIETY OF SPECTACLE AND RELIGIOUS AS CONSUMPTION**SILAS DA SILVA FRANCO<sup>1</sup>MARCOS PORTO FREITAS DA ROCHA<sup>2</sup>

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**INTRODUCTION**

In this article we present a concept of consumption related to religiosity, and the stimulus that the society of the spectacle provides to the religious market, the relations between the pursuit of happiness through the pursuit of equality through the consumption of mediatic religiosity, which has deep relations with Brazilian neopentecostalism the theology of prosperity.

It also addresses the use of marketing as a tool in the service of religious spectacle aimed at customer loyalty, the consolidation of religious empires based on the worship of the religious leader and the dispute over the religious market between the different religious neopentecostais media, related to the writings of Debord, Mariano, Novaes and Slater.

It identifies a transformation of neo-Pentecostal churches through the influence of the Society of Consumption and Information Society, which causes a departure from the original spirit of the Early Church, moving away from an action for the division of goods in order to care for society around it and moving towards the accumulation of goods or the search for happiness linked to religious and material consumption.

We highlight the bibliographic research in a qualitative proposal of analysis of the authors that approach the subjects, as well as the accomplishment of an interdisciplinary analysis from the academic trajectory of the authors, combining the expertise in marketing to the theology, for the proximity that the researches in humanities, cultures and arts provide us. The methodology is based on exploratory and bibliographical research that will be pertinent throughout the text. Through studies of prosperity as an instrument for the "conversion of souls," and for the empowerment of the individual within social groups in neoliberal models.

**Consumption of Religiosity as a form of Show**

Merengué (2012) defines consumption as everything that comes from the environment and is used by the individual or the group, materially or subjectively, in a specific society. The author explains us this way:

The etymology of the word 'consumption' comes from the Latin *consumere* (exhaustion) and is formed from the principle of the application, or spending of the riches, and more, *suemere* (to seize, to spend, to grab). There are other definitions that are also a little scary: to spend or to corrode until the destruction, to annul and to destroy. (MERENGUÉ, 2012, p.5).

According to Baudrillard (2011), the act of consuming has been part of the human species since the beginning of its existence. In order to quench the physiological needs, man used animals, vegetables and living beings of all species, feeding on the flesh and using the leather and the skin to cover the body and protect itself from the most varied environmental threats.

Consuming also integrates with other spheres of cultures that have been built through the ages in different societies. For Baudrillard (2011), to consume is confused with happiness, because it alludes to the exact dimension of consumer society, diffusing itself as the original compatible "of salvation". It is the rescue of the human condition of coexistence.

According to the author, consuming conveys the sense of equality and this brings the individual to the state of happiness.

The ideological force of the notion of happiness does not derive from the natural inclination of each individual to realize it by itself. It gives him, historically partner, the fact (sic) that the myth of happiness is the one that collects and embodies in modern societies, the myth of equality (BAUDRILLARD, 2011, p. 49, emphasis added).

According to Featherstone (1995), this need to be happy as a consequence of consumption is in line with the imposition of the "myth of equality" established by the Industrial Revolution, as well as with the State's needs to increase its collection exponentially. The human being comes to understand happiness as an instant of seeing itself using the same goods that the great majority makes use of. Fashion establishes a state of equality, consequently a state of happiness.

For Featherstone (1995), after the so-called Industrial Revolution it is inserted in the context "the expansion of the capitalist production of commodities". Thus, the world comes to live with the diversities and accumulations causing the demonstration of riches, characterized in the form of consumer goods.

Not unlike tangible material goods, services become part of the daily lives of consumers, the churches that make up the movement of Neo-Pentecostalism, begin preaching the theology of prosperity with promises to address the demands of society, whether physical, financial or in relationships loving

For Ricardo Mariano (2005), it was Robert McAlister, founder of the New Life Church, the pioneer in Brazil, to proclaim the Theology of Prosperity. In his services, he was already explaining the issue of the financial contribution. The author also affirms that evangelizers perpetuate the terms "prosperous" - always the exchange with the sacred, for example, the delivery of tithing by the miracle, and "healthy", always, on all occasions:

These preachers assert that he is not only financially healthy and happy in this life that lacks faith, does not fulfill what the Bible says about divine promises, and is involved, directly or indirectly, with the Devil. Ownership, acquisition and display of goods, health in good condition and life without major problems or afflictions are presented as evidence of the spirituality of the faithful (MARIANO, 2005, p.157).

The phenomenon of prosperity is associated with the many elements of the life of the faithful, from financial, being present in the emotional, and even in the family, including the search for an immediate solution.

The contemporary conception of marketing encompasses the composition of a complete and perennial win-win relationship, in which people and groups of people take possession of what they want and need, thus supplying their needs in a holistic way.

Marketing is born as a tool to understand and meet the demands of the market, so it is not limited only to consumer

goods. It is commonly and widely used to market ideas and social projects. Marketing strategies are employed in many areas of life besides business, such as political systems, religion, and sports.

#### The Marketing in Prol of the Religiosity Show

Debord (1997), in his book *The society of the spectacle*, states that "the whole life of the societies in which the modern conditions of production reign are presented as an immense accumulation of spectacles" (p.13). For the author, what was personally experienced became from there a great montage, a drama, as if life were a play. The symbols began to gain prominence in viewing angles of consumers' daily lives.

The perfection of the symbols constructed as images became a form of spectacularization, being an instrument of simple self-admiration, considered by him the act of deceiving himself. The paradoxical dialectic, built by propagators of Neo-Pentecostalism, becomes even more vulnerable when it comes to the Gospel narrative of Matthew, chapter, verse 20, when Jesus says, "Foxes have dens, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head."

For Debord (1997), the show is not designated as a grouping of symbols, but a social dependence between individuals or groups of individuals. Symbols and images produced as part of consumption make up the spectacle phenomenon, which manifests itself in real time according to the behavior of society itself, since it is part of it, being the target of the social groups and their whole understanding. The author states that, "because this sector is separate, it is the place of deluded gaze and false consciousness; the unification that it performs is only the official language of generalized separation" (p.14).

Debord adds:

The concept of spectacle unifies and explains a great diversity of apparent phenomena. Its diversities and contrasts are the appearances of this socially organized appearance, which must be recognized in its general truth. Considering according to its own terms, the spectacle is the affirmation of all human life - that is, social - as mere appearance. (DEBORD, 1997, p.235).

For Adauto Novaes (2004), in "Beyond the Spectacle", the spectacle can confuse its spectator, being able to "blind" it of the reality.

We are now dominated end to end by the images, and it is thanks to this excess that we have not learned to see yet. If we do not know how to see, it is certainly because the visibility does not depend on the object alone, nor on the subject who sees, but also on the work of reflection: each visible has an invisible fold that must be unveiled every moment and every movement. (NOVAES, 2004, p.11).

Ricardo Mariano (2005) claims that the use of communication, radio and television vehicles essentially cooperated with the growth of neo-Pentecostal churches to expand within Brazilian territory and even internationally, as they contribute to the reproduction and propagation of the spectacle of and other ceremonies, to convey the results of those who are already followers of the prosperous paths reached, and plunged into the universe in consumption, presenting many times the fruits of their acceptance, such as acquired goods, successful businesses and reconstructed relations.

The society's view of the culture of consumption presupposes that in the contemporary universe, the customs of societies and cultural riches, including ideals, convictions, dreams and basic personalities are determined and delimited in association with consumption, disregarding other collective aspects such as use of the capacity of the workforce or of the condition of being a citizen, of religious belief or of any other choice, be it professional or ideological.

For Slater (2002, 32) to describe a society in terms of its consumption and to suppose that its essential values derive from it is an unprecedented stance: a militaristic culture, an agrarian culture, a maritime culture. But a culture of religious consumption?

For the author, when analyzing "modern society" in comparison to the "consumer society", one notices that there are no references to any specific type of demand, which is, according to him, a "determined consumer culture". Slater (2002) describes contemporary society as a materialistic society, which is part of a mercantilist generation, owner of a "money-based pecuniary culture, concerned with 'having' rather than 'being'" (p. a model of society that became, according to the author, a product. Immediate and individual pleasure has become the primary goal of life, which forms a hedonistic society. For the author:

Culture structured by the consumption of goods is often considered a contradiction in terms, because the term "culture" has been defined as the social preservation of authentic values that can not be acquired by money, nor by market exchange (SLATER, 2002, p. 32).

According to the author, the equivalence between consumer culture and "mass culture" is clear, as the wills and tastes of societies turn into opportunities for greater financial gain, whether they are earned by the work itself or tangible for rights, such as social and political rights, which contribute in an accelerated way to cultural impoverishment and to growth in consumption. For the author, the culture was "reduced to consumption" (page 32)

For Debord, (1997) the circumstances that the artisanal production faced, considering the social conjunctures of the massive market and the abundance of liquidity, mainly of financial resources, provoked the appropriation of the commercial production, which has absolute supremacy in the economy. For the author, from this moment the product is placed as the central point of the mercantilist logic, it is a precise, measurable and profitable method of evolution. This endless manifestation of mercantile power vis-à-vis the format of products has transformed the labor of the human being into an effort.

According to Debord (1997), economic evolution exempts societies from the inherent constraints that forced individuals to struggle intensively to survive, but according to the author, "it is the liberator that they can not free themselves. The independence of the commodity extended to the whole economy, on which it reigns" (p.29).

For the author, the world is transformed by the changes that occur in the economy, however, the world is transformed into a universe for the use of the economy itself. The simulated environment where man's labor has been alienated demands persisting in the art of working perpetually.

Don Slater (2002) argues that the "culture of consumption" is usually recognized with the concept of "mass consumption", since it refers to the universalization of the consumption of products for all. However, "mass consumption" is only one of the basic and fundamental indications for scale production.

For Slater (2002), the design of mass production is based on marketing some good that has not been produced according to the metrics of the demands of a consumer or a group of consumers now known; the idea is based on the generalization of production. Thus, he asserts that it is presupposed a production directed to some consumer in any place that is attainable, thus seeking non-personal exchanges in a generalized way, which are supported by the total interference of consumption.

For this British professor, mercantilist links are not well-named, since the consumer can not be said to be a "customer"

of the family, being, according to the author, someone not known, who should only be presumed and an instrument. The objective of effective marketing actions is to obtain answers about the profile of purchases produced by consumer studies in the market.

Moreover, when the cultural meaning of the good of consumption is not immediately provided by the personalized relations in which it is produced and exchanged, then it also has to be produced and distributed on an ever larger scale in an impersonal and generalized way: design, advertising, marketing, they all begin before industrialization spreads, because of the need to personalize the impersonal, to culturally specify the general and abstract (Slater, 2002, 34).

The author assures that the culture of consumption, although it seems, is not associated with the daily life of all. We are free to consume goods and services that we want, but between desire and need to buy and the realization of the purchase there is a limiting element, which we call purchasing power. However, the choices would be free, there being no formal limits to the acquisitions. Viewed as a basic prerogative of the human being, to consume is, according to the author, "the innate right of the modern Western subject" (SLATER, 2002, 34).

The theology of prosperity, according to Ricardo Mariano (2005), is part of the culture of consumption, and can contribute to understanding the relationship of the media, consumption itself and religion.

The theology of prosperity would have resulted from the syncretic combination of distinct religious traditions (Western and Eastern), esoteric and paramedical practices, which left indelible marks on this religious movement. According to Pieratt (1993), the opponent and detractor of this theology, 'it was the metaphysical sects which provided the distinctive teachings and the general vision that shaped the gospel of prosperity'. (MARIANO, 2005, p.152).

For Ricardo Mariano (2005), the theology of prosperity until a certain time was based on healing and confession, and it was an American evangelist, Oral Roberts, who embraced the understanding of "abundant life," in which the financial reward would be greater than value donated.

The contemporary conception of marketing encompasses the composition of a complete and perennial win-win relationship, in which people and groups of people take possession of what they want and need, thus supplying their needs in a holistic way.

Marketing is born as a tool to understand and meet the demands of the market, so it is not limited only to consumer goods. It is commonly and widely used to market ideas and social projects. Marketing strategies are employed in many areas of life besides business, such as political systems, religion, and sports.

Regardless of our understanding of marketing fundamentals throughout human history since the early days of marketing goods and services, marketing is a new area of study if contrasted with many other fields of scientific knowledge. Market research studies arise from the demands of producers of goods in order to manage the new reality resulting from the Industrial Revolution, which has resulted in the metamorphosis of a market from sellers to a market of buyers.

After the Industrial Revolution, marketing becomes inseparable from the economy and from the classical administration, which was idealized by Henri Fayol, and this one is configured by the relevance given to the organizational structure, by the vision of the economic man and by the pursuit of maximum productivity, since The primary focus was to meet growing demands. There was no competition, and consumers had neither the conditions nor the bargaining power (CHIAVENATO, 2004, p.79-84).

With the growth of consumption, which began after the end of World War II, marketing actions in organizations have become increasingly relevant to the growth and development of brands, as well as to the emergence of new products / services, with the leverage of new market niches. Marketing, which until then was only a sales department, with managers, supervisors and salespeople, gained strength within organizations, playing a crucial role in the implementation of brand marketing actions, such as the study of market segmentation and the study of consumption.

For Kotler and Armstrong, who are among the greatest scholars of the subject, "marketing is a social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and desire through the creation, supply and exchange of valuable products with others" (1994, 27). Do the authors insert a relevant contribution to the thesis of "prospering through religiosity," are such promises capable of wresting such a great flock from neo-Pentecostal temples?

#### Conclusions

The present article sought to investigate the exponential growth of neo-Pentecostalism in Brazil, its rise among those who desire an abundant life of material goods and the solution of their problems with regard to social problems.

According to scholars, for the leaders of denominations called neopentecostals, a human being is endowed with a life endowed with material abundance, a life without diseases and with possibilities of prosperity and involvement in social and political groups, factors that are common to those that are included in the "Consumer Society" and the "Information Society".

It is notorious in the research that the gospel as a good news for the salvation of the soul is not a priority factor for the leaders of so-called neo-Pentecostal churches, because they abdicate the message of sanctification and rely on texts that proclaim social, material, sentimental and financial growth.

Notably, the so-called sacred writings leave an account that can be further deepening, bringing more clarity to so many dialectics, when in the account of the Gospel of John, 8, verses 31 and 32 assures us that Jesus was saying to the Jews who create "If ye abide in my word, ye shall be my disciples indeed; And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (BIBLE, 1969).

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**ABSTRACT**

This article was developed through a partnership between Masters researchers in Humanities, Cultures and Arts in an interdisciplinary perspective in Marketing and Theology, aiming at analyzing Prosperity Theology in Brazil and its use as an instrument for attracting new followers, as well as for their loyalty. The article concomitantly approaches the concepts of the Society of the Spectacle, Society of Consumption and Information Society, considering the use of the means of communication for the propagation of the achievements of its followers. It has as theoretical reference the works of Debord, Slater, Mariano, Novaes, Baudrillard, Kotler and Armstrong in an analysis about the use of religiosity as a form of glamorization and spectacle with a comparative analysis with the biblical texts. The methodology is based on exploratory and bibliographical research that will be pertinent throughout the text. Through studies of prosperity as an instrument for the "conversion of souls" and for the empowerment of the individual within social groups in neoliberal models.

**KEYWORDS:** Society of the Spectacle, Religiosity as Consumption, Brazilian Neopentecostalism

**RÉSUMÉ:**

Cet article a été développé à partir d'un partenariat entre des chercheurs en sciences humaines, cultures et arts, dans une perspective interdisciplinaire en marketing et en théologie, afin d'analyser la théologie de la prospérité au Brésil et son utilisation en tant qu'instrument permettant d'attirer de nouveaux adeptes et de les fidéliser. L'article aborde simultanément les concepts de la Société du spectacle, de la société de consommation et de la société de l'information, en considérant l'utilisation des moyens de communication pour la propagation des réalisations de ses adeptes. Il a comme référence théorique les travaux de Debord, Slater, Mariano, Novaes, Baudrillard, Kotler et Armstrong dans une analyse sur l'utilisation de la religiosité comme forme de glamour et de spectacle avec une analyse comparative avec les textes bibliques. La méthodologie repose sur des recherches exploratoires et bibliographiques pertinentes dans l'ensemble du texte. À travers des études sur la prospérité en tant qu'instrument de "conversion des âmes" et de responsabilisation de l'individu au sein de groupes sociaux dans des modèles néolibéraux.

**MOTS CLÉS:** Société du spectacle, Religiosité comme consommation, néo-pentecôtisme brésilien

**RESUMEN:**

Este artículo se desarrolló a partir de asociación entre investigadores Maestros en Humanidades, Culturas y Artes en una perspectiva interdisciplinaria en Marketing y Teología para analizar la Teología de la Prosperidad en Brasil y su uso como instrumento de captación de nuevos seguidores, así como de su fidelización. El artículo aborda, concomitantemente, los conceptos de la Sociedad del Espectáculo, Sociedad de Consumo y Sociedad de la Información, considerando el uso de los medios de comunicación para la propagación de las conquistas de sus seguidores. En el análisis sobre el uso de la religiosidad como forma de glamorización y espectáculo con análisis comparativo con los textos bíblicos, tiene como referencial teórico las obras de Debord, Slater, Mariano, Novaes, Baudrillard, Kotler y Armstrong. La metodología se sustenta en investigación exploratoria y bibliográfica que será concerniente a lo largo del texto. Por medio de los estudios sobre la prosperidad como instrumento para la "conversión de las almas", y para el empoderamiento del individuo dentro de grupos sociales en los modelos neoliberales.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Sociedad del Espectáculo, Religiosidad como Consumo, Neopentecostalismo Brasileño

**RESUMO:**

Este artigo se desenvolveu a partir de parceria entre pesquisadores Mestres em Humanidades, Culturas e Artes em uma perspectiva interdisciplinar em Marketing e Teologia visando analisar a Teologia da Prosperidade no Brasil e seu uso como instrumento de captação de novos seguidores, bem como de sua fidelização. O artigo aborda, concomitantemente, os conceitos da Sociedade do Espectáculo, Sociedade de Consumo e Sociedade da Informação, considerando o uso dos meios de comunicação para a propagação das conquistas dos seus seguidores. Possui como referencial teórico as obras de Debord, Slater, Mariano, Novaes, Baudrillard, Kotler e Armstrong em uma análise acerca do uso da religiosidade como forma de glamorização e espetáculo com análise comparativa com os textos bíblicos. A metodologia se sustenta em pesquisa exploratória e bibliográfica que será concernente ao longo do texto. Por meio dos estudos sobre a prosperidade como instrumento para a "conversão das almas", e para o empoderamento do indivíduo dentro de grupos sociais nos modelos neoliberais.

**PALAVRAS CHAVE:** Sociedade do Espectáculo, Religiosidade como Consumo, Neopentecostalismo Brasileiro