



Evaluating the Applicability of the TTM in the Marketing Practice of Krishna Consciousness in France

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Abstract: *Analyzing the promotional activities of Krishna Conscious communities of Europe a new model was discovered, in which they promote their religion by creating a tourist product in the form of rural community. The former analysis of the behaviors of the visitors of Krishna-conscious communities in numerous European countries has shown that the Transtheoretical Model of Behavior Change (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983) may be applied to study engagement to a religious community. In this paper, this model was tested via qualitative methods of observation and in-depth interviews on the example of New Mayapur in France, evaluating whether the model is applicable similarly to the other European countries analyzed previously. The aim was to find out whether the TTM is applicable in the case of New Mayapur. The researches have shown that TTM may be applied to the case of France, just like the other European countries examined before.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Analyzing the promotional activities of Krishna Conscious communities of Europe, a new model was discovered, in which the national communities initiate their activities of promoting the religion by creating a tourist product in the form of a farming or rural community. The other three types of institutions operated by the Krishna-conscious organizations – temples and centers, restaurants and educational institutions – focus their promotional activities on people, who are already acquainted and possibly engaged with the religion, while the promotion of farming and rural communities focus on the newcomer audiences mainly (Bence, 2014; Bence-Kiss, 2019; Bence-Kiss & Szigeti, 2020).

Since religions are highly bound by religious economies – meaning that the activities they carry out are highly determined by the principles of the religion – creating the tourist product is a good mean of overcoming the limitations and achieving more freedom in the marketing mix (El-Bassiouny, 2014, 2016; Hashim & Hamzah, 2014; Sandikci, 2011; Sandikci & Jafari, 2013; Wilson, 2012). When applying the marketing mix of services marketing, six out of the 7Ps are mainly determined by religion, leaving the marketers freedom only in terms of promotion. On the other hand, by creating the tourist product, religion will only influence, but not so strongly restrict the marketing mix elements. Communities devoted to Krishna Consciousness utilize this opportunity to attract and involve potential followers of the religion via rural communities operating as tourist centers all over Europe (Ann & Devlin, 2000; Bence, 2014; Hashim & Hamzah, 2014; Iyer et al., 2014; Juravle et al., 2016; Kuran, 1994; McDaniel 1986; Mulyanegara et al., 2010; McGraw et al., 2011, Shaw & Thomson, 2013).

The analysis of the behaviors of the visitors of Krishna-conscious communities in Hungary, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Germany, the Czech Republic, Italy and Ireland re-

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garding the religion has shown that the Transtheoretical Model of Behavior Change (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983) may be applied not only to measure the changes in individuals' change of behavior concerning addictions and health behaviors but also concerning engagement to a religious community. In this paper this model is going to be tested on the example of the Krishna-conscious community of France, evaluating whether the model is applicable similarly to the other European countries analyzed previously. The aim is to find out whether the TTM is applicable in the case of New Mayapur as well and to compare the activities of the community to those of other European countries (Bence-Kiss, 2021).

2. TRANSTHEORETICAL MODEL OF BEHAVIOR CHANGE (TTM)

The Transtheoretical Model of Behavior Change (TTM) is a model developed by Prochaska and DiClemente (1983) to conceptualize the intentional changes in human behavior. The model aimed to interpret what processes people fighting addictions or seeking for a healthier life are going through. It was tested and validated on twelve different health behaviors and showed consistency in the stages and processes of change. The model identified five stages of behavior change: precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action and maintenance, as Figure 1 shows (Newcomb, 2017; Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983; Szabó, 2016; Szakály, 2006; University of Maryland, 2020; Velicer et al., 1998).

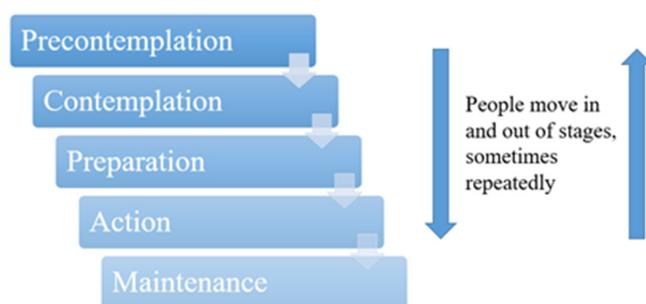


Figure 1. The stages of change in the Transtheoretical Model of Behavior Change

Source: author's own processing based on Newcomb, 2017

In the first, *Precontemplation* stage people are not about to make any changes to their behaviors and are sometimes not even aware of the changes that could be made. In the next, *Contemplation* stage awareness already arises and a motivation to change the behavior in the near future of approximately half a year appears. This stage is characterized by weighing the costs and benefits of making the changes and active information seeking, and the beginning of the rational decision making process. In the *Preparation* phase, the information seeking continues, but the decision has already been made to change the behavior within a short period of approximately a month. In this stage, individuals are usually not entirely committed to their decision to make changes. In the *Action* phase, individuals start to change their behavior actively; and this is the stage where relapse to the earlier stages is most likely in case of difficulties or the lack of reassurance. The fifth – and last – stage is *Maintenance*, when people have already been able to maintain the changed behavior patterns for at least half a year. In this stage there is still a chance of relapse, but over time it decreases compared to the action phase. The movement along these stages is often not linear and may take different time spans depending on numerous internal and external factors influencing the individual (Newcomb, 2017; Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983; Prochaska & Velicer, 1997; Szabó, 2016; Szakály, 2006; University of Maryland, 2020; Velicer et al., 1998).

3. RESEARCH METHODS

Qualitative research methods were applied to be able to compare the situation of the Krishna-conscious community in France to those of other communities previously examined. The first method applied was observation, which was carried out in form of a personal visit in New Mayapur, the rural community of France. The observations were unstructured and took place in July 2021. During the field research the main goal was to observe and identify the most important characteristics, which make the countries with farming communities stand out in Europe and to find similarities or differences in the case of New Mayapur in France. The community was analyzed along the marketing mix of services marketing (7P), aiming to identify the common characteristics in marketing services and religions, while also highlighting the most important shortcomings of the model in the case of religious communities. Following the field research observations, the molecular model – created by Shostack (1977) and applied by Srinivasan (2012) – was used to evaluate and summarize the most important characteristics of the community. Shostack and Srinivasan created the molecular model to analyze the offers created by service providers in details by visualizing the good and service elements of certain offers, which may own both tangible and intangible characteristics. This research applies an altered molecular model (based on the original work of Shostack) in order to distinguish and visualize the different elements of appearances of Krishna Consciousness in certain countries, regardless of tangibility. The modified molecular model aimed to identify those institutions and activities, which contribute to spreading the knowledge about the religion in a certain country. In order to confirm and clarify the results of the observations and to receive more detailed information on the operation of the community, an in-depth interview was also carried out with a member of the community, who has been part of its development since the very beginning. During the interview - which lasted approximately one and a half hours – topics on the life of the community in general, self-sufficiency, external relations, marketing activities, tourism and future plans of the local leaders were covered.

4. KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS AND TTM IN FRANCE

As the in-depth interview has revealed, New Mayapur, the rural community of France was founded in 1974 and flourished between the 1970's and the 1990's, when it served as the European headquarters of the religious movement, giving a home to more than 200 devotees. However, when at the beginning of the '90s the spiritual leader of the community left, it meant the downfall of New Mayapur: most of the inhabitants moved away, leaving only ten devotees to maintain the facilities, out of which only the temple is still there currently; the prosperous school of the community closed and the village was striving for survival. This meant that France has lost the main driver of promoting Krishna Consciousness for a while.

Recent times have brought a change in the life of New Mayapur; the number of permanent inhabitants tripled and as Figure 2 shows, the number of institutions and activities directed towards the external audiences has increased as well. The molecular model drawn on Krishna Consciousness in France highly resembles those of other European countries: religion as a product is mostly promoted via traditional means, such as proselytizing on the streets and selling books and charitable activities. The temples and the restaurants own websites and social media pages, but they focus on the people already involved in the life of the Krishna-conscious community, at least via nutrition. On the other hand, New Mayapur communicates not only with the current, but also with the potential devotees by offering them different ways of getting acquainted with the religion.

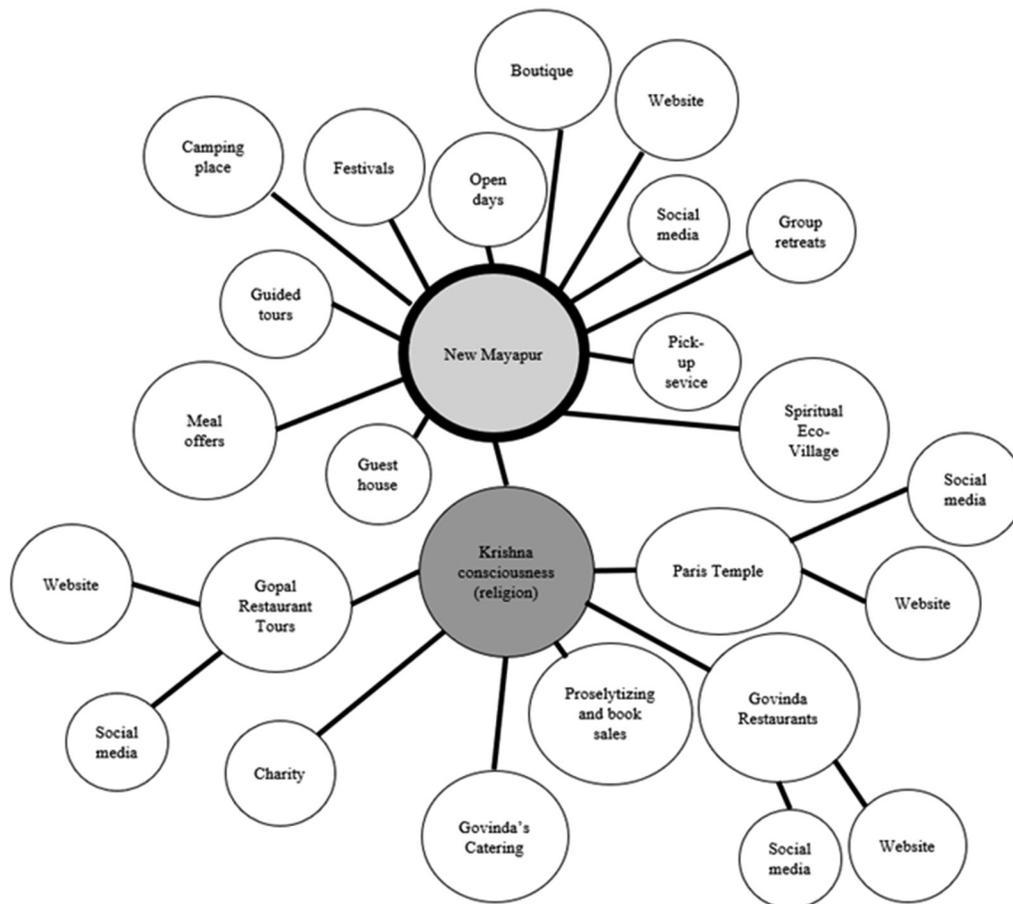


Figure 2. The molecular model of Krishna Consciousness in France
Source: author's own processing

As the observations have shown, currently the tourist product is still limited after the depression of New Mayapur: the opportunity to visit is given, complemented by guided tours, pick-up service, meal offers and a possibility to stay overnight at the campsite or in the guest house; but there is only one festival to attract larger audiences in a year. The *prices* are not yet well-set either: most of the services related to tourism are free, such as meals, only things such as overnight stays are charged. Usually, the prices of tourism services in communities devoted to Krishna Consciousness are utilized to diminish the perceived costs associated with the religion: people just invest small amount of money into tourism activities instead of feeling that they need to let go of their certain habits and join the community immediately, if they visit. In France, these positive effects could not take place yet, due to the tourist product being less developed and lacking a price structure. This also means that the ideal and engagement-free *place* of getting acquainted with Krishna Consciousness – the way rural communities usually serve – is not complete yet, therefore also not promoted so much. According to the in-depth interview, there are no intentions for more *promotion* yet – apart from the website and the social media pages already existing – since New Mayapur would not be able to serve the increasing tourists' needs at the moment. *People*, who live in the community are true representatives of Krishna Consciousness, following the guidance of the religion, but they are not yet able to take on further duties related to tourism besides maintaining and developing the community, and also the *processes* of the tourism hospitality are not clearly developed yet. The setup of New Mayapur resembles that of other European rural communities, where local architecture embraces the *physical evidence* of the Indian roots of the religion, merging the two cultures to provide a com-

fortable blend for both inhabitants and visitors. The additional facilities serving tourists' needs are currently being built: a restaurant and a yoga hall is under construction and the guest house is also being developed, which show good opportunities for further growth.

These features mean that currently, New Mayapur has only a limited ability to serve the purpose of promoting the religion along the lines of TTM: the limited marketing activities make it hard to reach people in the *Precontemplation* phase; and it is also hard to attract those in the *Contemplation* phase with such a limited tourist product and so few changes in the perceived price. The only way to attract these individuals besides tourism is the opportunity for volunteer work, which, according to the interview has been applied for many years; however, legal problems built obstacles for going further on this path. In the *Preparation* phase, New Mayapur can already be a little bit more successful thanks to the catering services provided by the community, which is only partially self-sufficient, but yet is able to offer meal services not only in the community building, but also externally. This helps a lot to those on the level of *Preparation*, since at this stage nutrition is the most important segment of the lifestyle changes made. There is also limited support in the *Action* phase, since the opportunities to move into the community are not so elaborate yet, which increases the perceived price at this stage too, due to the efforts that have to be taken to make ends meet as an inhabitant of New Mayapur, which also suggests that there are not too many options for supporting *Maintenance* either, in which stage the focus should be on religious life free from daily life struggles and educational opportunities provided to support further spiritual development.

There are clear plans in the community, however, to develop in all stages of the TTM: the yoga hall and the restaurant being built, together with the development of the guest house contribute to the creation of a more complex tourist product, which then enables New Mayapur to be more visible to people outside the Krishna-conscious community and attract more people in *Precontemplation* and *Contemplation* phases. The boost in tourism in return provides more opportunities for the devotees of New Mayapur, which makes it easier to support those in the *Preparation*, *Action* and even in the *Maintenance* phases thanks to better and richer job opportunities and higher incomes. Currently there is also a project in New Mayapur for building more houses, which improves the housing opportunities as well, and there are intentions to rejuvenate the school of the community too, which shows a direction towards the example set by the most prosperous communities of Europe, such as Krisna Völgy in Hungary, Bhaktivedanta Manor in the United Kingdom or Radhadesh in Belgium.

This implies that even though New Mayapur is only at the beginning of the second development path, TTM is applicable in their case too. On one hand this is proved by the first twenty years of the existence of the community, when the presence of the tools supporting the people in the different stages of the TTM resulted in a flourishing community. On the other hand, some features matching the general idea of the model may be observed nowadays as well, and as the interview has clarified, the intentions show towards the same direction as the largest European communities, where the actions based on TTM already take their positive effects.

5. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Being a relatively new area of study, there are plenty of opportunities to extend the scope of the work. Since the research so far were carried out with the help of eleven farming communities of nine countries, whereas there are a total number of eighteen rural communities in fourteen countries just in Europe, therefore the first further step after the current research should be to

establish a relationship with the Krishna-conscious communities of all the countries with farming communities to increase the volume of the research. After the completion of the research on the European continent, the same research structure may be extended to countries outside Europe, where Krishna-consciousness is registered as a new religious movement, which includes North and South America, Australia and Africa as well, but also parts of the Asian continent. The research was already expanded further on to evaluate not only the marketing activities but also their effects on the image and the reputation of the religious community, which could be a further direction regarding all the communities within and outside Europe. The complex analysis may further be extended to other religions, not only new religious movements but also other religions of the world.

6. CONCLUSION

In this research, the applicability of the Transtheoretical Model of Behavior Change (TTM) was evaluated in the case of Krishna Consciousness in France and the rural community of New Mayapur. Previously this model has proved to be applicable to analyze the behavior changes implied by the activities of Krishna-conscious communities in Europe in the cases of Hungary, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Germany, the Czech Republic, Italy and Ireland. In all of the countries, rural farming communities serve as touristic destinations to bring the religion closer to the people and create a space where they can get more involved in Krishna Consciousness without the burden of stronger engagement or obligations. These tourism destinations free the promoters of Krishna Consciousness from the boundaries of religious economics, which would restrict most of the elements of the 7P due to the fundamentals of the religion. The touristic destinations however may be promoted more free from these boundaries, which provides wider space for the religious community in terms of publicity and visibility. These destinations are a mean of attracting people in the *Precontemplation* and *Contemplation* phase of TTM to get more involved in the life of the religious community, while it may also contribute to the development of those in the *Preparation* phase thanks to providing support in nutrition, which is a crucial element of this phase. In *Action* and *Maintenance* stages of the TTM these communities may contribute by confirming the lifestyle changes via educational programs and workshops and providing job opportunities and even a place of living for those, who take the path of becoming a devotee.

New Mayapur in France is a community, which was prosperous and served the purpose of supporting people in different stages of behavior change between the '70s and the '90s, but had a downfall afterwards. However, currently there are efforts to recreate the prosperous community again, and the plans of the members of New Mayapur are directed towards creating the touristic destination and targeting people along the lines of TTM again, which supports the applicability of the framework in the case of France besides the other countries examined before.

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