

The Joint Influence of Social Marketing and Televangelism on Behavioral Change : An Analysis of Psychosocial Dynamics

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Abstract: This study examines the often-underestimated intersection between the tools of social marketing and the mechanisms of televangelism within the dynamics of changing mindsets. While social marketing adopts commercial methods to serve the public interest (such as health and civic duty), televangelism relies on the rhetoric of the sacred to structure the lives of believers.

Drawing upon the work of Eboussi Boulaga (1977) regarding the condition of the African subject and Mudimbe (1982) on the frameworks of colonial and postcolonial thought, we analyze how these two forces converge to redefine lifestyles. Through a qualitative investigation, this article demonstrates that religious "anointing" validates and amplifies social messages, creating a hybrid persuasion system. In light of Ndaywel è Nziem's (1997) work on social movements in the Congo, the study suggests that the effectiveness of public campaigns today depends on their ability to engage in dialogue with this omnipresent religious imaginary.

Keywords: Social Marketing, Televangelism, Social Change, Social Influence.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In contemporary Central African societies particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo behavioral change is no longer a matter of simple factual information transmission. It lies at the heart of a struggle for influence between the rationality of public institutions and the fervor of religious discourse. As Eboussi Boulaga (1977) highlighted in *La crise du Muntu*, the African subject attempts to reclaim their humanity within a complex modernity where traditional and imported knowledge structures collide.

This introduction addresses the problem of the effectiveness of social campaigns (health, education, civic duty) in the face of the massive emergence of televangelism. While social marketing seeks to "sell" beneficial behaviors, televangelism proposes an integral transformation of the individual through faith. The objective of this article is to understand how the convergence of these two forces can in the words of Mudimbe (1982) redefine the "smell" of social norms and lastingly influence individual trajectories.

➤ Social Marketing

Social marketing cannot be reduced to a mere transposition of advertising mechanisms onto the field of the

common good. According to the seminal perspective of Philip Kotler (2002), it is a complex strategic approach aimed at voluntarily influencing the behavior of target audiences to improve their personal situation or that of the community. From this viewpoint, the objective is no longer a commercial transaction, but rather the adoption of civic or health-related attitudes—such as vaccination or waste management—perceived as "social products."

However, as Jean-Jacques Lambin (2008) emphasizes in his analysis of strategic marketing, the effectiveness of such an approach imperatively rests on a sophisticated understanding of the needs of the "social consumer." Without this active listening, social marketing risks becoming what Mudimbe (1982) denounces as an "imported science » : a set of exogenous techniques that crash against the wall of local realities.

To avoid remaining a "cold persuasion technique," social marketing must integrate itself into what Mudimbe calls the "order of knowledge" of the target population. It is no longer just about "disseminating" a message, but about co-constructing a solution that makes sense in the daily life of the citizen. In short, the success of social marketing in the African context depends on its ability to transform the passive

beneficiary into a conscious actor, capable of taking ownership of the levers of their own well-being without renouncing their identitarian frameworks of reference.

➤ *Televangelism*

Televangelism does not merely occupy the airwaves; it saturates the mental space. By utilizing mass communication tools, media-pastors exert an influence that extends far beyond the framework of dogma. Referring to the historical analyses of Ndaywel è Nziem (1997) on social dynamics in the Congo, it becomes clear that religious discourse has always been a motor for mobilization—at times even a lever for protest or community structuring.

➤ *Behavioral Change and Hybrid Social Influence*

Behavioral change is no longer the result of simple exposure to an information campaign. According to Kotler's model, taking action requires the removal of psychological and social barriers. However, in a society characterized by oral tradition and strong spirituality, these barriers are often lifted by moral authority. Social influence thus becomes hybrid:

- Cognitive influence : social marketing provides facts and technical solutions (the "know-how" or *savoir-faire* emphasized by Lambin).
- Existential influence: televangelism gives a sacred meaning to change (the "sense of being" explored by Eboussi Boulaga).

The effectiveness of a social change policy depends on its ability to navigate between these two poles. As suggested by the history of Congolese mentalities, human behavior only changes durably when there is resonance between the strategic proposal (marketing) and deep-seated conviction (faith).

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The validity of research regarding objects as fluid as faith and marketing depends on the refinement of its instrumentation. For this study, we opted for an immersion that goes beyond simple statistics, anchoring ourselves in the current of ethnosociology.

➤ *Methodological Framework*

Our approach is directly inspired by the work of Georges Lapassade and institutional analysis. Ethnosociology allows us to perceive televangelism not as a passive spectacle, but as a social "analyzer." From Lapassade's perspective, this involves studying the group (faithful/viewers) in their natural environment to understand how behavioral norms are renegotiated in front of the screen. This approach allows us to capture the "implication" of the subjects a concept central to the Vincennes School in order to see how religious discourse saturates daily life and influences choices regarding consumption or health.

➤ *Sampling and Participant Profile*

The study is based on a sample of 70 individuals, selected using the quota sampling method (or purposive sampling) to ensure a diversified representation of televangelism viewers in the DRC.

- Sample Size: $N = 70$.
- Inclusion Criteria: Participants must be over 18 years old, reside in Kinshasa (or the study area), and report watching televangelism programs at least three times a week.
- Diversity: The sample includes various socio-professional categories to observe whether the influence of social marketing varies according to educational levels, echoing Lambin's (2008) theories on audience segmentation.

➤ *Materials And Data Collection Tools*

To transform our observations into actionable results, we utilized the following tools:

- Semi-structured Interview Guide: Designed to allow for open expression, this tool explored the perception of the "Muntu" (referencing Eboussi Boulaga) when faced with social marketing injunctions relayed by pastors.
- Program Observation Grid: A monitoring tool for television broadcasts used to catalog behavioral change themes (health, finance, ethics) addressed by televangelists.
- Reception Questionnaire: Administered to the 70 participants to quantify the frequency of behavioral modifications following exposure to the messages.

➤ *Analysis Procedure*

The collected data underwent thematic content analysis. We cross-referenced participant discourse with the theoretical frameworks of Kotler (on social message effectiveness) and Mudimbe (on the reappropriation of knowledge). This triangulation identifies the mechanisms through which televangelism becomes either a catalyst for or a barrier to social marketing objectives.

III. RESULTS

The processing of data from our sample of 70 participants reveals a reality that is both rich and contrasted: faith broadcast on television plays a decisive role in how individuals understand messages related to social change. Far more than a mere transmission channel, it constitutes a genuine framework of reference through which values, norms, and collective representations are redefined. The primary findings of this analysis are organized around three key axes.

➤ *Televised Faith as a Framework for Reading the Social Sphere*

The results clearly indicate that religious programming profoundly influences the perception of social issues. For a large portion of participants, statements made by preachers on television enjoy high credibility, often associated with a superior moral authority. Consequently, notions such as justice, solidarity, individual responsibility, and public ethics are primarily interpreted through the lens of spiritual principles. When social change messages align with this religious logic, they are more easily accepted and integrated.

➤ *Selective Appropriation of Change Messages*

The study also reveals that individuals are not merely passive receivers. They filter the messages they receive based on their compatibility with the religious teachings they follow. Thus, ideas perceived as contrary to the values conveyed by faith often trigger reactions of mistrust or even rejection. Conversely, discourses judged to be in conformity with these values are not only accepted but sometimes reinforced in daily practices and conversations. Televised faith, therefore, acts as a filter that guides the acceptance or contestation of social change.

➤ *Tension Between Engagement and Conservatism*

Finally, the data highlights a significant duality. On one hand, televised faith can encourage positive behaviors, notably by promoting mutual aid, community engagement, and social cohesion. It can thus become a driver of constructive social transformation. On the other hand, it can also lead to a form of retreat into norms deemed immutable, particularly when certain changes are perceived as a threat to religious values. This double dynamic illustrates the ambivalent nature of religious media in the processes of social mutation.

These results emphasize the central importance of televised faith in how individuals perceive and interpret social transformations. It appears simultaneously as a factor for mobilization and a potential barrier, depending on the nature of the messages and their alignment with the religious convictions of the target audiences.

IV. DISCUSSION

The results obtained invite an in-depth reading of the ambivalent role played by televised faith in social transformation processes. Far from being a mere dissemination tool, it establishes itself as a structuring actor in the production of meaning, influencing both individual representations and collective dynamics.

Firstly, the fact that participants grant high credibility to televised preachers confirms the importance of symbolic authority in the reception of social messages. This authority, grounded in the religious register, tends to supplant other forms of legitimacy, particularly institutional or political ones. Thus, social change messages gain effectiveness when reformulated in a spiritual or moral language, which aligns with theoretical approaches to persuasive communication and the cultural anchoring of discourse.

Furthermore, the selective nature of reception highlights the active role of the audience. Individuals do not merely absorb messages ; they interpret, adapt, and sometimes reject them based on their prior beliefs. This finding aligns with reception theories, which emphasize that the meaning of a message is never fixed in advance but is co-constructed by the sender and the receiver. In this context, televised faith acts as a framework for symbolic validation, capable of reinforcing certain norms while marginalizing others.

In addition, the tension observed between social mobilization and normative retreat reflects a duality inherent to religious media. On one hand, they can serve as powerful vectors for social cohesion by promoting values such as solidarity, peace, and community engagement. On the other hand, they can also hinder certain social evolutions by consolidating conservative worldviews. This ambivalence mirrors sociological analyses that view religion as both a factor for change and for social stability.

It is also important to emphasize that this dynamic is situated within a specific sociocultural context where religion occupies a central place in daily life. In such an environment, religious media acquire considerable influence, particularly in contexts where public institutions may be perceived as fragile or lacking in credibility. Televised faith thus becomes an alternative space for the legitimization of social norms.

However, certain limitations must be taken into account. The sample size, while sufficient for an exploratory analysis, does not allow for an absolute generalization of the results. Moreover, the perceptions collected rely on subjective statements, which are susceptible to social or cultural biases. These elements suggest a need for further research, particularly through comparative or longitudinal approaches.

This study highlights the necessity of considering televised faith as a central actor in social communication strategies. Any initiative aimed at promoting social change would benefit from integrating religious referents into message development, while remaining attentive to the risks of resistance linked to divergent values.

V. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that televangelism in the DRC is not merely a religious phenomenon, but a powerful lever for social marketing. The effectiveness of behavioral change here depends on the "resonance" between the communication strategy and the deep-seated faith of the public. To achieve lasting social transformation, it is now imperative to integrate the moral authority of preachers, as it alone seems capable of removing sociocultural barriers and granting a sacred meaning to new standards of living.

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