



**DETERMINING MUSLIM CONSUMERS' ATTITUDES
TOWARD ADVERTISING FROM ISLAMIC
PERSPECTIVE: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY IN
MALAYSIA**

BY

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**A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Business
Administration**

**Kulliyyah of Economics and Management Sciences
International Islamic University Malaysia**

March 2017

ABSTRACT

This research is on determining Muslim consumers' attitudes toward Islamic concept of advertising, using Expectancy-Value Theory of attitudes. Another primary focus of this study is to provide introductory knowledge of what is Islamic advertising. Islamic marketing is an emerging academic field with very high practical significance, but still very little work is done on it, especially on Islamic advertising. This research is done on the premise of countering unethical contemporary advertising practices, therefore, attitude-towards-Islamic-advertising is positioned as a direct response to attitude-towards-advertising-in-general. This research uses mixed methodology to achieve the intended objectives, hence two data collection instruments were used. Data was collected from 384 randomly drawn respondents within Malaysia through a questionnaire. While in-depth interviews were conducted from 20 faculty members specialising in marketing. The survey results showed that consumers had a very favourable attitude towards Islamic advertising. This attitude was influenced by the religiosity of the respondents, while age, gender, and education moderated this relationship. Further, it was also found that what the consumers not only highly valued Islamic advertising but also what they expected from Islamic advertising had a very positive relationship with attitude-towards-Islamic-advertising. The interviewees expressed similar thoughts. In general, many were in favour and optimistic of the idea of Islamic advertising. They not only reflected their positive views but also suggested the way forward for Islamic advertising. It is from their suggestions that the recommendations section was formulated. The advertisers are the main stakeholders of this research, as this research gives them a green signal to adopt Islamic mode of advertising. The policy makers are also to benefit from it, especially those from Muslim countries. They can devise and revise their existing policies in light of the principles of Islamic advertising cited in this research. This study is the premier of its kind and proves to be a stepping stone in the literature of Islamic marketing and Islamic advertising and opens up great avenues to further research in this emerging field.

ARABIC ABSTRACT

خلاصة البحث

يركز هذا البحث على تحديد مواقف المستهلكين تجاه المفهوم الإسلامي من الاعلان، وذلك باستخدام نظرية قيمة التوقع من المواقف. التركيز الرئيسي الآخر لهذه الدراسة هو توفير المعرفة التمهيدية عن الاعلان الإسلامي. يعتبر التسويق الإسلامي أحد الحقول المعرفية الناشئة. ورغم أهميته العملية العالية، إلا أن الأعمال العلمية ما تزال قليلة جداً عنه وخاصة بما يتعلق بالاعلان الإسلامي. بما أن هذا البحث يقوم على فرضية مواجهة الممارسات الدعائية الغير أخلاقية المعاصرة، لذلك، تم وضع "الموقف تجاه الاعلان الإسلامي" كرد مباشر على "الموقف تجاه الاعلان التقليدي بشكل عام. يستخدم هذا البحث طريقة البحث المختلطة لتحقيق الأهداف المرجوة من هذا البحث، وبالتالي تم استخدام اثنين من أدوات من المستطلعين الذين تم اختيارهم جمع البيانات. وقد تم جمع البيانات من خلال استبيان من ٣٨٤ من أعضاء هيئة التدريس بشكل عشوائي داخل ماليزيا في حين أجريت مقابلات متعمقة من ٢٠ المتخصصين في مجال التسويق. وأظهرت نتائج الاستبيان أن المستهلكين كان لديهم موقف إيجابي جدا تجاه الاعلان الإسلامي. وقد تأثر هذا الموقف بعنصر التدين لدى المستطلعين، في حين كان لعناصر العمر والجنس والتعليم دور الاشراف في هذه العلاقة. وعلاوة على ذلك، فقد وجد البحث أيضا أن المستهلكين ليس فقط قيموا الاعلان الإسلامي ولكن توقعاتهم من الاعلان الإسلامي كان له علاقة إيجابية جداً على موقفهم تجاه الاعلان الإسلامي. وعبر المقابلون عن آراء مماثلة. بشكل عام، كان الكثير منهم داعمين لفكرة الاعلان الإسلامي ومتفائلين بها. بالإضافة إلى ذلك فإن المستطلعين لم يكتفوا بالتعبير عن آرائهم الايجابية ولكنهم أيضاً قدموا اقتراحاتهم لتطوير الاعلان الإسلامي. وتم صياغة قسم التوصيات من مقترحات الخبراء المقابلين. يعتبر اصحاب الاعلانات من أصحاب المصلحة الرئيسيين في هذا البحث، نظراً لأن هذا البحث يعطيهم الإشارة الخضراء لتبني طريقة الاعلان الإسلامي. يتوقع ان يستفيد صناع القرار أيضا من نتائج البحث ولا سيما في البلدان الإسلامية. حيث يمكنهم وضع ومراجعة السياسات الحالية في ضوء مبادئ الاعلان الإسلامي التي ورد ذكرها في هذا البحث. تعتبر هذه الدراسة لأولى من نوعها وبرهن على أن كونها نقطة انطلاق في أدبيات التسويق الإسلامي والاعلان الإسلامي، وهي تفتح آفاقا كبيرة لمزيد من البحث في هذا المجال الناشئ.

APPROVAL PAGE

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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EMPIRICAL STUDY IN MALAYSIA**

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Dedicated to my poverty, helplessness, and disheartenment:

Hope I never see you again!

Acknowledgements

AlhamduLillah, for nothing is possible without His Divine Will.

My foremost and deepest thanks goes to my wife, Anbar! Your hopes kept my ambitions alive; your encouragement wiped my fears away; your patience absorbed my frustrations; your faith strengthened mine; Thanks *yaar* for being there! It was impossible without you.

Thank you my little angels, Maira and Sahar; for your innocent souls gave me a reason to struggle. I always wanted to be the best *baba* for both of you and I wish to be one now.

Tahir *bhai* and Naheed *bhabi*, thanks for every help you have extended to us. You guys have always been a wonderful support to us.

Ami and *Abu*, I don't even know what I should thank you for! For you sacrificed your present for my future in return for nothing. Thank you *Ami* and *Abu*! Thanks for your prayers, for they were always with me and solved my problems whenever I couldn't.

To my supervisors, Prof. Dr. A.K.M. Ahasanul Haque and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kalthom Binti Abdullah, thank you for your guidance, support, and knowledge. It was wonderful working with you and *In Sha Allah* it will continue in the future.

Lastly, thanks to all my respondents who voluntarily took out their precious time to respond to the questionnaires and recorded interviews. May Allah SWT reward you with the best of rewards.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Despite the fact that Muslims have existed for centuries and have been involved in trade and commerce ever since, Islam and marketing seldom came together until recently, said Sandikci (2011) and Sandikci and Ger (2011b). There has been a growing interest in academic and practitioners' circles, evidenced by increasing number of research articles, at least two dedicated academic journals, organising of conferences and workshops, production of consultancy reports, and printing and publishing of stories pertaining to Muslim consumerism (Alserhan, 2010; Sandikci, 2011; Sandikci and Ger, 2011b; Wilson and Liu, 2011). Then, Islamic perspective is also gaining momentum in the field of business ethics (Saeed et al., 2001). The pertinent question to ask is *why* and *why now*, especially when other religions are not studied in such a standalone manner.

There are at least five reasons for this increased interest as narrated by Saeed et al. (2001), Damirchi and Shafai (2011), and Abuznaid (2012): (1) Islam provides a framework that shapes all the moral and ethical behaviours of one quarter of global population that forms majority in more than 50 countries – Muslims. (2) Of all, a number of Muslim majority countries are increasingly becoming affluent. (3) Foreign investment in Muslim countries has been increasing over the years. (4) Muslim

trading block formation is gaining momentum. (5) In countries like Afghanistan, Algeria, Egypt, Pakistan, and Sudan, even the political mood is towards more *Islamisation*.

This growing interest is also related with the emergence of Muslims as an untapped, affluent market which although is geographically dispersed yet is very common in consumption patterns (Sandikci, 2011; Sandikci and Ger, 2011; Alserhan and Alserhan, 2012; Wilson J. A., 2012a) and has the ability to afford branded products; hence a mushroom growth of fast food giants, luxury hotels, and entertainment industry, which includes CDs and recording of sermons and pop music, toys, lifestyle magazines, and tele/broadcast stations (Sandikci and Ger, 2011; Abuznaid, 2012; Wilson J. A., 2012a) that target Muslims only (Alserhan, 2011). Such growth is counter evidence to historical academic and managerial writing on Muslim consumers which always treated this segment as static, having no contact with its environment, and inherently different from general consumers (Sandikci and Ger, 2011a).

Consequently, it is the businesses which have to offer the Muslims the same appeals, but in a *Shari'ah*-compliant way (Alserhan, 2011). These reasons make it almost necessary for the Multinational Corporations (MNCs) to enter Muslim market. In order to do so it is imperative for them to understand business dynamics from Islamic viewpoint. Failure to do so not only results in alienating them, but also results in direct conflict (Rice and Al-Mossawi, 2002; Bari and Abbas, 2011; Abuznaid, 2012). This equally applies to advertising. In terms of advertisements to Muslims, they should reflect their societal values and definitely not try to change them (Rice and Al-Mossawi, 2002).

Conversely, it is found by Muslim and non-Muslim researchers alike that contemporary advertising practices cannot and do not fit advertising scenario of Muslim countries. Advertising professionals inspired by as well as experienced in conventional advertising practices find it difficult to run advertisements without offending the audience. Hence, the audience, Muslims especially, developed a very negative attitude towards advertising.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Fennis and Stroebe (2010) term attitude as a major determinant of behaviours that are used in almost all behavioural models. Although there are multiple other factors that affect one's consumption or any decisions for that matter (Ajzen, 1991), but the attitude, specifically attitude towards the object is a powerful predictor of the same decision (Fennis and Stroebe, 2010).

Attitude is the most distinctive and indispensable concept in social psychology as famously said by Gordon Allport (Allport G., 1935). According to Fennis and Stroebe (2010: 113) the definition that follows is still considered to be the most influential definition of attitudes: "Attitude is a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour". It reflects a person's psychological disposition towards an attitude object. This disposition is usually in the form of an evaluation, which means it can be favourable, unfavourable, or even neutral. We can either have very positive thoughts or feelings towards an object and might want to use it (or behave in line with it in certain ways). On the other hand, we might also be having adverse thoughts towards another object

which we would not want to have or use (or would stay away from certain behaviours). These tendencies, or dispositions, influence the way we think, feel, and ultimately behave towards the object. A favourable attitude would mean favourable thoughts, feelings, and potentially favourable actions *towards* the attitude object. An unfavourable attitude would mean a person holds unfavourable thoughts, feelings, and ultimately unfavourable behaviours *away* from the attitude object. This is typically called the attitude-behaviour relationship, as given by many authors over time, such as Fishbein (1963, 1967b), Bagozzi and Burnkrant (1979), Palmgreen and Rayburn II (1982), Kotler (2000), Schiffman and Kanuk (2007), Cooper and Schindler (2008), Noel (2009), Fennis and Stroebe (2010), Clow and Baack (2012), Potter (2012), Izquierdo-Yusta et al. (2015), etc. This research terminates only till attitudes though. Embarking on behavioural or intention to behave is another dimension that is too broad to cover within one PhD thesis. This is the same reason why the Expectancy-Value Theory of attitudes was taken. More on this theory comes in chapter 2.

The importance of attitude-behaviour relationship is mentioned by many authors, who say that attitude research often includes topics such as attitude measurement and change, consumer behaviour, and the attitude-behaviour relationship. Predicting how attitudes affect consumer behaviour is a prime area of research for many (Izquierdo-Yusta et al., 2015). Wen (2009) and Noel (2009) add, who are supported by Izquierdo-Yusta et al. (2015), that although there are various situational as well as dispositional aspects that influence the consistency of attitude and behaviours, often it has been found that attitudes are more predictive of behaviours in certain situations. It is also important for marketers to understand attitudes, how they are formed, and how they could be influenced because of their

influencing power (Noel, 2009). In explaining the same relationship, Book and Barnett (2006) write that behaviours are a consequence of intentions; intentions develop from attitudes; and attitudes are formed out of beliefs (or expectations) that certain behaviours will lead to specific outcomes. Similar has been said by Fullerton et al. (2013: 34) that “persuasion literature generally points to a strong relationship between attitudes and behaviors [sic]”.

Attitude-towards-advertising-in-general influences advertising performance in terms of perceptions, understanding, and intended actions after viewing the advertisement. Throughout its history of research, it has been found to be an important antecedent influencing a series of several other attitudes and eventually influencing one’s purchase intention (Shimp, 1981; Lutz, 1985; MacKenzie, Lutz, and Belch, 1986; Muehling, 1987; MacKenzie and Lutz, 1989; Pollay and Mittal, 1993; Mehta, 2000; Ling, Piew, and Chai, 2010; Fam, Grohs, and Waller, 2011; Pyun and James, 2011). This linkage is shown below:

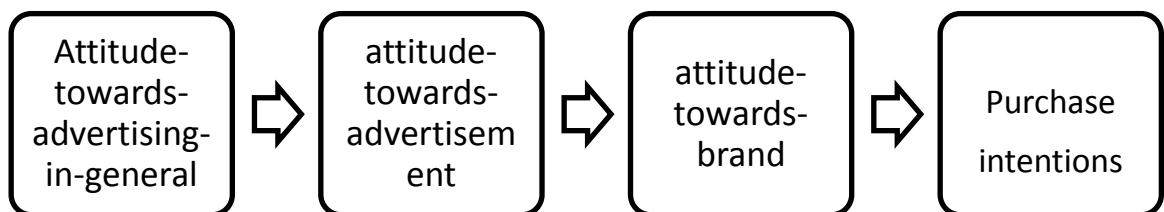


Figure 1.1 Link between attitude towards advertising and behavioural intentions

Attitude-towards-advertising-in-general is defined by MacKenzie and Lutz (1989: 53-54) as “a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favourable or unfavourable manner towards advertising in general”. It is one’s attitude towards

advertising industry and measures what one thinks about its practices, its potential positive or adverse impact on individual and society, and its overall contribution to the society and economy.

Attitude-towards-advertising-in-general is “an integral part of a theoretical network of relationships regarding advertising’s impact on the individual” (Andrews et al., 1991: 16). It is an important determinant of attitude-towards-an-advertisement (A_{ad}), which in turn affects the attitude-towards-brand and purchase intentions (Andrews et al., 1991; Durvasula et al., 1993; Ferle & Lee, 2002; Ashill & Yavas, 2005). Deductively, if attitude-towards-advertising-in-general is favourable, then attitude-towards-an-advertisement is favourable too and so is attitude-towards-brand. Theoretically, this leads to favourable purchase intentions for the advertised brand. Thus, the core, attitude-towards-advertising-in-general has to be favourable in order for advertising to lead to purchase intentions. But available literature on attitudes toward contemporary advertising has consistently reported unfavourable attitudes.

1.3 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

While the important role that advertising plays in daily lives cannot be over-emphasised, the same is subjected to immense criticism on playing its part in high prices, deceptive advertising and promotional practices, creating false wants, promoting too much materialism while not providing enough social goods as well as causing cultural pollution (Pollay & Mittal, 1993; Al-Buraey, 2004, Abdullah, 2008, Alserhan, 2011, etc.). The severe criticism on advertising practices brought researchers and scholars to think on ethical lines regarding how businesses,