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## **Crescent Marketing, Muslim geographies and Brand Islam: reflections from the JIMA Senior Advisory Board**

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – To bring together the thoughts and opinions of key members of the *Journal of Islamic Marketing's* (JIMA) Editorial Team, regarding the recently branded phenomenon of Islamic marketing - in the interests of stimulating further erudition.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The authors adopted an ‘eagle eye’ method to investigate this phenomenon: Where attempts were made to frame general principles and observations; alongside a swooping view of key anecdotal observations - in order to ground and enrich the study. We participated in an iterative process when analysing longitudinal and contemporary phenomenological data, in order to arrive at a consensus. This was grounded in: Triangulating individual and collective researcher findings; critiquing relevant published material; and reflecting upon known reviewed manuscripts submitted to marketing publications – both successful and unsuccessful.

**Findings** – We assert that a key milestone in the study and practice of marketing, branding, consumer behaviour and consumption in connection with Islam and Muslims is the emergence of research wherein the terms “Islamic marketing” and “Islamic branding” have evolved – of which JIMA is also a by-product. Some have construed Islam marketing/branding as merely a niche area. Given the size of Muslim populations globally and the critical importance of understanding Islam in the context of business and practices with local, regional and international ramifications, scholarship on Islamic marketing has become essential. Western commerce and scholarship has been conducted to a limited extent, and some evidence exists that research is occurring globally. We believe it is vital for “Islamic marketing” scholarship to move beyond simply raising the flag of ‘Brand Islam’ and the consideration of Muslim geographies to a point where Islam – as a way of life, a system of beliefs and practices, and religious and social imperatives – is amply explored.

**Research limitations/implications** – An ‘eagle eye’ view has been taken, which balances big picture and grassroots conceptual findings. The topic is complex – and so while diverse expert opinions are cited, coverage of many issues is necessarily brief, due to space constraints.

**Practical implications** – Scholars and practitioners alike should find the thoughts contained in the paper of significant interest. Ultimately, scholarship of Islam’s influences on marketing theory and practice should lead to results which have pragmatic implications, just as research on Islamic banking and finance has.

**Originality/value** – The paper appears to be the first to bring together such a diverse set of expert opinions within one body of work, and one that provides a forum for experts to reflect and comment on peers’ views, through iteration. Also the term *Crescent marketing* is introduced to highlight how critical cultural factors are, which shape perceptions and Islamic practises.

**Keywords** Islamic marketing and branding, Muslim consumer behaviour, Marketing theory and practice, Halal, Muslim Youth, Nation Branding, Culture Theory, Hip hop, Indonesia, Malaysia, Middle East, Arab Spring.

**Paper type** Viewpoint.

## Background

It is often argued under the umbrella of postmodern social sciences, that the hallmarks of professionalism and rigor are grounded in hermeneutic principles of interpreting art and science from a position of relative dispassion. Traditionally, marketers are the messengers who convey messages, which shape perceptions of marketplace realities, but this does not necessitate that they place themselves within these meanings - instead preferring to take a back seat, as architects and encoders.

However, with the increased focus, efficacy, and impact of phenomena such as: user generated content; social media; expressions of marketplace tensions, such as anti-branding movements and single issue politics; consumer-centric models of co-creation; celebrity endorsers; and corporate and social responsibility - it is becoming increasingly difficult and even divisive for marketers to remain behind the scenes of the marketing theatre. Furthermore, previous analogies of marketers being orchestra conductors or architects also appear to have limitations. For savvy, engaged and information hungry tribes of consumers crave the knowledge that they are being served by marketers who share the same ideals and values. In this instance, the inference is that *authenticity* is ratified by those who practice what they preach, and openly stand alongside their communications and offerings.

In support of these arguments, we have chosen to highlight a phenomenon which exemplifies such a movement: namely, the rise of Islamic marketing. Bringing faith, the divine, and the sacred as well as the profane so forthrightly into the marketing mix attracts greater scrutiny from all stakeholders, regardless of faith. Furthermore, it is clear that rather than this phenomenon being a passing fad, it in fact appears to be a rapid heterodox evolutionary development in modern marketing. Muslims' core belief system is derived from religious texts, which nourish and reshape cultural norms and values.

When searching through online message forums globally and reviewing conference agendas especially in the Muslim world, using netnographic methods (Kozinets, 2002), it is apparent that a growing number of Muslim consumers and businesspeople are now demanding that commodities are not only compatible with their own desires and beliefs, but also that these commodities and commerce take centre stage as part of a process of thought leadership and divine worship. Whilst the desire is there and discussions are underway, finding published exemplars of such products and services globally, beyond promotional rhetoric, remains scarce. However, locally there is evidence of this trend amongst social entrepreneurs and small businesses.

Knowledge, theory and practice in this field is still relatively new, both inside and outside of the Muslim community - and so this paper is positioned as a phenomenological treatise, looking to raise key questions and help identify promising areas of research. Based upon our initial findings, it is judged that the concepts presented here are not only of benefit to marketers looking to cater for a growing and vocal Muslim global community (already accounting for a quarter of world's population), but also that the same theoretical underpinnings could potentially be applied to other 'minority', ethnic, cultural, subcultural, tribal and faith groups in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, a key question remains as to what underpins a collective faith and meeting of minds, where there exist intricate variables of culture, ethnicity,

schools of thought, transnationalism, and interpretations behind the meanings and drivers of conspicuous consumption. Furthermore, if established, there is evidence to suggest that these may in fact be a moving feast, as the Muslim population is changing rapidly - due to conversions; over half of the community being under the age of 24; and with this youth population being engaged in social hypercommunication, interactivity, and situational cultural hybridization (Ogilvy Noor, 2011; Wilson, 2012e; Wilson and Liu, 2012).

Even with the global Muslim population at 1.8 billion (Ogilvy Noor, 2011), size alone is not sufficient to justify the creation of a new subject. Also, if the wider landscape of faith-based marketing is important, it could be argued polemically why there is no Catholic marketing (1.2 billion followers), or Buddhist marketing (400 millions)? (Sandikci and Ger, 2011; Wilson and Hollensen, 2013). It is worth noting that Kartajaya and Dwi Indiro M. (2009) have written a book which looks marketing and cultural practices in Ubud, a city village in Bali, Indonesia, which is underpinned by Hinduism, however again with Hindus totalling 900 million globally, there is also no comparably overarching Hindu marketing subject discipline.

There are however books on Buddhist business and consumption practices (Badiner 2002; Kaza 2005), New Age capitalism (Lau 2000), material Christianity (McDannell 1995; Moore 2004), the marketing and consumption of Christianity (Einstein 2008; Miller 2004; Roof 1999; Twitchell 2004, 2007), Christianity and popular culture (Forbes and Mahan 2000; Lyon 2000; Mazur and McCarthy 2011; Schmidt 1995), the globalization of charismatic Christianity (Coleman 2000), and the globalization of Eastern religions like Buddhism and Hinduism (Campbell 2007; Partridge 2004). As this proliferation of titles suggests, there is much to study. Islamic consumption and marketing, and scholarship to date have barely scratched the surface of relevant perspectives.

## **Approach**

In line with the observations stated, the arguments developed in this paper are grounded in two principles. Firstly that the method of interpreting phenomena is governed by the experiences and expertise of researchers engaged in the field. And secondly, that the theory presented is contributing a new perspective: namely that the marketer (or collective of marketers) are an integral part of the authenticity and acceptance of the marketing proposition. The brand, campaign, ingredients, design, functionality and collective offering are strengthened by a marketer's overt presence – assuming that they are able to live up to the scrutiny of the consumer.

We also find that identifying the emergent phenomenon of Islamic marketing provides a fertile ground for new concepts critical to generative theory building. Literature on Islamic marketing, arguing for its significance and relevance, can be grouped largely into three observations and by extension, standpoints:

1. **The economic argument** – where data is presented and calculated to demonstrate the market potential through financial value; and future sustainability through population figures
2. **The consumer-based perspective** – which articulates that beyond the market value and size, there exists a consumer-based religious obligation to develop the sector, which views profits as one criteria, but not necessarily the key criterion.
3. **The geopolitical imperative** – where commerce linked with Islam is influenced by geopolitics, which reciprocally affects factors such as international relations, political stability and national brand equity.

Collectively, these three points suggest establishing Islamic marketing as an important field; a school of thought; and on a macro level, a contributor of knowledge of relevance to mainstream marketing. Furthermore, these points can be summarised under one paradigm, which argues for Islamic marketing reaching out beyond one religion and beyond Muslims. To this end, Islamic marketing is positioned as being similar to other previous movements and groups, which have gravitated towards the mainstream, such as with Chinese management as an analogy (Barney and Zhang 2009); and also Feminism; Fair Trade; Japanese culture and total quality management; and Black entertainment, amongst others.

As Islam is classified as a religion, such a positioning may be viewed by some as an inflammatory statement. However, we argue that Islam and Muslims articulate that they are not so much about being a religion by conventional interpretations; rather more accurately, a way of life and lifestyle choice - as a holistic lived experience, with Islam being intended to govern all decisions and judgements. The key Arabic term used by Muslims is *deen*, which goes beyond the restricted sense of religion. *Deen* has no direct translation, but is used to describe faith, judgement, decision, allegiance, path, and way of life. Therefore, if individuals in a particular space and context can be defined according to for example, feminism, capitalism, Marxism, Hip-hop, football, or national identity, then this is their *deen*.

Whilst Islamic scholars may posit discussions back towards instructive and didactic religious texts, on another level, Islam also accepts the limitations of humans, their free will and differences, which have to be preserved. Chapter 49, verse 13 of the Qur'an states that Allah (God) created humans from one origin, but made us into nations and tribes so that we would know more about each other, the reality of our surroundings, the nature of our existence and our creator. As an extension of this argument, we have also reviewed wider cultural theory topics, which present possible lacks of a tenable dichotomy being reached – cases in practice being Afro-centrism and '*blackness*' in a contemporary context, which will be discussed in more detail later.

Interestingly, one of the further key themes from the Oxford Islamic Marketing and Branding Forum was whether Islamic branding and marketing could be used to tackle wider global issues affecting Muslims at a political, societal and international level. However, this may be a bit too ambitious and unrealistic. After all, Islamic marketing is largely about having a better understanding of the diverse Muslim consumers and designing integrated marketing better placed to serve their needs. If the view is that social cohesion and mobility can be achieved through linking Islam and Muslim geographies with education, tailored product offerings, sympathetic messaging, and

consumption linked with Islam made conspicuous – then perhaps scholars and industry can play a part in bridging gaps more successfully than in existing subject disciplines rooted in the humanities.

Due to the significance of this lived cultural experience, we use the allegory of the crescent – which is a powerful symbol not only in the Muslim world, but also in other Eastern religions hailing from India, China and Japan. We argue that a new dawn is on the horizon - that can be observed by the sighting of a new moon, which craves authentically marketed value propositions, offered by marketers who stand side by side with their offerings.

## Method

We adopted an ‘eagle eye’ method to investigate this phenomenon: where having circled and hovered above the phenomenon and its surrounding landscape, we then made attempts to frame general principles and observations; alongside a swooping view of key anecdotal observations - in order to ground and enrich the study.

Inspiration for this method was taken from Sidney J. Levy’s presentation at the 2012 Consumer Culture Theory conference, at Saïd Business School, University of Oxford. Levy used the analogy of a fish ‘swimming in the culture’ as a description for his approach. From a Culture Theory perspective, he spoke of the necessity of researchers being immersed within a sea of culture and that particular geographies and cultural settings required further intuitive interrogation. Furthermore, Holt (2004) argues for the *cultural approach* widening the field of analysis, by embodying a view, which he terms comparably as a ‘bird perspective’ - drawing from anthropological narratives and inductive reflections from within societal phenomena.

To this end, we participated in an iterative process when analysing longitudinal and contemporary phenomenological data, in order to arrive at a consensus. This was grounded in: triangulating individual and collective researcher findings; critiquing relevant published material; and reflecting upon known reviewed manuscripts submitted to marketing publications – both successful and unsuccessful.

The method of investigation draws on the expertise of the authors, as a panel of research active experts who serve on the editorial advisory board for the *Journal of Islamic Marketing* alongside other marketing journals. In tandem with their own research activities, serving on editorial boards offers them exposure to regular subject specific manuscript submissions and peer review feedback, which positions them firmly as experts in the field. Based upon this emersion, research for this paper was conducted through an iterative process of investigation and knowledge sharing, in order to arrive at a collective consensus, which shares methodological parallels with modified Delphi studies (Powell, 2003). The Delphi ideal is one of unearthing knowledge beyond truisms, and so cannot be assessed according to the usual psychological test criteria of reliability and validity. Rather, it is a procedure for “structuring a group communication process so that [it] is effective in allowing a group of individuals, as a whole, to deal with complex problems” (Linstone and Turoff, 1975 p.3).

We have to say that this process was engaging, highly informative and a great learning experience for all of us. It wasn't easy to arrive at a final consensus and it took the best part of a year to bounce ideas, write and revise the paper. From the length of the paper, which was meant to be a relatively short viewpoint piece, it is perhaps also apparent that the size of topic and what still remains under researched is great. Furthermore, we were driven by a passionate and scholarly desire to capture enough of our experiences, in sufficient depth. Also, we encourage other scholars and practitioners to document more of their discussions in a similar way - especially following conferences, business meetings, research workshops, and as part of exploratory studies. Committing such discussions to print, documents valuable information and knowledge sharing, which perhaps might otherwise be lost, and is conducive to refining conceptual arguments.

### Reflections on key literature

There has recently been a blossoming of research interest in Islamic marketing and Islamic consumer behaviour (Alserhan and Alserhan, 2012). Among the indicators of this growing interest are the publication of the *Handbook of Islamic Marketing* (Sandikci and Rice 2011); *The Principles of Islamic Marketing* (Alserhan, 2011); *Marketing Dans Un Environnement Islamique* (Nestorovic, 2009)<sup>1</sup>; *Marketing in the Emerging Markets of Islamic Countries* (Marinov, 2007); the publication of several articles about Islamic topics in the *Journal of Consumer Research* (Sandikci and Ger 2010, Karababa and Ger 2011; Izberg-Bilgin, forthcoming); and the 2010 initiation of the *Journal of Islamic Marketing*. Conferences and special issues of journals on Islamic marketing offer further evidence [listed in the references section]. Notably, all of these developments have been in English, as the English-speaking world seeks to discover more about Islam, Islamic Consumers, and marketing to these consumers (Jafari et al., 2012). There are multiple causes for this surge of interest, including: growing multiculturalism in the world; the on-going "Arab Spring" in the Middle East; the rise of influence of Al Jazeera (both English and Arabic); the increasing wealth of Arab Gulf nations; and the wave of Islamization in response to Western reactions and military actions following the September 11, 2001 World Trade Center attacks. These occurrences have contributed toward a period of global reorientation and JIMA is well situated to help stimulate scholarship and research on topics of increasingly vital interest (Alserhan, 2010a).

The study of Muslim consumers, Muslim entrepreneurs, branding and business practices in Muslim contexts has gained recent interest from academics and business practitioners from all over the world (Wilson and Hollensen, 2010, 2013; Wilson and Liu, 2010, 2011; Temporal, 2011; Alserhan and Alserhan, 2012; Wilson, 2012a,b,c,d,e). This rise of attention can be explained by the increasing economic, political and cultural power of Muslims in Muslim-majority and minority countries as well as the emergence of a new middle class of Muslim consumers striving to strike a balance

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<sup>1</sup> Whilst written in French, Nestorovic's work has nevertheless attracted much attention internationally and has been subsequently delivered in English. On 17th May 2012 Nestorovic was awarded 'Professor of the Week' by the Financial Times, for his work in the field of Islamic Marketing (Financial Times, 2012)

between their Islamic values and the marketplace offerings of the global consumer ethos (Sandikci, 2011; Sobh, Belk and Gressel, 2012; Alserhan, 2010b,c; Wilson and Liu, 2010). In many Muslim countries like Turkey, Malaysia, Indonesia and Gulf countries, the omnipresence or resurgence of Islam and religious values in shaping identities and informing behaviour, coupled with the accumulation of wealth and increasing integration of these countries into the global economy, have resulted in large segments of ultramodern and empowered Muslim consumers keen to partake in global consumer culture, yet striving to remain faithful to their Islamic values in their everyday practice (Sandikci and Ger, 2011; Alserhan, 2010b,c; Wong, 2007). The outcome is the emergence of negotiated multilayered Muslim identities and lifestyles worthy of exploration by both practitioners and academics.

There exists long-standing interest in cultural research, with some earlier work making comparisons of marketing and consumption between developing countries in the Islamic and Christian worlds, and Islamic consumption practices within what are predominantly Western, Christian markets (Belk and Ger 1994; Belk, Ger, and Askegaard 1997; Ger and Belk 1999; Caglar, 1995). More recently, there has been research on modesty versus vanity in covered women's appearance (Jafari and Maclaran, forthcoming; Sobh, Belk and Gressel 2012, 2010; Sandikci and Ger, 2005); privacy and gendered spaces in Arab homes (Belk and Sobh 2008, 2010; Sobh and Belk 2010b, 2010c); consumption rituals associated with Ramadan in Muslim majority and minority contexts (Sandikci and Ömeraki, 2007; Hirschman, Ruvio, and Touzani 2011); and Arab hospitality at personal, commercial, and national levels (Belk and Sobh 2012, Sobh and Belk 2011a). Much of this latter work has been visual and has involved both still photography and videography, which signals the breadth of research approaches and methods needed to help "lift the veil" on the mysteries of Islamic consumption as currently seen by the West. The driving factors of these studies, as seen by the authors of these papers are to show the dynamic and changing character of Islamic consumption practices, focusing attention on issues of gender, modernity, and inter-ethnic relations in the Muslim World.

Following critical examination of the literature, this appears to be an opportune time for research involving Islamic consumption and marketing (Wilson, 2011a,b,c; Jafari, 2012; Jafari and Süerdem, 2012; Jafari and Goulding, 2008, 2012). Not only are the academic and business markets anxious for such research, the mutual definition of self and *Other* is thrown into high definition in a globalizing and shrinking world. As in other multinational contexts, there are issues of how to respect and become more knowledgeable about Islamic values, to appreciate the multiple cultures of Islam, to become aware of the competing swirl of values within Islamic societies and between Islamic and non-Islamic societies, and to envision new opportunities for greater cultural and marketing exchanges (Abdullah, 2008; Ahmed, 2008; Sandikci and Ger, 2011; Wilson and Liu, 2011). The implications for practitioners are that there are numerous opportunities apparent for marketing in Islamic cultures. There are also numerous challenges for Islamic businesses to market consumer goods globally. The resources exist to become more of a global player beyond merely marketing to the Islamic Diaspora, acting as an invisible part of the global supply chain, or buying up existing businesses. But there are barriers in terms of entrepreneurial skills, education, and global market stereotypes and expectations (Wilson, 2012a,b,c). While



it is increasingly easy to find treatments about marketing to the Islamic consumer, it is difficult to find much of anything about marketing by the Islamic businessperson. Given the great history of Islamic merchants, this is ironic.

### **Shaping the Crescent Marketing phenomenon**

The following section groups the main literature findings, existing empirical data and expert observations, in order to establish a basis for further theoretical developments. The term *Crescent marketing* is presented here to illustrate key points of debate stated earlier, which will be followed by key findings. By shifting attention onto the symbolism of the moon, we wanted to move away from that of the sun - which is often used to reflect upon notions of rising and setting enlightenment and power in the East and West.

The sun is essential to the daily worship of Muslims, governing times of prayer - but the lunar cycle sets the Muslim calendar and dictates when further worship such as fasting should be observed. Because of this, some older Orientalist texts have previously made erroneous and derogatory assertions that Muslims are moon worshippers, which fuelled critical responses from Said (2003). Our focus is on encouraging a longer-term and cyclical perspective towards Islamic Marketing (IM) - across the sacred, profane and mundane. Taking a more esoteric perspective, the moon's omnipresence reflects sunlight, moving through phases of partial or full visibility - which by allegory we use to highlight the moving conspicuous and inconspicuous nature of IM. Furthermore, the symbolism of the moon has also been linked with the East, seduction, passion, romanticism, lunacy, irrationality and darkness (with all of its relative connotations). It is apparent that IM is open to misunderstandings and suspicion - as this newly found passion is sometimes eclipsed by aspersions in some quarters of lunacy and irrationality. From these, we argue that the full emotional experience of participants and observers within the field of IM should be examined.

Anecdotally, the crescent was not originally a symbol of Islam, but came afterwards - perhaps in response to the strong symbolism of other faiths such as Christianity, or through embracing the significance of the crescent in other Eastern religions and cultures. We have reflected upon this final point and considered whether Islamic marketing is following the same path. Firstly, is it an offensive or defensive stance in response to Christian-centric theoretical marketing iconography? And secondly, could it even entertain the idea of pluralism - as Islam states that everything is permissible, unless stated otherwise?

Table 1. Highlighting recent phenomena in the field

*In alphabetical order, rather than ranking according to significance*

<b>Phenomenon</b>	<b>Description</b>
Education	Increase in Western university satellite campuses in Muslim countries. Increase in business and management courses with Islamic studies content and Muslim languages globally.
Emerging market overlap	China has as an estimated 20-100 million Muslims. India has 160 million Muslims. Growing number of Hispanic and Latino Muslims.
Emerging markets	Indonesia: university figures, social media, political imperative. With 17,500 islands, Indonesia is the most populous Muslim nation, with 240million Muslims.
English Language significance	The shift towards the use of English in trade and commerce. The rise in English language Islamic instruction and materials. A key factor being that the majority of Muslims are non-native Arabic language speakers, whilst Arabic remains the language of Islam.
Evangelical conspicuous consumption	The role of symbolism in affirming and celebrating a strong religious and contemporary identity, beyond mere shariah compliance. Single issue politic and boycott groups, also with alternative product offerings e.g. the 'Cola wars' (Qibla, Evoca, ZamZam, Mecca)
Halal as a common denominator	Non-Muslim owned companies offering halal approved commodities across the board, outside of the Muslim world. This has been adopted for example in key cities and locations in the UK, by Subway, KFC, Nandos
Halal ingredient certification	Meat, Fast Moving Consumable Goods (FMCG), leather, cosmetics and pharmaceuticals. The growth in halal certification bodies.
Halal living	Music, films, entertainment, comedy, art, and fashion. Halal certified hotels and holiday packages. Visibly vocal and practising Muslim entertainment artists and athletes. Muhammad Ali and Yusuf Islam perhaps being the catalysts.
Halal supply chains	Logistics and supply chain processes in compliance with shariah principles.
Islamic Finance and Banking	The growth of shariah compliant financial models and offerings, including: microfinance, insurance ( <i>takaful</i> ) and bonds ( <i>sukuk</i> )
Manufacture and commodities	9 of the top 10 oil and gas reserves Iranian and Malaysian car manufacturing agreements. Joint ventures with Korean and French car manufacturers. Car trade and assembly agreements with South America. Clothing production in Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Turkey. Condom production in Malaysia. Rice production in Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh. Spices and fragrances throughout the Muslim world.
Muslim brands	Al-Fakher, Al Jazeera, Bateel, Emirates, Etihad, Ghraoui, HSBC Amanah, Jumeirah Group, Malaysia Airlines, Petronas, Qatar Airways, Royal Brunei Airlines, Turkish Airlines, Ülker [also owner of Godiva], Yusuf Islam, as mainstream offerings, which celebrate their Islamic heritage.
Muslim diaspora	Growing significance in terms of spending power, population figures, and political interest of Muslim minority groups in Europe, North America, South Africa and Australia.
Redefined modesty	Modesty no longer being judged on lines of anonymity, frugality, and shyness. Branded inconspicuous and conspicuous formed consumer identities. Accentuated 'modest' visible beauty. Aesthetic attractive modesty as a proselytizing instrument. Lifting perceptions of 'misery equalling piety'

Social media political religiosity	Social media used to mobilize political activism. Notably, the Arab Spring and single issue politics boycott movements.
Social media religious instruction	The internet as a resource for information gathering and knowledge sharing. Online searches for religious and legal verdicts; halal and ingredient verification. Prayer timetable and compass Apps.
Spiritual tourism	Packages framed as holidays, which allow for worship and pilgrimage, while enjoying recreational and social activities.
Sports and sponsorships	The rise in sports competitions, and professional training facilities in the Gulf region. Sponsorship of Soccer and Rugby football teams and stadiums. World Cup 2022 in Qatar.
The Prophet of profithood	The Prophet Muhammad and his companions as timeless exemplars for both marketers and consumers. A focus not just on LifeTime value, but also <i>AfterLifetime</i> value
Tourist hubs	The Gulf region as a both a tourist destination and stop-over. Malaysia being branded as 'Truly Asia'
Trade hubs	Relocation of businesses, additional headquarters, and free trade zones in the Gulf region. Brunei Halal Hub.
Tribal sub-culture hybridization	Muslim youth mediating complex situation specific identities. A key observation being the significant influence of Afro-American culture and civil rights movements. Notable examples being: Malcolm-X, Hip hop, fashion and food. Citizen journalists and user generated content sharing lived experiences, which look to lift the veil. For example reasons for conversion; various fashionable ways to tie a headscarf.
Unifying concept of <i>Ummah</i> and its interplay with Cultural Nation Branding	A global Muslim identity, which crosses socio-economic groups, ethnicities and nations – most evident when observing Muslim pilgrims in Mecca.

## Key Discussions

The following phenomena are held to be the most significant topics, which will influence how practitioners serve these growing markets and Muslim geographies. Comparably, it is suggested that these are the areas most in need of further empirical investigation and academic research.

## New perspectives on faith

Our position is to interpret religion in the modern urban world as a form of *neo-spiritualism*, a concept used by Watanabe (2007), which we argue here can lead to better understanding. Neo-spiritualism is a term we use to extend the frame of reference offered by the Arabic word *deen*, to also encompass Consumer Culture Theory – to mirror the phenomenon of how consumerism and consumption linked to Islam has risen in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Furthermore, with an increase in economic migrancy, religious conversions, and mixed-parentage relationships: race and nationality are often poor indicators of consumers' value systems – despite conventions still linking them with religion and behaviour. Instead, understanding a Muslim culture of dynamic social networks and nodes of socialisation, linked with possessions, rituals, space, time and context is vital. For some, spirituality is governed by Islam, but this spiritual observance can also share commonalities with music and sport practices – both of which have fan(atic)s. Therefore, at this stage of discovery,

the social sciences can offer contributions beyond those of theologians, concerning Muslim and interconnected non-Muslim thoughts, feelings and actions in the widest sense. First and foremost, marketing is concerned with the needs and desires of humans – and to some extent needs to maintain a level of hermeneutical apoliticism, non-partisanship, and even irreligiosity.

This may seem like a strange recommendation within the field of Islamic marketing, however we believe that even within orthodox Islam there is a similar pursuit. Central to Islam is the concept of negation, followed by acceptance. The first part of the declaration of Muslim faith, the *shahadah*, which all Muslims must proclaim, reaffirm frequently, and adhere to, is split into two parts. It states that: *'there are no gods or anything else worthy of worship, except Allah [the one God, sole creator and supreme being, of whom there is no likeness or comparable]'*. Here, Muslims have to understand what is *not* before they can understand and affirm what *is*.

Moving forward, Muslims seem set to gravitate toward greater collaborative consumption and new ways of interpreting what faith means – and how it shapes life in the here and now. This could mean that the role of the imam (religious leader) or scholar changes. Rather than being autocratic sources of knowledge and verdicts, they will be brought into an arena of democratic collaboration and consultation with the wider Muslim community using the internet and social media. This is especially evident with Muslim youth, who check and check again, and are engaged in hypercommunication via wide ranging transnational social media sources. Here, share of voice, expression, opinions, reciprocity, and seamlessly moving between the sacred, profane and mundane in the same conversation are commonplace. A notable example of this can be taken from the Arab Spring – where communities mobilized themselves using social media, in a form of leaderless opposition.

### **Conversions and reversions to Islam**

More commonly in the fields of sociology and political science, there has been a growing interest into the drivers behind an increase in Islamic observance. It has been postulated that this is particularly interesting, due to its visibility in the West. A culture of freedom of expression supported by legislation, have allowed culturally born Muslims an opportunity to soul search and question their faith. In tandem similarly, a significant number of non-Muslims have made leaps of faith and converted (or is sometimes called *reverted*, based upon the conceptual arguments within Islam) to the faith of Islam. Commitment and adherence to Islam can be most visibly observed by the number of females wearing headscarves; the construction of mosques; and prayer rooms in workplaces, commercial spaces like airports, and academic institutions.

A reoccurring question often posed is why this is happening amongst Muslim citizens in the West, when it was thought that freedom of choice, liberalism and exposure to other ways of life would in fact neuter a faith such as Islam - which mandates that its practising followers adhere to so many prescriptive and regular guidelines? Dress codes; regular prayer five times a day from dawn to night; visits to the mosque; dietary codes; fasting for at least one month a year; taxes on wealth; and learning Arabic are some of the main activities, which Muslims find challenging even within Muslim

countries – where societies are designed to assist Muslims in these duties. In comparison in the West, Muslims have to work hard to find time and a place to pray at work. And during the fasting month of Ramadan, unlike in Muslim countries, the working day is not adapted to coincide with when Muslims can break their fast and eat again. These examples it is argued are testament to the passion and steadfastness with which some Muslims in the West are practising their faith.

The focus of this paper is not to try and offer reasons as to why there are more practising Muslims in the West, but rather to make the following observations. The ethnic and cultural diversity of Muslims in the West is great. Furthermore, there are a growing number of Western educated and affluent home-grown Muslims, who can no longer be classified or dismissed according to Occidental and Orientalist constructs. These two factors alone have transformed how Islam is interpreted and practised, which poses challenges.

Many media stories report on how these Western Muslims' vocal and visible significance is affecting both the non-Muslim and Muslim world alike. What this means within the field of marketing is that generalisations and inferences according to ethnicity, country of origin, cultural heritage and even the names of individuals will become less reliable and insightful. A simple indicator of this fact can be seen when surveying national sports teams and athletes – where it is clear that Islam is a culture, but not necessarily one denoted by ethnicity, heritage, or national identity. Muslim athletes compete for many non-Muslim countries and yet in the widest sphere outside of sports, there remain many studies, which assume the seamless interchange between ethnic, national and religious classifications, as being sufficiently similar (Wilson and Liu, 2012).

In addition, it is likely that many Muslim consumption patterns may externally resemble other consumer groups, but intrinsically may paint a very different picture. Perversely, it is further argued that simply discerning what faith someone is, or checking for a 'Muslim' name may yield only incremental insight and only in restricted categories, such as diet. For example, when considering female fashion, it would be naïve to assume that practising Muslim women who cover their form and wear the headscarf do not consume revealing items of clothing – they are just as likely as other women to respond to advertising messages and consume. However, what changes is how they wear these items and where. Anecdotally, even shopping malls overlooking the Kaaba (considered by Muslims to be the holiest place and centre of the universe) in Mecca sell high street Western fashion and lingerie. Therefore a key recommendation of the authors is that more work needs to be done to unveil and unpack consumption patterns, identities, possessions and the extended-self - from emic and etic perspectives, linked to internationalization, globalization, and localization. Without these, the development of Islamic marketing will be hampered and skewed.

## Meat and Money

A cornerstone of many Islamic marketing debates often a focus on either *halal* products or Islamic finance. Especially in the United Kingdom (UK), *halal* foods and finance products have grown in popularity (Wilson and Liu, 2010). Cases in practice are fast-food chains and banks offering *halal* (permissible commodities and practices according to Islam). In some stores of the sandwich chain *Subway* management has made all of their products *halal*, by using pork substitutes, such as turkey bacon (as eating pork is prohibited in Islam). This is interesting because while it occurs in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) [governed by Islamic law] and Israel [where Jewish *Kosher* practices share common dietary laws]: the fact that the United Kingdom has a Muslim minority, is indicative of Muslims' spending power, appetite and proactivity. The United Kingdom is also seen as being a hub for Islamic finance activities, which affect the Muslim world. Furthermore, the fact that branded *halal* goods are so important now within Muslim majority countries as has never been seen before, despite always producing *halal* products, is an indicator that Muslim consumption practices globally have changed (Wilson and Liu, 2011).

In stark contrast, the French have been less receptive. Their interpretations have argued that rather than encouraging social cohesion and integration; more *halal* products sold on home soils pose a cultural threat. A recent article reported that close to one third of meat in France is in fact slaughtered according to compliance with Islamic law, but is only labelled as such if it is intended for Muslim consumption. The reasons given are that it is easier commercially to produce for any consumer, but not all consumers may wish to consume products branded in the same way. Such news has brought forward arguments that some food should be branded as 'non-Halal' – which in fact is a practice adopted in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Malaysia. However in the UAE and Malaysia this is for positive, inclusive, and pluralistic reasons (Wilson and Liu, 2010) – as opposed to the mood of negative opposition expressed in France. Furthermore, while employment legislation in the UK classifies religious practices and dress as 'protected characteristics', France has sought to ban the display of religious dress, such as the Muslim veil, in public places – with offenders receiving a fine.

Perhaps slightly hypocritically, many European nations, Australia and New Zealand are more comfortable exporting *halal* products to Muslim territories, so this appears to be a highly politicised phenomena, linked to fears of control and the rise of Islam in Europe and the West. Some would argue that the fears are legitimate, as Islamic extremism has been linked with terrorism. However, we suggest that restricting the production and sale of things such as food is both draconian and makes poor business sense. Research points to products such as Islamic Finance also being consumed by non-Muslims, for many reasons – ranging from, shared values within the Abrahamic faiths, assurances that funds will not be invested in gambling and pornography, through to foreign policy.

## Muslim youth culture

Arguably the most exciting and significant segment in today's global market lies in the hands of Muslim Youth. Advertising and Branding agency *Ogilvy* which recently formed the sub-division *Ogilvy Noor* (specialising on Islam and Muslims) estimating that over half of Muslims are under 24 years old and that makes for over 10% of the World's population.

When looking specifically at Muslim Youth in Europe, the authors argue that rather than these Muslims becoming 'Westernized', as has been suggested by traditional Muslim quarters and many Western non-Muslim sources, Muslim Youth are in fact entering an age of new "becoming." For if this is a simple case of Westernization, does this mean that the 'West is best', and are Muslim Youth moving away from Islam as understood and practiced in the Muslim world? Or is it that they see Islam as not just being the property of Muslim nations? Therefore, is it that they are open to inspiration and truth wherever it exists?

Evidence for the last perspective lies in the increase in visible practices of Islam by Muslim youth – most notably in their dress and the conversations on the Internet, which are there for all to see. Muslim Youth are consuming commodities that were thought of as not necessarily having any Islamic reference or relevance and they are *Islamifying* them (Wilson, 2012e).

In addition, the authors argue that East/West, or Muslim/The West thinking harms the development of Muslims, in terms of development, ethnic identity, religiously, and emotionally, – as it implies separation. And more importantly by inference it supports the idea that the strongest brands, media platforms, and educational systems lie outside of the hands and inception of the Muslim World, which profiles Muslims as being intellectually impoverished. Therefore, if this is the case, Muslims may now and in the future be profiled as romantics who were once great, but now live in the shadow of the enlightened West.

Gaining insight into stakeholder perceptions – concerning individual and group identities, are central components of any good marketing. Arguably, the youth market is tough: because how many brands can predict whether they will be the next cult, or cool thing – especially when tastes change so quickly? Furthermore, if consideration is given to the fact that Muslim youth are balancing adherence to their faith (which is taken from information largely based upon classical texts), with living in the here and now (meaning that some texts have to be brought up to speed with the world today) – then there are plenty of debates to be had.

Among the younger generation especially, patterns are being broken up by additional displays of conspicuous and inconspicuous consumption – the all-important accessorising and customising. However, an additional level of understanding worth considering is, are more Muslim youth accessorizing and customizing Muslim dress and entertainment; or in fact the opposite – that they are *Islamicising* non-Muslim sources?

For example, some more orthodox Islamic quarters see women wearing jeans as a departure from Islamic convention, attempting to be *Western* (the inference being that Western is bad), and imitating men. However, an alternative view would be that jeans are technically comparable with, for example, female Pakistani *shalwar* trousers, or in fact are a step up – as they have more practical uses. Furthermore, whether to wear jeans or not is not the key issue – it’s how, when and where. Comparably, non-Muslim youth are also adopting similar dress patterns. Non-Muslim females can be seen wearing jeans under skirts and pashmina scarves. Also, Arab scarves in new vibrant colours have become an edgy urban chic accessory - in the same way that Che Guevara pictures appear on the walls and t-shirts of fashionable would-be revolutionaries.

When examining music trends and tastes, Wilson (2011d) writes about the global cultural, ethnic, class and marketing significance of the Hip-hop phenomenon in general. Literature exists which documents how political Hip-hop has grown in popularity within the Muslim world, and in tandem there are reports of Islamic Hip-hop culture influencing religiosity in born Muslims and the decision of non-Muslims to convert to Islam (Wilson, 2012e). Furthermore, Aidi (2012) observes that,

*“Surveying European hip hop today, one notices two things: first, as in America, some of the biggest stars are Muslim, the children of immigrants and/or converts; and second, a number of these artists are (or have been) embroiled in controversies about freedom of expression, national identity and extremism... In Britain, the BBC is still addressing protests regarding decisions made in 2011 by Radio 1 Xtra to tune out the words "Free Palestine" in a track by the rapper Mic Righteous, so as "to ensure that impartiality was maintained” ”.*

Therefore, in light of these observations, we argue that more research into the link between Islam, Muslims and Hip-hop is an area also in need of further study, especially as JIMA has currently received no submissions in this area.

Muslim youth appear to be keen to assert their identity as a generation of informed, self-mediating, empowered and technologically savvy urbanites. For them, heritage is progressive: they embrace the eradication of hierarchy and knowledge that simply translates to power. Instead: diverse networks, the sharing and adaptation of information, and ultimately the positioning of Islam as a ‘co-brand’ with other spheres of life offer more of a pull. So perhaps it could be argued that there is a renaissance back to the early golden days – where Islam gifted social mobility and empowerment through structured innovation.

Anecdotally, there is a science fiction tabletop miniature wargame called *Infinity*, set 175 years in the future. Within it there are eight factions:

- **PanOceania:** derived from Western Civilizations
- **Yu Jing:** based on far-Eastern culture
- **Ariadna:** evolved from the colonization of Cossacks, Americans, Scots and the French
- **Haqqislam:** based on Islam
- **Nomads:** nomadic people
- **Combined Army:** made up of different, dangerous alien species



- **Aleph:** intelligence-based humanists
- **Tohaa:** aliens who have been fighting against the Combined Army
- **Mercenaries:** a group that can be hired by any other faction for a price

Whilst this is only science fiction, we nevertheless found some of these classifications interesting. Faction Haqqislam (*Haq* being Arabic for truth) are cited as having evolved as a response to fundamentalism.

*“Haqqislam bases its culture on an Islam which is humanist, philosophical and in continuous contact with nature. Biosanitary Science and Earthformation are the two major strengths of Haqqislam, which includes the best schools of medicine and planetology in the Human Sphere”* (Infinity the game, 2012).

Our thinking is that academics should attempt more creative and futurist interpretations of the current phenomenon of Islamic marketing, and ways to classify Muslim segments - in the interest of taking the subject forward. For it is our strong belief that academics should not only be documenting what is happening, but also setting the agenda.

### **The significance of English**

Another key development has been the ascendance of English language. English in particular, because it is the worldwide language of business. In tandem, while Arabic is the language of Islam and with Islam spreading across the globe, Arabic it is not the mother tongue of most Muslims, which means that it is often used alongside another mother tongue to derive meaning and understanding. Therefore, today it could be argued that English has grown in its importance in connection with Islam, as it is more widely understood. However, a key question is what sort of English – as most people who speak English have it as a second non-native language. Also, non-English languages are in turn influencing English - as collectively they all express culturally specific patterns, which are embedded in contextual situations. Evidence points to the strongest global brands being known according to strong linkages with English language text and English derivatives, shaped by non-English language natives. Language is especially central to Youth Culture in general - as it is subject to context, group and rapid fashionable change. What may be cool for some, or today, may not be the case in the future.

## Indonesia – the hidden treasure

With over 17,500 islands, Indonesia is the most populous Muslim nation, with 240million inhabitants, of whom 88% are Muslim (approximately 210 million). Considering its size and potential, there remains paucity in literature and research on this region (Fitriati, 2012).

In spite of its status as the world's largest Muslim country, most Indonesian consumers are still occasionally ignorant toward halal products. There are still a small number of products that have already been certified by the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) [Council of Indonesian religious scholars]. In January 2011, the Assessment Institute for Foods, Drugs and Cosmetics (LP POM MUI) revealed that only 36.73% of all products sold in Indonesia were already certified as halal products. However, Indonesia is one of the first countries to have its own halal standards system. The standards are set by LPPOM MUI and are already acknowledged by many foreign institutions and countries, including Australia, Brazil, The Netherlands, New Zealand, and The United States of America. Members of World Halal Food Council (WHFC) want to move toward an international standard, following strong Islamic concerns and observations that technological developments are impacting on perceptions of what is truly halal (Wilson, 2012a).

When looking at financial products, some Indonesian Muslims are still reluctant to use Islamic banking, since they still cannot appreciate any functional benefits. Moreover, only a small number of those users are actually loyal or have moved totally from conventional banks to Islamic banks. Most still use both conventional banks and Islamic banks simultaneously. In 2008, MarkPlus conducted research on Muslims' perceptions and behaviour toward Islamic banking. They found that:

- Indonesian Muslims are still thinking about functional benefits when considering Islamic banking products
  - The functional benefits they search for are profit sharing, which enables them to gain more financial profit, easy access, a variety of products, and good service
  - The emotional benefits they search for are mostly related to their anxieties of wanting to be more obedient to their religion, such as feeling more peace, obeying Islamic law, achieving better afterlife prospects, and participating in a form of worship
- In relation to behaviour toward Islamic banking: the segmentation of Indonesian Muslim consumers is more complicated than has been profiled traditionally. Usually segmetation hinges on grouping consumers simply between being either 'loyalists' or 'rationals'. Markplus's research findings led them to recommend more detailed segmentation according to the following categories:
  - *Islamic-banking loyalists* - a segment of consumers who will stay loyal toward Islamic banking
  - *Followers* - a segment of consumers who will use Islamic banking when it has become mass product

- *Rationalists* - a segment of customers who will choose a particular banking system based on the benefits they seek
- *Docile consumers* - a segment of consumers who use Islamic banking because they feel they are obliged to
- *Conventional-banking loyalists* - a segment of consumers who will stay loyal toward conventional banking
- Some potential Muslim customers tend to be reluctant toward the Islamic attributes communicated currently in Islamic banking:
  - Some people feel alienated, and even intimidated, coming to Islamic banks with too much of an Islamic atmosphere
  - The majority of Indonesian Muslims are not yet familiar with Islamic words and phrases. Islamic naming for Islamic banks' products is hard to understand - and potential customers consequently find it unattractive and cannot understand the features and benefits

Along with their economic growth, Indonesian consumers across categories are becoming more demanding. They are searching for more than just the Islamic aspects of a product - they also seek the functional and emotional benefits to add the value of the product. Consumers are becoming more involved, leading to greater rational and emotional involvement with consumer decision making. As a result, it is argued that passive peacefulness or big picture rhetoric offering a passage to a better afterlife will no longer be their main considerations in choosing products. *Brand Islam* cannot just be used as an ingredient, or unique selling point alone to cater to a captive audience. Therefore:

- Islamic commodities are demanded to innovate their products and services continuously, and to be on par with conventional offerings if they want to stay competitive for Indonesian Muslims.
- What constitutes halal for Indonesian Muslims can not only cover basic halal requirements, but should also cover hygiene factors and aspirational aspects. Notably, assessment beyond functional compliance, is moving toward health and purity (Wilson and Liu, 2010). This demand will drive the MUI to extend more halal certifications to small and medium sized enterprises and street vendors, and potentially add further criteria which examine aspects of purity, quality, and health benefits.

By 2020, Coughlan (2012) reports findings from an Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) study, projecting Indonesia as moving from 6<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> place in terms of number of university graduates, with the U.S. slipping from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> place. Vaswani (2012a,b,d) and Mishkin (2012) also highlight how important social media is in the region, from urbanites to farmers.

*“This is one of the most Twitter and Facebook-friendly nations on Earth. A higher proportion of Indonesian internet users sign on to Twitter than in any other country. Indonesia is also home to the world's third-largest number of Facebook users. Indonesian Facebook and Twitter users have managed to push for social justice online and embarrassed misbehaving government officials, as well as helping businesses market their products. That is why [the] popular computer*

*game Angry Birds held the global launch of its tie-up with Facebook in Jakarta this week.” (Vaswani, 2012a).*

Particularly in Indonesia, Islamic marketers should also keep their eyes on Western and Korean trends within Indonesia. These trends mostly influence Indonesian Muslims’ recent product consumption. Anecdotally, perhaps the large numbers of Indonesian youth have contributed to the recent phenomenal global successes of Korean music artists and film (Putra, 2006; Penh, 2012; Rogers, 2012). Furthermore, in a recent BBC News Business (2012) interview with award winning music producer David Foster [who has composed songs for Celine Dion and Madonna amongst others], Foster states that Asian popular music has been perceived as being very good at copying Western music, however now Asian music spearheaded by South Korean bands such as K-pop and Psy [of ‘Gangnam Style’ fame – the second most watched and most ‘liked’ video of all time on YouTube] a phenomenon is occurring where Asia looks set to take centre stage, in terms of innovation and audience figures.

Vaswani (2012e) also reports on how there is a growing movement of comics in Indonesia, which are being used a vehicle to tackle religious issues in a more contemporary way, following manga traditions - with characters facing the challenges of everyday life, fused with Javanese mythology. Artists have perhaps been given encouragement by the mainstream success of *The 99* – which is produced in the Middle East and US. The creative team for *The 99* have worked for Marvel and DC comics, and its concept is based upon the idea of 99 people who each have a particular skill and attribute. In Islam, Allah (God) is known by 99 names, which describe his attributes and these are the ones which have been used here.

When looking at films, Sulthani (2012) reports on the the Indonesian martial arts film “The Raid: Redemption” smashing domestic box office records, and becoming “*the first Indonesian flick to break into the U.S. box office, also winning acclaim at international film festivals*”. Hopes are that the film’s success “*will breathe new life into Pencak Silat, the Indonesian martial art it showcases – and one whose followers are dwindling at home.*” Interestingly, some schools practising Silat in Indonesia and Malaysia draw from and integrate religion (Islam here), in a comparable way to Buddhism, Taoism, Shinto and Sikhism - forming an underpinning for Chinese, Japanese, and Indian martial arts, as is more widely reported.

The socio-political implications of these phenomena should also not be underestimated. Indonesia has previously been reported as producing cult ‘terrorism merchandise’, sporting figures such as Osama Bin Laden (Inside Indonesia, 2007; My Telegraph, 2010). Perhaps due to further insight into the region, courtesy of US President Obama’s upbringing, the US Obama administration has understood that Indonesia is not so much anti-American, as a region that has felt underserved, misunderstood, and unheard. Taking a new approach, Vaswami (2012c) reports of a government-funded diplomatic mission, where *Native Deen*, an Islamic hip-hop group visited the region to help spread tolerance and faith through music; and further U.S. understanding. Washington stated that is was keen “*to start focussing on ‘soft’ power, so that it can increase its influence in Muslim-dominated countries.*” The tour also included visits to Egypt, Tanzania and Jordan.

Taking all of these factors into account, Indonesia has the cultural potential, alongside its vast population figures of increasingly more educated and internet hungry youth, to play a more significant role in influencing understanding toward marketing theory, practice, and consumption.

### **Cultural Nation Branding**

In Islam there is a strong concept of encouraging the Muslim faithful to work towards creating one global *ummah* (Arabic for nation or community). In tandem, the term *'asabiyyah* (Arabic for social solidarity, unity, social cohesion, tribalism and clanism), like *ummah* existed pre-Islam. *'Asabiyyah* however tends to carry some negative connotations, unlike *ummah* - because scholars have interpreted *'asabiyyah* as implying loyalty regardless of adherence to Islam. In many ways therefore, *'asabiyyah* shares common concepts with Confucian ideas of filial piety and respect for family bonds and elders; whereas *ummah* champions Muslim social solidarity across race, social status, and territories, above family ties.

When reviewing societal units in a modern context, Rohner (1984) notes that for many parts of the world concepts of *society* have become synonymous with those of a *nation*. Rohner (1984) goes further in asserting that the concept of a *nation* is a *Western* one, originating from circa nineteenth century - where boundary setting has become more about political expediency, rather than to separate neighbouring societies. Therefore, it is argued that analysing separable sub-cultures linked to national identity, rather than simply nationality, becomes of more significance when attempting to understand the Muslim *ummah*.

Also, we have considered whether the rise in significance of brands and nation brands, as identifiable national artefacts, such as flags, branded goods and ingredient brands, are precursors of an emerging modern-day trend in the *ummah* and *Brand Islam*. Furthermore, is this an offensive or defensive response to globalization? As an extension of this thinking, can brands also be seen as a modern day phenomenon, which marks culture's and individuals' way of mediating the effects of Globalization, by preserving manageable units of meaning and identity?

de Mooij (2011) gives consideration to the effects of *globalization* and *global consumer culture* - and in particular those negative effects. de Mooij (2011) observes that,

*"In practice, notwithstanding the worldwide reach of television and the internet, in many people's lives, in consumption or entertainment habits, be it music or sports, the people of different nations continue to have different habits, tastes, and loyalties. Instead of causing homogenization, globalization is the reason for the revival of local cultural identities in different parts of the world."* (p.5).

This is a view also supported by Giddens (2000) and Featherstone (1991). de Mooij challenges Levitt's (1983) rational view of global markets, where technology leads to the homogenisation of consumer wants and needs - as they will crave high-quality and low price standardized products over customized high-price offerings. de Mooij (2011) points to observation of Usunier (1996), that there exists no empirical evidence to show homogenisation of tastes or the appearance of universal price-minded consumer segments. Furthermore, that those consumers are not after profit maximization.

Instead, “Convergence at a macro level (e.g., convergence of GNI [gross national income] per capita) does not necessarily imply convergence of consumer choice. As people around the globe become better educated and more affluent, their tastes diverge” (de Mooij, 2011 p.6).

In light of further technological developments, we argue that these points support both de Mooij and Levitt’s views. For it is now possible to offer customised, high quality and low-price offerings. Furthermore, if profit maximisation is taken to be a socio-culturally centred value calculation, as opposed to a reducible financial value: then humans can be viewed as collective individuals, who balance rationality, emotions – and that these form the essence of cultured human existence. Likewise, is unification under a concept of ummah enough to denote homogeneity?

The implications are that if the Muslim ummah is to strengthen its Islamic marketing and branding activities, there needs to be an evaluation as to what constitutes positive nationalism and whether individual Muslim nation brands can work both individually and collectively under a banner of healthy competition, for a greater good? This is an area of contention amongst the traditional Islamic scholars and some more practising Muslims, who may see this as tending towards the more negative traits of ‘asabiyyah. However, we argue that strong nation brands are one of the most powerful ways to change societal perceptions – with Japan and Germany being cases in practice.

However, having made these observations we question whether nation branding might be better framed as *Cultural Nation Branding*. Whilst the field of Nation Branding exists, with a key paper coming from Fan (2006), we observe that there are Islamic nations like those of the Middle East, where cultures are perhaps more important than nations. It is not that the nation is unimportant, but given the diversity of cultures in which the dominant Muslim population is, even where at times they are representative of a minority of Arab residents, religion appears to be not as important as Arab ethnicity. Here, nation often takes a back seat to these other considerations. A further case in practice exists in Malaysia, with the implementation of affirmative action educational policies of benefit to Bumiputras (indigenous ethnic Malays) – who by extension are also classified as being habitually Muslim. The breakup of former nations like Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia also shows how artificial the construct of nation can often be. On the other hand, Pan-Islamic branding can draw together rather diverse cultures. Therefore, we suggest that such considerations might offer refinements or alternatives to conventional nation branding arguments.

## **Conclusions and further areas of potential development**

As has been stated previously, this paper is snapshot viewpoint from a collection of experts immersed in the field. The authors have tried to balance giving a reflective overview, with highlighting areas held to be of the greatest interest to academics and practitioners. In taking such an approach there are limitations. First and foremost, this is by no means a systematic review; nor is it a comprehensive study providing detailed empirical data. However, it is a faithful documentation of phenomenological observations, which are meant to raise more questions and stimulate further debates. It is argued that the subject discipline is in need of more documented open

discussions such as this, in the interests of furthering new frontiers knowledge. The following recommendations are offered as potential areas of future development and research.

### **Trade and commerce**

Islam's ethical code and proactive Muslim censure, bind together the transient and transcendent. Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (1993) have discussed the 'Seven Cultures of Capitalism', making reference to capitalism's inception rooted in North American evangelical Christians, who viewed wealth creation as a moral act. There are arguments to suggest that historically Islam has encouraged the same pursuit of piety through trade and commerce. However, only after some hiatus does it appear that these discussions are being revived beyond romantic discussions of a bygone Muslim golden age of scholarship, the arts, science, luxurious commodities, food, hospitality, and journeys along the silk route. Islam has always viewed business as an act of worship and now also with China's invigorated encouragement toward a new model of capitalism – is there an argument to be made for a pre-Western industrialized and more Eastern economic interpretation of ethical marketing?

### **Recalibration of a moral compass**

Notably, the halal industry is growing and crossing sectors. However, interpretations as to what halal means, especially in the here and now, need further consideration. While there are religious textual references (ahadith and Qur'an), which offer guidance, it still remains contentious how these can and should be applied. One example of such a case is the hadith that not only calls for cursing of the person who drinks alcoholic wine, but also the seller, the wine maker and the grape farmer (growing grapes for this purpose) (Wilson and Liu, 2010). This has implications on how the hospitality industry can serve its customers, with halal assurances, and what assets can be insured. Other key areas are the differing opinions on how animals are slaughtered, and ingredients in products such as pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, and fragrances.

Furthermore, current conventional thought calls for brand building through projective techniques - where meaning, identity, and personality are ascribed to the brand. However if linked to something like halal branding, regardless of how human a halal brand is, halal is judged by the space, context, time, and individuals with which it is associated. In support of this point there is another hadith, which states that all actions are judged by intention (of the individual) rather than just the strategy. Therefore, does this mean that practitioners should also be certified, according to their intentions, knowledge, and practices? There is insufficient space to do these topics justice here, but nevertheless they are key battlegrounds and topics necessitating further research.

### **Paradox reconciliation**

Having made these points, certain paradoxes can exist following attempts to apply and harmonize terms and concepts, which need to be constantly reviewed and ironed out. For example, when examining the term '*black*' as a hyphenated adjective used to describe the African diaspora – it is situation and context specific. For in cultural

contexts linked with consumption, now *black* says more about the state of individuals, rather than classifications and experiences simply linked to skin colour. Objects, practices, emotions, values, underpinning philosophies and political standpoints dominate - conveying sentiments which are felt, embraced and adopted by many more; therefore indicating that *black* is far from being skin-deep.

Evidence of this can be seen looking at white English Muslim females, some of whom have expressed how they have been ethnicized, having adopted the headscarf. In response, this has led to changes in UK employment laws, which protect against racial discrimination – where previously it was difficult for a white indigenous English Muslim female to argue for having experienced racial discrimination, while comparable claims could be upheld from black females. In global commerce and literature, this philosophical paradox or enigma prevails – as ‘black’ often denotes the needs and wants of a minority. However, if these *black* markets and segments are niche or reflective of minority; they are in fact minority markets with mass appeal and adoption. Notable examples being, black fashion, black food, black music and black entertainment. No longer is it the case that you have to be ethnically black in order to legitimately produce or consume - with credibility, host acceptance and authenticity. Muslims are often portrayed as being ethnic and even members of a ‘black religion’ right across the board - from white Bosnians, Hungarians and Turks, right through to Malays and Central Asians. This is especially interesting as they share the same lineage as Judaism and Christianity, but attract greater fear and discrimination by being framed as ‘the other’, as is rooted in the meaning behind the black experience.

### **Playing the long game**

Therefore, it is argued that if the Muslim faithful is to carry their journey mainstream, they will have to be mindful of the racial connotations associated with their faith. However when under the microscope, if embraced positively and with a ‘thick-skin’, there are potential long-term gains for Muslims. For in a relatively short time as an allegory, Afro-American culture has been commoditised and packaged, with great success and benefit to this community and the wider African diaspora. As an extension, there is also evidence of a more recent Afro-American Muslim sub-culture, which is being embraced throughout the Muslim world. When mapping these observations back to the theory development discussions in this paper, it likely that definitions and frameworks will evolve, but they have to be organic, inductive and intuitive – and safeguarded against being too prescriptive and reductionist. We recommend that researchers should expand their literature searches beyond religious and marketing texts, to draw from findings and perspectives within ethnic studies, anthropology, linguistics, human geography and popular culture.

### **Identity and relationship bonds**

Finally, social media (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Pintrest, etc.) are linking people together in new ways, which are also drawing marketers into the wider communities, as active participants. Celebrity brand extensions and more recently consumer celebrities are also signalling the overt presence of marketing creators. In line with this, the lines defining modesty are being rewritten. Only the most cynical and myopic are suggesting that new patterns of consumption and expression are a contradiction or undermine Islamic fervour. Further research needs to be done into whether there are



differences in the way Islam and Muslims treat these communication channels and the celebration of wealth, fame, and modesty.

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## Key conferences attended by the authors

*Oxford Global Islamic Branding and Marketing Forum*, Saïd Business School, University of Oxford, 26<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> July 2010

“Teaching Islamic Studies in Scotland”, *Higher Education Academy Islamic Studies Network*, Edinburgh University, 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2010.

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*International Conference on Islamic Marketing and Branding*, 29<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> November 2010, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur.

*1<sup>st</sup> Global Islamic Marketing Conference*, 20<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> March 2011, Dubai.

*CREME Conference: Educating Muslims in the UK*, Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> June 2011, Centre for Research and Evaluation in Muslim Education (CREME), Institute of Education, University of London.

*2<sup>nd</sup> Global Islamic Marketing Conference*, 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>nd</sup> January, Abu Dhabi.

*Social scientists examine Islam and the lives of Muslims: an expert seminar from the HEA Islamic Studies Network*, 18<sup>th</sup> May 2012, London Metropolitan University.

“Ethnocentric and Faith-based marketing perspectives and practices – setting a research agenda” [Panel session], *2012 Academy of Marketing Annual Conference*, 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> July, University of Southampton.

*Islamic Business Symposium*, 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> September 2012, Monash University Malaysia.

*2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on Islamic Marketing and Branding*, 20<sup>th</sup> -21<sup>st</sup> November 2012, Brunel University, UK.

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American Muslim Consumers Conference - <http://www.americanmuslimconsumer.com/>

Dinar Standard - <http://dinarstandard.com/>

Disruption Manifesto (Formerly Muxlim) - <http://www.disruptionmanifesto.com/>

Emel magazine - <http://www.emel.com/>

GouldWilson - <http://www.gouldwilson.com/>

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Halal Focus - <http://halalfocus.net/>

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JWT - “Understanding the Islamic Consumer”  
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Markplus Inc. <http://www.markplusinc.com/>  
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Oxford Global Islamic Branding and Marketing Forum -  
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The 99 comic - <http://www.the99.org/>  
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WPP “Islamic branding: the next big thing” -  
<http://www.wpp.com/wpp/marketing/branding/islamic-branding.htm>  
World Halal Forum - <http://www.worldhalalforum.org/>  
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### **Special issue journals**

*Marketing Theory* (Forthcoming) “The Contribution of Islamic Marketing to Marketing Theory”.

*Journal of Management Development*, Vol.31, Iss.9, Special issue: “Practical wisdom from Islamic tradition”.