

Social Marketing in Promoting Pro-environmental Behaviour in Not-for-Profit Organisations: A Case Study of Conventional Churches in Zimbabwe

Mercy Dube¹, Rukudzo Alyson Mawere¹, Sinothando Tshuma², Tendai Towo³, Delight Rufaro Hungwe¹

¹Midlands State University, Zimbabwe

²Zimbabwe Open University

³Bindura University of Science Education, Zimbabwe

*Corresponding Author's Email: mdube@staff.msu.ac.zw

Received: 30 August 2024| Accepted: 2 October 2024| Published: 31 October 2024

Abstract

Environmental awareness has become an interesting area of study for organisations since they all strive to contribute to the attainment of sustainable development goals. Social marketing is one of the key strategies that is being harnessed by organisations to promote sustainable consumption and encourage environmental conscious behaviour. This study focused on how conventional churches in Zimbabwe leveraged on social marketing to enhance pro-environmental behaviour among their congregates. The study adopted a qualitative research approach and an exploratory research design in data collection through focus group discussions and interviews. As the world becomes more aware of consumerism on the environment, organisations were increasingly focusing on sustainability through promoting pro-environmental behaviours among consumers. The findings showed that not-for-profit organisations like churches were aware of environmental issues and the leaders were also promoting the adoption of environmentally friendly behaviour. It was also found that the leaders were using different communication channels to share information related to environmental issues. However, some study participants indicated that the church had nothing to do with the natural environment. It was recommended that the churches needed to partner with other organisations and stakeholders for effective use of social marketing to promote sustainable behaviour.

Keywords: Eco-friendly, Pro-environmental Behaviour, Sustainable Marketing, Environmental Awareness, Sustainability

Introduction

In an era marked by escalating environmental concerns and the urgent need for sustainable practices, the role of social marketing in promoting pro-environmental behaviours has gained paramount significance. This study delved into the distinctive realm of conventional churches, examining how these religious institutions can serve as catalysts for positive environmental change through strategic social marketing initiatives. With an ever-growing global population and its associated ecological footprint, the imperative to foster pro-environmental behaviours

extends beyond individual actions to encompass collective and institutional efforts. The case study of conventional churches provides a unique lens through which to explore the integration of social marketing principles within religious communities, unravelling the potential for transformative impact on both individual behaviours and broader societal attitudes towards environmental stewardship. As we navigate the intersections of faith, community, and environmental responsibility, this investigation seeks to unravel the dynamics of social marketing in steering conventional churches towards a more sustainable and environmentally conscious future.

The World Commission of Environment and Development (1987) defines sustainability as a practice to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Likewise, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2002) asserts that sustainability is the consumption of goods and services that meet basic needs and quality of life without jeopardising the needs of future generations. To date, it is not in dispute that sustainability has filtered or pervaded many disciplines and non-profit organisations (NPOs) are no exception thus, sustainable consumption has gained some traction not only in the developed countries but also in the emerging markets. Sustainable consumption involves the process of planning, implementing and controlling the development, pricing, promotion and distribution of products to ensure that customer needs are met; organisational goals are attained; and the process is compatible with eco-systems (Fuller, 2002). As the world becomes more aware of consumerism on the environment, organisations are increasingly focusing on sustainability through promoting pro-environmental behaviours among consumers.

Amassed by the insurmountable changes of the climate, consumption patterns become pertinent in protecting the environment from the negative repercussions, and social marketing can therefore subsequently turn undesirable individual consumption behaviours to more sustainable ones, Rodriguez-Sanchez, (2023). The global environmental crisis has prompted an urgent need for collective action to address issues such as climate change, deforestation, and pollution. In this context, social marketing emerges as a powerful tool to influence behaviour towards sustainable and pro-environmental actions. This study focuses on exploring the effectiveness of social marketing strategies within conventional churches, aiming to understand how these institutions can play a significant role in promoting pro-environmental behaviours among their members. Conventional churches, as influential community hubs, possess a unique potential to drive change within their congregations (Adebayo & Govender 2020). Despite their spiritual focus, these institutions have largely remained untapped resources in the realm of environmental advocacy. Smith & O'Sullivan (2012) asserts that there is a growing awareness of the potential to utilize marketing concepts and techniques for the achievement of social goals. Churches as NPOs have goals and they strive to achieve their goals, and the attainment of the goals is also dependent on the environment in which the churches operate.

Understanding how social marketing can be tailored to align with the values and beliefs of conventional churches becomes crucial for leveraging their influence in fostering pro-environmental attitudes and actions. Organisations account for a greater negative environment impact (Smith & O'Sullivan 2012) and churches, as organisations, are no exception. This was because the congregates being people who make up the churches have a direct interaction with the natural environment in which they do their church activities.

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- To assess the existing levels of pro-environmental issues awareness within conventional churches.
- To explore the effectiveness of communication channels within churches for disseminating information on environmental issues.
- To analyse the influence of church leadership in shaping the attitudes and behaviours of congregants towards environmental stewardship
- To investigate the potential for collaborations between churches and environmental organizations to enhance the impact of pro-environmental initiatives.

Social marketing, an approach institutionalized in the 1970s by Kotler and Zaltamn, (Kotler & Lee, 2008). Garretson-Folse, (2012) Haq, et. al. (2013), Tkaczynskia, et. al. (2020) & McKenzie-Mohr, (2000) have alluded that social marketing is a concept that uses marketing techniques to design and implement programs that influence social behaviour of specific target segments of the public. The change intended by the use of social marketing, can either be behavioural or attitudinal, (Garretson-Folse, 2012). It is a long-term approach that makes use of the traditional marketing tools and techniques to create and implement programs for a specific targeted group, aimed at subsequent change in behaviour and attitude. It can be noted that, the social marketing underscores the pertinence of encouraging societies and individuals to adopt and maintain sustainable practices. Tweneboah-Koduah & Niblett (2005) asserts that to achieve social marketing programme objectives, the interventions often create new awareness and new attitudes that facilitate change in the form of action. Social marketing adopts the concepts and techniques of commercial marketing to influence target audiences to adopt or sustain behaviour, for example pro-environmental behaviour, in pursuit of social goals.

Social marketing evidently promotes institutional and organizational change that is upstream and systemic, and it also potentially influences and encourages pro-environmental behaviour, (Tkaczynskia, et. al. 2020; Gregory-Smith, et. al. 2017). Socio-psychological tools and incentives have been used in social marketing to foster change. Prompts, an example of the socio-psychological tools are messages in visual and audio format working to remind the target audience of the behaviour needing change, (Haq, et. al. 2013) Some social marketing programs have successfully, fostered recycling, donation of organs and other pro-environmental behaviours, (Garretson-Folse, 2012).

The implementation of social marketing has, through collaborative efforts of different stakeholders, fostered behaviour changes in pro-environmental behaviour of tourists; Tkaczynskia, et. al. (2020), and higher education students; Gregory-Smith, et. al., (2017), and but not limited to climate change; Haq, et. al., (2013). Scholarly evidence of social marketing in the church to create pro-environmental change is in its infancy, (Ives, et. al, 2023; Kaufmann, et. al. 2023 and Zemo, & Nigus 2020)

Pro-environmental behaviour is evidence of actions based on eco-centric environmental consciousness as opposed to anthropocentric environmental consciousness, (Maseno, & Mamati, 2021; Ives, et. al. 2022). The former is prioritizing a perspective that only humans and their interests have to be considered, whereas the later proposes that the value of nature should not be reduced to only focusing on human well-being. Intentional actions seeking to protect and sustain the livelihood of the environment can be regarded as pro-environmental behaviour, (Abdullah & Keshminder, 2020). The pro-environmental consumer is evidenced by the following actions; conserving water and energy, reducing waste, eco-shopping and consumption, eco-driving; that is minimizing the consumption of fuel as it emits gases harmful

to the environment, reduction of car usage and flights, (Whitmarsh & O'Neil, 2010 cited in Seitawan, et. al. (2021) and Abdullah & Keshminder, (2020). Pro-environmental behaviour in the context of religion can be depicted by the donations and contributions of money or resources towards environmental care, willingness or unwillingness to donate or contribute money and resources for environmental issues, intention to or protection of the environment, responsible and ethical usage of natural and environmental responsibility and ethical usage of natural and environmental resources (Zemo & Nigus, 2020; Abdullah & Keshminder, 2020).

Ives, et. al., (2023) mention that research on sustainability behaviour has been extensively done in so many areas, however research on the role of the church in transforming sustainable behaviour remains scanty. In recent years however the young generation have had a growing concern of the environment, (Maseno & Mamati, 2021). Some studies on pro-environmental behaviour have been done with the conventional church participants from the Anglican church, (Ives, et. al., 2022). However, the scholars have lamented over the limitations of the study; and question if the same research would elicit the same response if done in a different church and geographical area.

Pro-environmental behaviour is also centred on environmental concern. Environmental concern has been defined as the degree to which people are aware of environmental problems and support efforts to solve them and/or indicate a willingness to contribute personally to their solution. (Dunlap & Jones, 2002). Beliefs play a major role in understanding environmental concern. Dunlap et al. (2000) originally identified three beliefs fundamental to 'the new ecological paradigm', that is, 'balance of nature', 'limits to growth', and 'anti-anthropocentrism'. They later added 'human exemptionalism' and 'eco-crisis' (Dunlap & Jones, 2002). However, it is further argued that pro-environmental beliefs alone will not necessarily lead to pro-environmental behaviours. Other beliefs, that is, the belief that environmental issues create adverse consequences for valued objects and the perceived ability to reduce threat are fundamental to behaviour change.

An awareness of pro-environmental issues is shown by the level of consciousness and concern towards the livelihood of the environment, (Maseno & Mamati, 2021). Furthermore, awareness can be depicted through knowledge, experiences, concerns of environmental issues, (Sarrica, et. al., 2016). The Pentecostal church has been shunned for its emphasis on materialism, consumerism and the message on prosperity, without any focus on the environment within which they live (Maseno & Mamati, 2021). The level of awareness in the Pentecostal churches is low or next to none as revealed earlier. However, in some studies, findings show that some younger generation leaders are well versed with climatic changes in the globe and their prayers for rain are a sign of awareness of pro-environmental issues, (Zemo & Nigus, 2021).

Studies done in North America reveal the evidence of low levels of awareness and actions towards pro-environmental behaviour, (Ives, et. al., 2022). It would be imperative to find out if the case is ubiquitous in all religious denominations and sects and particularly for conventional churches in this study. The level of awareness of pro-environmental issues can be institutionalized through social marketing programmes as they create new attitudes and facilitate change in the form of action, (Tweneboah-Koduah, & Niblett 2005).

Communication channels have been regarded as the most effective tools in fostering a change of behaviour, evidenced by 85% rate of success, (Sanchez, et. al., 2023). In religious settings communication is done through sermons, worship services, educational programs, social media, websites, prayer meetings, outreaches and but not limited to workshops. Additionally,

Zemo & Nigus, (2020) highlight that the positive relationship between religion and pro-environmental behaviours such as donations for environmental causes is a result of encouragement to give through teachings, prayers and readings of sacred texts. Churches and their values have had a long-standing symphonic relationship with the environment they live in. These values are transmitted through teachings of ethical usage of the natural resources in the different meetings they hold, (Abdullah & Keshminder, 2020).

Churches use different communication channels to disseminate information. These channels can be effective to spread information on environmental issues. If environmental messages are incorporated in sermons, congregants may be inspired to action towards environmental protection. Recently religious communities have been called upon to participate in reshaping views of the world from non-responsibility to responsibility and respect towards the environment, (Abdullah & Keshminder, 2020). Sermons with environmental messages help to bring about awareness of environmental responsibility. Ntho-Ntho and Nieuwenhuis, (2016) have alluded that the combination of education and religion have a boisterous effect in promoting pro-environmental behaviour. Most churches offer educational programmes for the different age groups within the church. These include Sunday School and Bible study programs. Environmental issues and pro-environmental behaviour may be added to the curriculum to teach about the theological implications of protecting the environment and practical ways of sustainable living.

The media has been very effective in creating and influencing perception, (Zemo & Nigus, 2020; Abdulla & Keshminder, 2020). Many organisations have fast shifted to the use of social media to communicate and promote their products and services. The churches have also joined the bandwagon by creating and maintain an online presence through the use of social media platforms and websites. People value evidence and experience in environmental issues, (Cloere, 2016) and social media is one of the most important platforms to exhibit churches participation in pro-environmental behaviour. Churches could post about environmental events, campaigns and initiatives on Facebook, twitter, church website and any other pages to reach not only their congregants but anyone who gets exposed to them.

In essence, the communication channels within churches are effective in disseminating information about environmental issues which can successfully result in pro-environmental behaviour amongst the congregants. However, this may heavily depend on the amalgamation of thoughtful, consistent messages that engage and evoke to action. Churches may also add environmental stewardship into their mission and values to help sustain commitment to environmental consciousness.

In the findings of a study in a Pentecostal church in Kenya, leadership played a pivotal role in in shaping the attitudes and behaviours of congregants towards environmental stewardship, (Maseno & Mamamti, 2021). The findings reveal that leadership encourages the congregants to pray for the rain with an outlook of nature, crops, gardens and dams to be well watered. Commitment from religious leaders to steward the environment has a positive effect on the congregants to follow suit, (Gordon, 2013; Zemo & Nigus, 2020).

Wieseke et al (2009) argue that leadership behaviour plays a major role as a determinant of environmental awareness. Therefore, it is evident that church leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping attitudes and behaviours of congregates towards environmental stewardship. The church leaders discourage cutting down of trees by congregates during camp meetings and outdoor activities. The Seventh Day Adventist church Pathfinder manual (2018) has a mantra,

‘Take nothing but pictures, leave nothing but footprints’. This mantra encourages environmental stewardship among the children whenever they go for outdoor activities.

Leadership behaviour is the key mechanism by which culture is embedded in organisations (Schein, 1992). Organisations’ environmental values, typically articulated in vision and/or mission statements, shape responses to natural environmental issues by influencing which issues are identified, which appear on the organisational agenda, and which are associated with organisational responses (Bansal, 2003). Further, Bansal argues, organisational responses to natural environmental issues are determined by an alignment of organisational values and individual concerns.

Collaboration of different stakeholders in implementing social marketing has successfully yielded behaviour change in pro-environmental behaviour, (Tkaczynskia, et. al. 2020; Gregory-Smith, et. al., 2017; & Haq, et. al., 2013; Rodriguez-Sanchez, et. al., 2023). This kind of change requires participation of a variety of players, whose actions potentially the intended goals, (Tkaczynskia, et. al. 2020). Social marketing programmes to initiate change and foster pro-environmental behaviour are complex to design and require collaboration of different stakeholders. A study done in Canada, (Lakhan 2016) indicated that the municipality failed to promote recycling awareness through conventional training programs as the community indicated that they would rather be instructed and encouraged by the religious leaders. Thus the collaboration of the municipality and the church leaders may prove to be very effective in teaching promoting pro-environmental behaviour.

Abdullah and Keshminder, (2020) call for the integration of religious leaders and government to nurture pro-environmental behaviour. The government has an imperative role in formulating policies that ensure environmental sustainability. If the government partners with the church in conducting outreaches that educate and promote pro-environmental behaviour can positively steer the direction of the congregants and the communities at large towards environmental sustainability. The National Clean-up Campaign initiative by the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe has made it mandatory for organisations to partake in clean-up activities on the first Friday of every month. The churches, especially SDA are actively involved showing their commitment to the welfare of the environment.

The church can collaborate with different stakeholders, local government agencies, government, environmental organisations, community groups to exert efforts in addressing issues to do with environmental sustainability. Partnering on these different levels may enhance the reach and impact of initiatives that bring about pro-environmental behaviours.

Research Methodology

The study was qualitative in nature and an exploratory research design was selected as the most appropriate. Exploratory research aims to identify and clarify the nature of problems involving new insights and greater understanding of the issues involved (McGivern, 2009).

The target population for the study consisted of Seventh-Day Adventist Churches in three selected districts (Kwekwe, Chiwundura and Gokwe South) from the Midlands Province. The study was conducted during the periods when they had church gatherings which are usually done outdoor in the natural environment (termed ‘campsites’). A purposive non-probability sampling technique was adopted in choosing the study participants. Voluntary participation

was considered the optimum approach to achieving the research aims in that participants would be more likely to have been involved in environmental awareness initiatives.

Focus group discussions and interviews were used to generate qualitative data from the respondents. The qualitative nature of the study enabled the researchers to gather in-depth and detailed responses from the participants. Steyaert and Bouwen (2004) argue that group contexts, for example focus groups created by the researchers, are the most natural method for exploration and gathering knowledge, especially in an organisational context. Focus groups also avoid the reductionism of more structured techniques allowing normally unarticulated normative assumptions to be expressed (Bloor & Robson, 2001). They create a forum where participants can provide both previously shared and unshared information (Fern, 2001).

Fifteen focus group discussions from the three districts under study were conducted and five interview sessions were conducted from the same districts. The focus group discussions were between 30-45 minutes and the groups were made up of 15 to 20 participants of varied age groups. The age groups were the youths made up of age group 5- 9years, 10-15years, 16-20, 21 and above and lastly the adults age group consisting of married men and women. These were from the church congregates. The interview sessions were held with church leadership from the three districts comprising of five people who make up the church executive for each district. The interviews were transcribed, coded and analysed using Thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis involves finding patterns within the data which can describe, organise, and even interpret aspects of the phenomena (Boyatzis, 1998). According to Braun and Clarke (2019) thematic analysis is a flexible method which can be applied to different kinds of research enabling the researcher to follow a six-step process: familiarization, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up. Following this process help to avoid confirmation bias when formulating data analysis.

Results and discussion

The study findings revealed valuable insights into the contribution of social marketing in promoting pro-environmental behaviour among religious groups. The themes below were deduced from focus group discussions as well as interviews held with the participants.

Levels of pro-environmental issues awareness within conventional churches.

The first objective for the study was to analyse the level of pro-environmental awareness issues within the churches. Focus group discussions were conducted, and the following themes emerged from data analysis.

Theme 1: Theological and spiritual perspectives on environmentalism.

The participants were asked a question relating to their level of awareness of environmental issues and the impact of their actions on the environment. The responses from the participants clearly indicated that they were aware of the significance of environmental issues and how their actions can impact on the environment. Most participants highlighted:

‘We are the custodians of the natural environment, whatever we do must not harm or pollute the natural environment. God instructs us to take care of the environment as indicated in the

bible, Genesis 2 verse 15, which says that God put man in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. This means that as a church we are instructed to keep the natural environment’.

The above respondent was supported by another congregant that *‘we are the chosen custodians of the environment to our coming Lord and saviour, as a results on the judgement day we will account for all the ills we committed to this environment’*

However, there was different lamentations from another respondent that *‘this environment was cursed when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, as a result anything that tries to preserve this cursed earth is vanity’*

This response was supported by many who lamented that *‘the green environment was the Lord’s plan of creation, but sin cursed the land, it is now impossible to replace and replicate the ideal environment the Lord created, it requires intrinsic and extrinsic repentance, a really new gospel especially to the upcoming generation’.*

The above assertions concur with findings by Zemo & Nigus (2021) who asserts that the active involvement of churches in prayers for rain shows environmental awareness among congregates. `it is clear that congregates are enlightened on the issues to do with environmental protection from theological perspective. The findings on the theme contradicts findings by Ives, et. al., (2022) who asserts that on a study undertaken there were low levels of congregates awareness of environmental issues.

‘.....as churches whatever we do has biblical foundations, the bible in Psalms 24 verse 1 spells it out clearly that the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof. So we always do our best to take care of the surroundings, using them in such a way that do not results in degradation or pollution’.

From an analysis of the above response, it is clear that the levels of environmental consciousness among conventional churches is very high hence social marketing initiatives are promoting already existing norms, values and practices. The majority of environmental issues have their roots in human conduct (Hidalgo-Crespo, Velastegui-Montoya, Amaya-Rivas, Soto, & Riel, 2023) hence if the congregates have a significant level of awareness, the environment is bound to be protected. The theme concurred with Conradie (2012) who asserted that local churches have sense of responsibility which calls for stewardship. He went on further to say that the generalised called for stewardship may not be commensurate with the gravity and scope of environmental threats. Many local Christian communities and Christian organisations have therefore recognised the need to do more than that.

Theme 2: Congregational culture and environmental practices.

When people come together to establish churches, an organizational culture is established which is a system of shared norm, values and experiences that bind group members together. Congregational culture and environmental practices emerged as key theme in understanding the levels of pro-environmental awareness among churches.

‘we are always advised not to cut down trees during camp meetings. Only dried firewood is sold at the camps that will have been obtained after one has been given clearance by the Forestry Commission. The elders always give announcement prior to the camp informing us that no cutting down of trees is allowed’.

In order to minimize the negative effects on the natural environment, Christian groups are taking an active role in planting trees, and recycling litter. This concurs with the findings by Conradie (2012) who indicated that one may simply observe that Christians have begun to exercise priestly care of land entrusted to them.

‘The Pathfinder club actively interact with the natural environment through outdoor activities. As they go for the camp outs as leaders we encourage them to be environmentally friendly. We are guided by the mantra from the Pathfinder Manual which says; ‘leave nothing but footprints, take nothing but photographs’. This means that a culture of proper waste disposal is engrained on the kids at a tender age hence they grow up as responsible citizens with environmental welfare at heart’.

There are many reasons for engaging in the effort to enhance environmental awareness and action within the Christian church communities, there are thus considerable resources for a pro-environmentalist stance (Jerie 2010). This is evident on the above theme which clearly bring out that the church instils environmental awareness initiatives to all its members.

Theme 3: Congregates involvement and participation in environmental awareness initiatives.

‘...as a church we always participate in National Clean-up campaigns set for every first Friday of the month. The local authorities always remind us. We really enjoy the exercise as it gives us an opportunity to show that we abide by the rules of the land. This shows to the community that we are a church that has the welfare of the environment at heart’.

‘As Seventh-Day Adventist church, on the 16th of March every year we commemorate the Global Youth Day. The major activity on this day is to be involved in clean-up initiatives. We usually donate litter bins, enacting them on strategic positions within towns so that people can properly dispose of litter.

‘We usually participate in hospital clean-up and visitations as women in the Seventh-Day Adventist church. This is a way of participating in environmental awareness initiatives. Hence it’s a sign that we care for the welfare of the environment’.

The above citations clearly spell out that the congregates are greatly involved in environmental awareness initiatives. Feeling responsible to God the Creator could be a powerful incentive to pro-environmental concerns. According to Gottlieb (2003) environmental degradation is not only a health danger, an economic catastrophe, or an aesthetic blight but also sacrilegious, sinful, and an offense against God. Hence churches are not prepared to be aligned to sinful acts. Hosting regular clean-up events in local communities can help reduce litter and promote a sense of environmental stewardship (Klein 2023). However, there has also been deliberate dismissal by some environmentalists of the Christian religion as having anything constructive to offer about Human-Earth relationships (Booth, 1999; Naess, 1989). These scholars argue that the churches have no direct link with what happens in the natural environment hence they do not actively participate in environmental initiatives.

The effectiveness of communication channels within churches for disseminating information on environmental issues

The above objective focused on understanding the effectiveness of the communication channels within churches for disseminating information relating to environmental issues. The following themes emerged from the analysis of data collected from focus groups as well as interviews:

Theme 1: The church leadership always advice congregates on environmental issues.

‘Communication is important for the success and survival of our church. We are always up-to-date on current issues as well as contemporary topics like climate change and environmental issues. This is important in shaping our behaviour’.

Theme 2: There are effective communication channels used to inform the church members on environmental issues.

‘sometimes our leaders do not use effective ways of encouraging us to take care of the environment. Announcements during church services are not enough! We need to be constantly reminded that we must take care of the environment as well as dangers of not taking proper care of the environment’.

Another respondent supported the above lamentation that *‘not all leaders love and cherish the environment., Some of the leaders need luxurious stay in camps and to get the best camp accommodation they complement tents with tree logs as they will be in authority and face no condemnations of their ill practices’*

Theme 3: The church leadership is always in contact with congregates sharing information on environmental issues.

‘A variety of communication channels are used by the leaders to inform us on everything including environmental issues. However, some of the channels are not always effective’.

From the above analysis, it was clear that the church was not doing enough to communicate with congregates regarding environmental issues. There was need for effective communication channels to be adopted which reaches every congregate since they are geographically dispersed. Churches could organize workshops and seminars to educate their congregations about environmental issues and sustainable practices. These gatherings could cover topics like recycling, energy conservation and reducing carbon footprints (Klein 2023). These will be effective communication channels since all congregates will be actively involved and participating in the initiatives. Ntho-Ntho and Nieuwenhuis, (2016) further argues that sermons with environmental issues are also an effective channel for communication with church members.

The influence of church leadership in shaping the attitudes and behaviours of congregants towards environmental stewardship

The above objective was centred on the role of church leadership in shaping the attitudes and behaviours of congregates towards environmental stewardship. The following themes emerged from the data analysis:

Theme 1: The church leadership trains congregates on environmental stewardship and always remind them on its benefits.

‘The church leaders are the ones responsible for formulating rules and regulations that shape the behaviours and attitudes of the church. They are always informing us about the benefits of environmental awareness’.

Another respondent noted that: *‘The founding pioneers of the church built the church on the motion that preserving the environment is good as abiding to the Lord’s commandments as the green environment is the one that brings forth healthy balanced diet plates always being taught by the church (the vegetarian diet)’*

Another respondent supported the others that: *‘Early gospel missionaries when they came to Zimbabwe they brought the gospel packaged with exotic fruit trees that were not found in Zimbabwe and as we accepted the gospel we accepted to also cherish and conserve the environment we live in’*

Theme 2: There are laid down rules and regulations on environmental protection.

‘The Pathfinder Manual spells out what the children must do so that they do not pollute or contaminate the environment when they are involved in outdoor activities’.

‘....sometimes when you look at the colours for the Pathfinder club and Dorcas uniform you will realize that the green colour resembles the environment hence reminding us that we are the custodians of the environment’.

‘Church gatherings are always undertaken in natural environments hence encouraging congregates to live in harmony with nature. This is a way of teaching us to be concerned about the environment because failure to conserve it will mean having meetings in environments that are not conducive or friendly’.

The above themes clearly showed that the church leadership had an important role to play in making sure that the church members adhere to environmental issues. Wieseke et al. (2009) argues that leadership behaviour played a major role as a determinant of environmental awareness. This was because leadership had an influence on the overall behaviour of the congregates. Bansal (2003) argues that organisational responses to natural environmental issues are determined by an alignment of organisational values and individual concerns. From the above assertions it is clear that the values are determined and instilled on the members by the leadership hence leadership is vested with power for environmental awareness amongst the followers.

The potential for collaborations between churches and environmental organizations to enhance the impact of pro-environmental initiatives

The above objective focused on the collaborations between churches and environmental organisations to enhance promote pro-environmental initiatives. Churches do not operate in isolation; they work together with other organisations hence it is through these collaborations that they can work together for environmental protection. The following themes were derived from data analysis:

Theme 1: Partnership for environmental stewardship.

Most church leadership acknowledged that currently the church has no written doctrine that fosters partnerships with other institutions to protect the environment and ensure sustainable preservation of the earth's nature for the current and future inhabitants. It was also noted that on another aspect the church remains welcome to advisory by interested stakeholders or organizations on how best to safe guard the interests of the environment. A respondent noted that 'currently, we do not have any tangible partnerships with any external organization to foster environmental preservation but as a church we have laid down rules that we teach our congregants on how best to preserve the environment'

This response was supported by another respondent that *'a church we believe we can drive the green pro conservation alone as we are a big church in Zimbabwe, we believe we do not need any partnership as they might derail us from our beliefs and values as a church'*.

Theme 2: Faith-based environmental advocacy.

'Because of the Christ in us, we are environmental stewards and even our product consumption testifies that, our faith fosters us to eat clean, and only clean food is from a green environment' this was one of the response from the respondents. 'Our church supports the consumption of green food, as a result our faith and belief is made pure by environmental preservation'. This was another response from a respondent.

Many respondents mainly ordained ministers lamented that *'During trainings at theological colleges we have some subjects that focus on creation and many aspects on how to preserve the environ and increase green consumption are taught'*

This response was, however, criticised by many that, the content learnt on environmental preservation is very low, more content is on green consumption, which leaves a gap as to how do people sustainable ensure green consumption without being truthful stewards of the environment. Abdullah and Keshminder (2020) call for the integration of religious leaders and government to nurture pro-environmental behaviour. This shows that there is potential for collaborations among different stakeholders for environmental protection.

Conclusion and recommendations

The research findings highlighted that churches were organisations that were concerned with the welfare of the environment since the participants in the study alluded to environmental issues awareness and the availability of effective communication channels for dissemination of information. It was discovered that the church leaders were playing a pivotal role in shaping the behaviour of the congregates towards environmental stewardship. It was also highlighted that there were not clearly laid down rules on collaborations with other stakeholders on environmental awareness.

The study makes the following recommendations:

- The church needs to arrange for more pro-environmental teachings as mixed ideas relating to how to safe guard the environment were recorded.
- The church needs to input a doctrine that supports external collaboration to preserve the environment for future sustainable green marketing
- The teachings on how to become truthful environmental stewards should be practically done at theological colleges so that the teachings are mastered from the top of the organizational hierarchy.

- The churches are to partner with other stakeholders and agencies for environmental protection.

References

- Abdullah, M. S., & Keshminder, J. S. (2020). Religion and pro-environmental behaviour: a comparative analysis towards environmental protection. *International Journal of Environment and Sustainable Development*, 19(2), 174. doi:10.1504/ijesd.2020.106662
- Bloor, M., Frankland, J., Thomas, M., & Robson, K. (2001). *Focus groups in social research: Introducing qualitative methods*. London: Sage.
- Booth, A. (1999). *Does the spirit nerve you? Environmental spirituality*. Environmental Values, (8), 89-105.
- Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2019). *Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis*. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*: <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806> Clarion University of Pennsylvania, Clarion, Pennsylvania
- Conradie, E. M. (2012). *The Church and the Environment: Seven Stations Towards the Sanctification of the Whole Earth*. University of Western Cape. Article in Scriptura · August 2012 DOI: 10.7833/107-0-133
- Dunlap, R.E., & Jones, R.E. (2002). *Environmental concern: Conceptual and measurement issues*. In R.E. Dunlap & W. Michelson (Eds.), *Handbook of environmental sociology* (pp. 482–524). Westport, CT: Greenwood.
- Dunlap, R.E., Van Liere, K.D., Mertig, A.G., & Jones, R.E. (2000). Measuring endorsement of the New Ecological Paradigm: A revised NEP Scale. *Journal of Social Issues*, 56, 425–442.
- Fern, E.F. (2001). *Advanced focus group research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Garretson-Folse, J., A., (2012), Psychological ownership: a social marketing advertising appeal? *International Journal of Advertising*, 31(2), pp.291-315 DOI: 10.2501/IJA-31-2-291-31
- Gottlieb, R.S. (2003). *Saving the world: Religion and politics in the environmental movement*. In Roger Gottlieb (Ed.), *Liberating Faith: Religious Voices for Justice, Peace and Ecological Wisdom*. Lanham, M.D: Roman and Littlefield.
- Gregory-Smith D, Manikab, D., Wells, V., K., and Veitch, T., (2017), *Examining the effect of an environmental social marketing intervention among university employees*, *Studies in Higher Education*, Taylor and Francis, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2017.1309647> Hall/Financial Times
- Haq, G., Cambridge, H., & Owen, A., (2013), A targeted social marketing approach for community pro-environmental behavioural change, *Local Environment: The International Journal of Justice and Sustainability*, 18:10, 1134-1152, DOI:10.1080/13549839.2013.787974
- Ives, C.D., Buys, C., Ogunbode, C., Palmer, M., Rose, A., & Valerio, R., (2023). *Activating faith: pro-environmental responses to a Christian text on sustainability*. *Sustain Sci* 18, 877–890 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-022-01197->
- Jerie, S. (2010). The role of the church in sustainable environmental management in Zimbabwe: a case study of the Bulawayo archdiocese of the roman catholic church. *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa* (Volume 12, No.8, 2010) ISSN: 1520-5509

- Kaufmann, D., Tikotsky, A., Yoreh, T., and Tchetchik, A., (2023) *Engaging faith based communities in pro-environmental behaviour using soft regulations: The case of single-use plastics*, *Environmental Economics and Management*, Vol 10 <https://doi.org/10.3389/fenvs.2022.1019904>
- Key, T. M., & Czaplewski, A. J. (2017). *Upstream social marketing strategy: An integrated marketing communications approach*. *Business Horizons*, 60(3), 325–333. doi: 10.1016/j.bushor.2017.01.006
- Klein, C. (2023). *How Can Churches Engage in Christian Social Responsibility? Let's Get "Holy" Social! How Can Churches Engage in Christian Social Responsibility? Let's Get "Holy" Social!* (christianeducatorsacademy.com).
- Kotler, P. & Lee, N.R. (2008) *Social Marketing: Influencing Behaviour for Good* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Lakhan, C. (2016). *Effectiveness of recycling promotion and education initiatives among first-generation ethnic minorities in Ontario, Canada*. *Social Sciences*, 5(2). doi:10.3390/socsci5020023
- Lakhan, C., (2017) The garbage gospel: Using the theory of planned behaviour to explain the role of religious institutions in affecting pro-environmental behaviour among ethnic minorities, *The Journal of Environmental Education*, Vol 0(0), pg. 1–16 <https://doi.org/10.1080/00958964.2017.1337701>
- Maseno, L., & Mamati, K., (2021), 'An appraisal of the Pentecostal eco-theology and environmental consciousness among youths in Parklands Baptist Church, Kenya', *HTS Theologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 77(2), a6840. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v77i2.6840>.
- Mason, J. (1996). *Qualitative researching*. London: Sage.
- McGivern, Y. (2009). *The practice of market research* (3rd ed.). Essex, UK: Prentice
- McKenzie-Mohr, D. (2000). Promoting sustainable behaviour: An introduction to community based social marketing. *Journal of Social Issues*, 56, 543–554
- Muposhi, A., Mugwati, M., & Mawere, R., (2023) *Embedding Ecopreneurial Behaviour: Proposed Social Marketing Interventions from Value-In-Behaviour Perceptions of Plastic Waste Ecopreneurs* *Social Marketing Quarterly* 2023, Vol. 0(0) 1–17, sagepub.com/journals-permissions, DOI: 10.1177/15245004221150222
- Naess, A. (1989). *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Ntho-Ntho, A.M. and Nieuwenhuis, J. (2016) 'Religion in education policy in South Africa: a challenge of change', *British Journal of Religious Education*, Vol. 38, No. 3, pp.236–248, Taylor & Francis
- Peattie, K., & Peattie, S. (2009). Social marketing: A pathway to consumption reduction? *Journal of Business Research*, 62, 260–268.
- Rodriguez-Sanchez, C., Sancho-Esper, F.M., & Campayo-Sanchez, F. (2023). *A Systematic Review of Social Marketing Interventions to Promote Pro-Environmental Behaviour Using CBSM Benchmark Criteria*. *Business Research Proceedings*, X(X), 1-3. <https://doi.org/10.51300/BRP-2023-86>
- Rodriguez-Sanchez, C., (2023), *The role of social marketing in achieving the planet sustainable development goals, (SDGs)* *Int Rev Public Nonprofit Mark* 20, 559–571 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12208-023-00385-3>
- Spotswood, F., & Tapp, A., (2011), *Rethinking How to Tackle Binge Drinking Using Social Marketing: A Neotribal Analysis*, *SMQ | Volume XVII | No. 2*.
- Steyaert, C., & Bouwen, R. (2004). *Group methods of organizational analysis*. In C. Cassell & G. Symon (Eds.), *Essential guide to qualitative methods in organizational research* chap.12, (pp. 140–153). London: Sage.

- Tkaczynskia, A., Rundle-Thieleb, S. & Truongc, V. D., (2020), *Influencing tourists' pro-environmental behaviour: A social marketing application*, *Tourism Management Perspectives* 36 100740
- Tweneboah-Koduah, E., Y., (.....). *Using the Theory of Planned Behaviour in Social Marketing Intervention Programmes on HIV/AIDS*.
- Wieseke, J., Ahearne, M., Lam, S.K., & van Dick, R. (2009). The role of leaders in internal marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 73, 23–145.
- Zemo, K. H., and Nigus, H. Y., (2020) Does religion promote pro-environmental behaviour? A cross-country investigation, *Journal of Environmental Policy*, Vol 10(1), pp. 90-113
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21606544.2020.1796820>