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DOES MARKETING EMBRACE THE BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE OF HOPE?

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Abstract

Whether you are the company marketing a product or service or the consumer considering its purchase, the primary underlying premise of the marketing transaction is hope. Hope is a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen. It is often accompanied by positive feelings, such as optimism and a sense of confidence in the future. In its simplest form, hope is a belief that the future will be better than the present. The car sales manager hopes the new model car will outsell the prior year's model. The customer purchasing the vehicle hopes the new car will run more reliably than their old one. In fact, a compelling case can be made that all business marketing transactions are embedded in the biblical concept of hope. This paper explores the relationship between marketing and the biblical principle of hope. It further explores the directions for future research into this area.

Keywords: Marketing, Hope, Biblical Concept, Old Testament, New Testament

DOES MARKETING EMBRACE THE BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE OF HOPE?

While hope has been researched in the healthcare and psychology fields, little exists in the way of research or studies regarding how hope may manifest itself in marketing. When examining hope, as expressed in the Bible and a possible relationship to marketing, the research spectrum is devoid of information and studies.

Consequently, this article explores and raises questions regarding how the concept of biblical hope may or may not be found in marketing activities. Many marketing transactions use the concept of hope. For example, a fitness company might promote its new line of fitness equipment, specifically targeting individuals who are looking to improve their overall health and wellness. The advertisement copy might include:

Title: Unlock Your Potential with Our Revolutionary Fitness Equipment!

Ad Copy: Are you tired of feeling sluggish and out of shape? It's time to embrace a healthier lifestyle and take charge of your well-being. Introducing our state-of-the-art fitness equipment that is designed to help you reach your fitness goals faster and more effectively than ever before. Imagine a life where you wake up with energy, tackle your daily tasks with vigor, and feel confident in your

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own skin. Our innovative technology and expertly crafted equipment are your allies on this journey. With each workout, you're not just burning calories—you're igniting a fire of hope within yourself. It's not just about working out; it's about believing in the power of change. Embrace hope and step into a future where your health knows no bounds. Don't wait for tomorrow to start your transformation. Start today and let hope be your guide. Together, we can build a healthier, happier you.

In this example, the marketing transaction is centered around the emotion of hope. The advertisement taps into the audience's desire for positive change and a better future. It paints a picture of a more fulfilling life and uses phrases like "unlock your potential," "transform your life," and "ignite a fire of hope" to evoke feelings of optimism and aspiration. By associating the fitness equipment with these emotions, the marketing message aims to persuade individuals to make a purchase in the hopes of achieving their health and fitness goals.

Hope is often used as a powerful emotional motivator in advertising. Advertisements are designed to appeal to consumers' emotions, and hope is one of the most commonly used emotions in advertising. Advertisers use the promise of hope to motivate consumers to purchase products or services.

For example, an advertisement for a weight-loss program might appeal to consumers' hope for a better, healthier body. An advertisement for a car might appeal to consumers' hope for freedom and mobility. An advertisement for a vacation might appeal to consumers' hope for relaxation and adventure.

Hope can also be used as a way to differentiate a product or service from its competitors. Advertisers can position their product as the solution to consumers' hopes and desires and differentiate it from other products that do not offer the same level of hope.

Overall, hope is a powerful emotion that can be used to motivate consumers to take action and make a purchase. Advertisers use hope to create a positive emotional connection with consumers and to differentiate their product from the competition.

WHAT IS HOPE?

Hope is a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen. It is often accompanied by positive feelings, such as optimism and a sense of confidence in the future. In its simplest form, hope is a belief that the future will be better than the present, and that things will work out in the end. It can also refer to a feeling of trust or confidence in a person, idea, or situation. Hope is seen as a positive and powerful emotion that can sustain and motivate individuals during difficult times.

The concept of hope is complex and multifaceted, and its study spans a wide range of disciplines, each contributing to a deeper understanding of its significance and implications. Hope has been researched in psychology, sociology, education, healthcare, and philosophy. Most of the research on hope comes from psychology and healthcare.

Hope is extensively studied within psychology, especially in the subfields of positive psychology and clinical psychology. Researchers explore the cognitive and emotional processes involved in hope, its impact on mental well-being, and its role in coping with stress, trauma, and adversity. The psychological and physiological benefits of hope are well-documented. For example, research has shown that individuals with high levels of hope tend to have better mental health, including lower levels of depression, anxiety, and stress. Hope has also been linked to improved physical health, including a stronger immune system and better overall health outcomes. Additionally, hope has been found to play a crucial role in the healing process, particularly for individuals who are facing chronic or life-threatening illnesses.

Hope plays a significant role in healthcare settings. Research in this area examines how hope influences patients' attitudes, adherence to treatment, and overall health outcomes. It is also studied in the context of terminal illnesses and end-of-life care, exploring how hope can impact patients, their families, and healthcare providers. Johnson (2007) determined 10 essential attributes of hope that include "positive expectation, personal qualities, spirituality, goals, comfort, help/caring, interpersonal relationships, control, legacy, and life review" (p. 451). Philosophical inquiry into hope delves into its nature, meaning, and ethical implications.

In both religious and ethical contexts, hope can provide comfort, motivation, and a sense of purpose, helping individuals navigate challenges and find meaning in their lives. It can serve as a source of strength during difficult times and a guiding light toward a better future.

Many religious belief systems emphasize the concept of hope. In Christianity, for example, hope is one of the theological virtues and is closely tied to the belief in salvation, redemption, and the promise of an afterlife. Other religions also offer teachings that instill hope by providing a sense of purpose, guidance, and the prospect of a better future.

Ethics, particularly when grounded in a positive and compassionate philosophy, can also foster a sense of hope. Ethical systems often encourage individuals to strive for moral excellence, contribute to the well-being of others, and work toward a just and harmonious society. These principles can give people hope that their actions have meaning and can lead to positive outcomes, both for themselves and for the greater good.

MARKETING AND HOPE

While there may be no direct cause and effect connection between marketing and the biblical concept of hope, the concept of hope also comes from religion and philosophy. Hope has often been integrated into marketing strategies to appeal to people's emotions and values. The biblical concept of hope, in a general sense, refers to a positive expectation or belief in a better future. It is a deeply emotional and psychological concept that can inspire and motivate individuals to endure difficult times and work toward positive outcomes.

In marketing, emotional appeals are commonly used to connect with consumers on a deeper level. Brands may evoke feelings of hope, happiness, or positivity to create a strong bond with their target audience. They aim to associate their products or services with positive emotions, ultimately influencing a purchasing decision.

For instance, a brand might use advertisements that show people overcoming challenges and achieving their dreams after using their product. This narrative taps into the concept of hope, as it suggests that the brand's offerings can bring about positive change and improvement in the consumer's life. It is important to note that marketing strategies reflecting hope need to be ethically executed and not manipulate or exploit people's emotions. If a marketing campaign genuinely aligns with a positive and uplifting message, it can resonate with consumers and build a strong brand image.

Marketing is fundamentally tied to human emotions and desires, and hope is a powerful emotion that plays a significant role in marketing strategies. While it may be possible to conduct marketing without explicitly invoking hope, the absence of hope can severely limit the effectiveness and appeal of marketing efforts.

Hope is a positive and optimistic feeling that drives people to envision a better future, and marketers often use this emotion to create aspirations in their target audience. Hope influences marketing by:

Creating a vision: Marketing often revolves around presenting products or services as solutions to people's problems or desires. The promise of a better future or improved circumstances relies on hope to motivate individuals to consider the offering.

Providing an emotional connection: People tend to respond more positively to marketing messages that inspire hope. Such messages can evoke feelings of optimism, happiness, and excitement, making potential customers more receptive to the marketing campaign.

Overcoming challenges: Marketing frequently addresses obstacles or challenges customers may face. By offering hope for resolution, marketers can build trust and credibility, which are crucial in fostering a long-term relationship between the brand and its consumers.

Building desire: Hope can fuel desire, prompting individuals to aspire to possess a product or experience a service that promises positive outcomes.

Creating a call to action: In marketing, a call to action encourages consumers to take a specific step, such as making a purchase or signing up for a service. Hope can be a compelling motivator in the call to action, prompting individuals to take that step with the belief that it will lead to a desired outcome.

However, it is essential to recognize that marketing is not solely dependent on hope. Other emotions, such as fear, urgency, curiosity, and even skepticism, can also play roles in marketing campaigns. Still, hope tends to be a more positive and optimistic force that resonates strongly with consumers and contributes to building a lasting relationship between the brand and its target audience.

WHAT IS MARKETING?

Marketing is a multifaceted business discipline that involves creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging products or services of value to customers, clients, partners, and society at large. It encompasses a wide range of activities and strategies aimed at understanding consumer needs and desires, and then satisfying those needs positively and profitably. In more detail, marketing involves the following key components:

Product/service development: Identifying and developing products or services that meet the needs and wants of a target market.

Market research and analysis: Gathering and interpreting data about the target market, competition, and industry trends to understand customer preferences, behaviors, and market opportunities.

Advertising and promotion: Creating compelling messages and campaigns to communicate the value of products or services to the target audience and attract potential customers.

Sales and distribution: Establishing channels and methods to make products or services available to consumers and facilitate the purchasing process.

Branding and positioning: Building a strong brand identity and reputation in the market to differentiate products or services from competitors and create a positive image in consumers' minds.

Customer relationship management (CRM): Cultivating and maintaining long-term relationships with customers to foster loyalty and repeat business.

Digital marketing and social media: Utilizing online platforms and social media channels to reach a broader audience and engage with potential customers.

Market segmentation: Dividing the market into distinct groups based on various characteristics, such as demographics, behavior, and preferences, to tailor marketing efforts effectively.

Public relations (PR): Managing the company's image and reputation in the public eye through media relations, community engagement, and crisis management.

The ultimate goal of marketing is to create value for both the customers and the organization by profitably satisfying customer needs. It plays a crucial role in connecting businesses with consumers and driving revenue growth by fostering awareness, interest, desire, and action toward the products or services offered.

HOPE IN THE BIBLE

Throughout the Bible, hope is portrayed as a confident expectation in God's goodness, love, and fulfillment of His promises, even in the midst of challenging circumstances. It is a source of comfort, strength, and encouragement for believers. It is not just a passive wish, but an active trust in God's character, His plan for salvation, and His ability to bring about what He has promised. The biblical concept of hope is a recurring theme throughout the Bible and is often associated with trust and expectation in God's promises.

Hope in the Bible's Old Testament

Hope is a prominent theme in the Old Testament, and the concept of hope is expressed in a variety of ways, including through the use of specific Hebrew words and through narratives and poetry. A few examples of hope in the Old Testament include:

Trust in God's promises: Many of the Old Testament writings express hope through trust in God's promises. For example, in the book of Jeremiah, God promises to restore His people after a period of exile, and the prophet encourages them to trust in this promise: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (*New International Version Bible [NIV]*, 1978/1990, Jer. 29:11).

Deliverance from enemies: The Old Testament also expresses hope in God's ability to deliver His people from their enemies. In the book of Psalms, the psalmists often cry out to God for deliverance from their enemies and express hope that God will come to their aid: "But you, God, see the trouble of the afflicted; you consider their grief and take it in hand. The victims commit themselves to you; you are the helper of the fatherless" (*NIV*, 1978/1990, Ps. 10:14).

Restoration of the land: Another expression of hope in the Old Testament is the restoration of the land of Israel. In the book of Isaiah, the prophet speaks of a time when the desolate land will be restored and made fruitful: "The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom" (*NIV*, 1978/1990, Isa. 35:1).

Messiah and salvation: Finally, the Old Testament expresses hope in the coming of a Messiah who will bring salvation to God's people. In the book of Isaiah, the prophet speaks of a "servant" who will suffer on behalf of the people and bring about their salvation: "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed" (*NIV*, 1978/1990, Isa. 53:5).

Hope in God's deliverance: In Psalm 42:11 (*NIV*, 1978/1990), the psalmist expresses hope in God's deliverance despite being in distress, saying, "Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God."

Hope in God's faithfulness: Lamentations 3:21–24 (*NIV*, 1978/1990) speaks of hope in God's steadfast love and faithfulness even in times of affliction, "Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: ²²Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. ²³They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. ²⁴I say to myself, 'The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.'"

Hope in God's plan for the future: Jeremiah 29:11 (*NIV*, 1978/1990) is a well-known verse that speaks of God's plan for hope and a future: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Hope in God's promises to Israel: The Old Testament is filled with promises of hope for the nation of Israel, such as in Isaiah 40:31 (*NIV*, 1978/1990), "but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."

The Bible also speaks of hope as an anchor for the soul (*NIV*, 1978/1990, Heb. 6:18–19), a helmet for the head (*NIV*, 1978/1990, 1 Thess. 5:8), and a source of strength and comfort in times of difficulty (*NIV*, 1978/1990, Ps. 31:24).

Hope in the Bible's New Testament

Biblical hope is rooted in the person and work of Jesus Christ who came to earth to save us from sin and death and to restore us to a right relationship with God. These are just a few examples of how the concept of hope is expressed in the Bible. In the New Testament, the Greek word for hope is “*elpis*,” which implies a joyful and confident anticipation of what is to come. The apostle Paul wrote about the Christian hope in several of his letters, emphasizing its central role in the lives of believers. For example, in Romans 8:24 (*NIV*, 1978/1990), he wrote, “For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have?”

The Greek word *elpis* (ἐλπίς) is used throughout the New Testament to refer to the concept of hope. It can be defined as a confident expectation or anticipation of something good, based on trust in someone or something. In the context of the New Testament, this often refers to the hope of salvation and eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ. The concept of *elpis* is closely related to the idea of faith, as both involve a trusting belief in something that is not yet seen or fully realized. However, while faith is focused on belief in the present, hope looks towards the future with expectation and anticipation. For example:

Hope in God's redemption: In the New Testament, Romans 5:5 (*NIV*, 1978/1990) talks about the hope that comes through the Holy Spirit, “And hope does not put us to shame because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

Hope in the resurrection: The ultimate hope in Christianity is the promise of resurrection and eternal life. 1 Corinthians 15:20–22 (*NIV*, 1978/1990) affirms this hope, “²⁰ But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. ²² For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.”

Hope in Christ's return: Titus 2:13 (*NIV*, 1978/1990) speaks of the blessed hope of Christ’s return, “waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”

The New Testament also emphasizes the importance of hope as a source of comfort and encouragement in difficult times. Paul speaks of the hope of glory in Colossians 1:27 (*NIV*, 1978/1990) and the hope of the resurrection in Acts 23:6 (*NIV*, 1978/1990). Peter also writes about the living hope that believers have through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead in 1 Peter 1:3 (*NIV*, 1978/1990).

Overall, *elpis* is a key concept in the New Testament, representing the confident expectation of future blessings and the trust in God’s promises that gives believers comfort and encouragement in difficult times. In summary, the biblical concept of hope is a confident trust in God’s promises and character, which gives us comfort, strength, and assurance in the face of life’s challenges and difficulties.

MARKETING AS HOPE

The biblical concept of hope is related to the field of marketing in several ways. In the Bible, hope is often described as a confident expectation or assurance of good things to come. This idea of hope can be applied to marketing by creating a message that gives customers a sense of optimism and a positive outlook for the future.

For example, a marketing campaign that highlights how a product or service can improve someone’s life, or how it can help them achieve their goals, can tap into the idea of hope, and create a

compelling and inspiring message for potential customers. Another way the concept of hope can be applied to marketing is by emphasizing the benefits and positive outcomes that a product or service can provide, rather than simply focusing on its features or specifications. This can help customers envision a better future for themselves and create a sense of excitement and anticipation, which can drive them to act. By tapping into the idea of hope and creating a positive, inspiring message, marketing can not only help to sell products and services, but it can also have a meaningful impact on people's lives.

Marketing is a crucial aspect of any business, as it helps in creating awareness about a product or service and eventually leads to its success. The marketing strategies used by companies aim to connect with the customers and build a strong relationship with them. A significant aspect of marketing that has a profound impact on the success of a campaign is the emotional appeal it creates in the minds of the customers. The emotional appeal can vary from happiness, excitement, and trust to, most importantly, hope.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN HOPE AND MARKETING

The connection between hope and marketing is complex and multidimensional. Hope has been recognized as a critical factor in human behavior, decision-making, and overall well-being. Hope is a complex and multidimensional emotion that has been defined in different ways by various scholars. However, one of the most widely accepted definitions of hope is provided by Snyder (Snyder, 2002), who defines hope as “a positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful (a) agency (goal-directed energy), and (b) pathways (planning to meet goals)” (p. 250). Hope is a positive emotion that can help people overcome difficult situations, maintain their well-being, and pursue their goals. Hope is often seen as a crucial factor in human decision-making, as it allows individuals to plan and pursue their goals with a positive outlook, even in the face of obstacles.

Hope plays a critical role in marketing, as it can help companies appeal to customers and build a strong emotional connection with them. The marketing campaigns that are built around hope can help customers feel positive and optimistic about the future. This positive outlook can lead to an increase in brand loyalty and customer satisfaction, as customers are more likely to have a positive perception of the brand and its products. Furthermore, hope can also lead to an increase in customer engagement, as customers are more likely to actively participate in brand-related activities and share their experiences with others.

One of the ways in which companies can use hope in marketing is by creating a sense of hope for customers. This can be done by emphasizing the positive aspects of the brand and its products, and highlighting the ways in which they can make customers' lives better. For example, a company can create a marketing campaign that emphasizes how its products can help customers achieve their goals and improve their well-being. The marketing message should focus on the positive outcomes that customers can expect from using the product rather than just emphasizing its features. This approach can help customers feel more hopeful about the future and more likely to engage with the brand.

Another way in which companies can use hope in marketing is by creating a sense of community. This can be done by encouraging customers to engage with the brand and with each other, and by emphasizing the shared experiences and values that customers have with the brand. For example, a company can create a marketing campaign that highlights the ways in which customers can work together to achieve a common goal, such as improving the environment or helping others. This approach can help customers feel more connected to the brand and to each other and can lead to an increase in customer engagement and loyalty.

Companies can also use hope in marketing by highlighting the role of their products in creating a better future. This can be done by emphasizing the positive impact the products can have on the world and by highlighting the ways in which the products can help address pressing social and

environmental issues. For example, a company can create a marketing campaign that emphasizes the positive impact its products can have on the environment.

FUTURE NEW BIBLICAL HOPE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

Researching the presence of biblical hope in marketing transactions involves examining both the principles of biblical hope and the characteristics of marketing transactions. There is an abundance of anecdotal evidence that suggests the concept of hope, as expressed in the Bible, can be found in the spectrum of marketing transaction activities. What is missing are the investigative studies that can provide a framework for theoretical research.

There are some general approaches that can provide the basis for further study. A place to start is by thoroughly understanding the concept of biblical hope. Biblical hope is often associated with trust, anticipation, and confidence in God's promises. It is rooted in faith and the belief that God's plan will unfold, even in challenging circumstances. Other approaches include:

Identifying relevant biblical principles: Researchers can study relevant biblical passages that discuss hope, trust, honesty, and fairness in transactions. They can look for teachings that emphasize treating others with kindness, not exploiting or deceiving them, and maintaining ethical behavior.

Analyzing marketing transactions: One could examine various marketing transactions across industries to understand the dynamics of these interactions. This could include purchases, negotiations, advertising campaigns, and customer relationships.

Identifying the characteristics of biblical hope in marketing transactions:

Transparency: Evaluate whether marketing materials and interactions are transparent and truthful. Transparency aligns with the biblical principle of honesty.

Fairness and justice: Assess whether marketing practices are fair and just, considering whether parties involved are treated equitably.

Customer-centric approach: Explore if businesses prioritize the well-being and satisfaction of customers, reflecting values of care and compassion.

Long-term perspective: Investigate if businesses focus on building lasting relationships rather than quick profits, aligning with biblical patience and endurance.

Ethical practices: Analyze whether marketing strategies align with ethical guidelines, avoiding manipulation and exploitation.

Gathering data: Data can be collected from marketing materials, consumer surveys, interviews with marketing professionals, and case studies. One can look for instances where these characteristics of biblical hope are present or absent.

Creating a measurement framework: One could develop a framework or checklist that incorporates the identified characteristics of biblical hope in marketing transactions. This could be used to assess marketing practices objectively.

Conducting comparative analyses: Researchers can apply the measurement framework to a sample of marketing transactions and rank them based on the presence of biblical hope characteristics. This ranking can be compared with other metrics like customer satisfaction, brand loyalty, and long-term business success.

Examining ethical considerations: Is hope present in marketing transactions that are considered illegal? Is there a point where hope influences behavior negatively and violates ethical standards?

Drawing conclusions: Based on the analysis, one can draw conclusions about the presence or absence of biblical hope in marketing transactions. The implications of these findings can be discussed for businesses, consumers, and society at large.

Providing recommendations: Analysts can provide recommendations for businesses to incorporate principles of biblical hope into their marketing strategies, emphasizing the potential benefits for long-term success and ethical reputation.

The study of biblical hope and marketing is complex and may involve interdisciplinary approaches that blend religious studies, ethics, and marketing theory. There is no shortage of opportunities to further study and research biblical hope in marketing. To that end, this article has uncovered some of the opportunities that can advance research in this area.

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