

Chapter 7

Marketing

Communications in the

Islamic Perspective:

Communicating the

Halal Branding

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ABSTRACT

Because the Muslim market is so large, its potential has become a focus of many studies. However, few companies have managed to crack into this huge and lucrative market. This chapter attempts to define the problems and obstacles faced by companies attempting to cover this market and understand where they have failed. Furthermore, the chapter then provides guidelines towards avoiding and overcoming these obstacles while simultaneously turning them into opportunities. In this chapter, it was found that the mistakes commonly made are due to the coding of the messages, the lack of trust of companies, as well as an overuse and degrading of the Halal brand. It also finds that by establishing trust and relationship with the Muslim consumers, as well as by spreading awareness of the Muslim needs and culture among the employees of the company, these issues can be successfully tackled.

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INTRODUCTION

In a world becoming increasingly globalized, and every market niche being targeted and covered, a population of over one billion people cannot simply be ignored from a business perspective. However, this is exactly what has been happening. The difficulty of understanding Islam, the fragmentation of the Muslim community across the world, inaccurate stereotypes and generalizations of Muslims that just won't go away, and many other factors have prevented companies from truly understanding the Muslim consumer. As Marketing is a very culturally dependent science, this lack of understanding of such a large segment has led to disjointed, unfocused, inconsistent and even culturally insensitive marketing efforts which badly damage the hopes of companies wishing to benefit from such a large and growing segment. The aim of this chapter is to separate Muslim consumers into different segments to focus the method of communication; then to create the framework for an effective Marketing effort by any organization whether it be local company in a Muslim country, a company targeting Muslims in a non-Muslim country, or even a global company operating in both Muslim and non-Muslim countries. This will be done by understanding the characteristics of the Muslim consumer, realizing how to advertise in an Islamic context, defining the Halal product, understanding Halal from the consumers' perspective, and finally creating and communicating a Halal portfolio.

BACKGROUND

Of all the different countries, cultures, ethnicities, norms and religions, perhaps the one most often misunderstood (and thus communicated with poorly) is Islam. Islam, as with most other major religions, is not merely a religion; it is in fact an entire culture that pervades across the different countries and unifies an otherwise completely diverse and unrelated group of people. This unity despite political, linguistic and social barriers is further strengthened by the prevalence of only one major branch of Islam (Sunni) with approximately 75% of the world's Muslim population adhering to it. Then why is it that communication with them is often so difficult? One reason is the dual nature of the unity of the Muslim religion and of Muslims themselves; for it can be said that Muslims can have the same *and* different views about the same words, teachings, and scriptures (Jafari, 2012).

These issues have created large hurdles to overcome, and overcome them we must because the size of the potential market of the Muslim community is huge — it is comprised of over 1.5 billion people world-wide with an incredible \$2.1 trillion global market (J. a. J. Wilson & Liu, 2010). This untapped market has increased the demand for expertise and knowledge on Islamic Branding (IB) and has generated

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