Chapter One

Introduction

Chapter Objectives:

- To understand the complicated connection between religion and business achievement, particularly in an African context.
- To explore the impact of religious beliefs on business values, decisions and results.
- To examine the issues and opportunities that arises when you consider religious ethics and economic activities.

Throughout the globe and history, business has been the engine of societal transformation, creativity and economic development. However, under the veil of business and rivalry, the power that is easily ignored, affects how individuals go about achieving success: it is religion. The pervasive, although subtle, part that faith can play in influencing business values, decision and outcomes is an intriguing mystery given that economic theories and management strategies are the prevailing themes in business literature. To what extent are religious beliefs involved in business practices? Is it indeed the faith that makes one thrive and another succeed in the business world? Or are these effects less obvious as we would expect?

Faith and business have a very rich and complex relationship in Africa. In this case, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and African Traditional Religions (ATR) are not only a personal belief, but they also extend to the fabric of the ordinary, be it in the family rites of passage to the boardroom. The morals that these religions advance such as honesty, endurance, accountability, and a feeling of community are common in business transactions. However, religion might also pose some special problems or issues especially where the religious values appear to contradict the economic needs. Is it because of these very beliefs which are supposed to be guiding and inspirational that businesses are at times held back? Or do they, rather, equip business people with the strength and perspective to navigate in the uncertain times? The responses are also elusive, and the questions are not resolved (Maviya et al., 2024; Smith et al., 2023).

Regardless of their importance, the interrelationships between religion and business performance are not discussed in-depth particularly in the African context. Why are some business owners strengthened and even creative with their faith and others find it hard to deal with limitations that religious affiliation might bring? What role do religious networks play in terms of creating trust, collaboration, and even innovation? And how does it work when the ethical demands of a society are at variance with the acquisitive ambitions of a marketplace? Such are the mysteries and the contradictions, which this book is attempting to, unravel (Annuar & Ali, 2021).

Religion and Business Success is a call to explore past the superficial of business success and explore the underwater tides of belief that inform the African business environment. This book opens its doors to a world where faith and commerce are in surprising and even contradictory ways through stories, analysis and comparative perspectives. You will come across questions that upset conventional knowledge, and findings that could change how you perceive not only business, but also belief, as you go through the pages. The trip is going to be as thought-provoking as it is eye-opening do you feel like knowing what is really under the surface of business success?

Practical Questions:

1. What are the differences between the religious beliefs and values that influence the business owners in Africa?
2. How do the examples mentioned show the power and/or the restriction of faith on business success?
3. What role can religious networks play in terms of trust, partnership and innovation in business?