Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences (PJSS)
Vol. 39, No. 4 (2019), pp. 1209-1218

Islamic Marketing: Fad, Fashion or Obligation

Muhammad Nauman Abbasi
Professor/Director, Institute of Management Sciences
Bahauddin Zakariya University, Pakistan
Email: abbasimna@bzu.edu.pk

Safia Bano
Assistant Professor, Institute of Management Sciences
University of Baluchistan, Quetta

Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to uncover hidden truth regarding the fate of Islamic Marketing in Pakistan. The paper addresses three key questions; isn't Islamic Marketing is the real need of the market, isn't knowledge of Islamic marketing should be mandatory for all business graduates, and isn't knowledge of Islamic Marketing provides any competitive edge in recruitment and selection. To have a real insight on these questions, expert opinion from key practitioners and academia were managed. Five professors and eight marketing professionals were interviwed. Data were collected through participant observation methods and the Socratic elenchus as suggested by Wilson (2012). Encouragingly, Islamic Marketing has been acknowledged as the need of the time. Islamic Marketers intend to bridge a gap between companies' offerings and fundamentals of Islam. Amazingly, it is reported that companies are seeking authenticated knowledge and managerial guidance to align their marketing strategies incordance with the principles of Islam. These findings suggest opportunities with respect to Islamic Marketing and proposed new academic avenues for academia. Despite of market potential, still Islamic marketing isn't declared mandotory due to inadequate theoratrical foundation and practical research. Finally, results revealed that due to lack of market practices, knowledge of Islamic Marketing still doesn't considered as competitive weapoen to attain market position. The paper shed light on the need of Islamic Marketing in Pakistan and provide meaningful managerial implications for effective marketing stratgeies.

Keywords: Islamic Marketing, Marketing Strategies, Expert Opinion, Pakistan

I. Introduction

In today's highly competitive markets, understanding the real unmet needs of the targeted customers and creating & delivering the value added solutions is the under pining phenomena of business success. Leading companies like, Wal-Mart, Dell, Coca Cola, Apple, McDonalds, Samsung and others are striving hard to adopt best marketing practices to gain competitive advantage over their rivals. Commonly used marketing practices include; targeting, segmentation, positioning, branding, customer services, pricing, promotion and placement, etc. Companies intelligently devise these strategies to take unique position in the mind of their customers. Identifying potential segments and targeting right customers is what companies are consistently looking for big market gains.

Knowing the fact that one fourth of the world population i.e. 22.74% is comprises of 'Muslims' (World Fact book report of CIA, 2014). Markters all over the world have conceived it as new strategic window and named it 'Muslim segement'. The increasing proportionate of Muslim population all over the world seem challenging for marketing managers to tackle the emerging needs of Muslim consumers. Studying Muslim Consumer as emrening segment is just like studying any other consumer segment which has unique set of characteristics (Wilson & Liu, 2011). Though, marketing firms in countries like Qatar, Kuwait, UAE, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are struggling hard to fulfill the needs of Muslim consumers, yet, the situation is alarming and invite attention of both accademia and practitioners.

Offering prodcuts and services for Muslim consumers and offering Halal products that being prodcued and marketed inacordance with principles of Islam are two different phenomenon. First, address the general needs of muslim conumers while later sepecifically focused on producing and marketing products and services in accordance with the principles of Islam and 'Shari'ah'. This paradigm shift of sgementing Muslim customers led to establish a new discipline termed as "Islamic Marketing". Since inception of this term in marketing litertaure, efforts have been made to define Islamic Marketing and determine it's span and scope in accordance with the principles of Islam.

Though, expalinatory notes have been given on differences in contemporary marketing and Islamic Marketing (Jonathan & Wilson, 2013; Md Arphan et al., 2015), concept of halal and its implications in marketing activities, (Ahmad & Kalsom, 2016; Norazah & Abang, 2016), Islamic branding (Baker, 2010; Maha & Hatem, 2013), implications of fashion in Islamic Marketing (Aron et al., 2013), ethics & Islamic prespectives of advertisement (Illham & Dalia, 2016; Sarah et al., 2016), etc. Notably, with little exception, the geographical focus of all these studies remained the Muslim countries. However, recently the scope of these studies has been shifted to non-Muslim countries. For instance, halal food is a major concern for Muslim consumers all over the world and resutltantly it has gain the attention by researchers in UK (Ahmed, 2008).

Despite of the growing research trends in Islamic Marketing still practitioners believe that the concept is a fabricated fad in marketing literature. Whatever has been researched and written in context of Islamic Marketing is not more than a drop in ocean. Still much need to be researched and explored to establish Islamic marketing as an independent discipline. What lacks in the literature is theroratical foundation, it's principles and comprehesive application of the subject. To adress some of the key issues and implications of Islamic Marketing, this paper is dedicated to shed light on the fate of Islamic Marketing in Pakistan and the results provide meaningful managerial implications for effective marketing stratgeies.

II. Literature Review

Knowing the fact that Muslim population is increasing with an increasing rate in the International market, marketers intend to blend the marketing strategies with the principles of Islam. In marketing literature, this blend of Islam and Marketing is termed as 'Islamic Marketing'. Generally speaking, marketing is a process of identifying, anticipating, and satisfying customer needs with profitably. In similar tune, the process of identifying, anticipating, and satisfying customers in accordance with the principles of Quran and Hadith can be viewed as Islamic Marketing. It is strategic and profitable

window in conventional marketing. It involves a process which is valuable for both the businesses and customers and eventually provides them mental satisfaction.

Literature is agreed upon this fundamental fact that Islam is a religion having its implications in every aspect of life. Since the inception of the term Islamic Marketing in the literature, researchers try to associate Islamic principles with marketing practices. For example, Anwar and Saeed (1996, p.02) asserted that the common aim of Muslim is to earn Allah's pleasure and earning this pleasure by serving society through halal products & services is what Islamic Marketing is and this phenomena is getting popularity in today's era. Wilson (2012a) reinforced the concept by stating it as a God (Allah) centric approach which requires mandatory compliance of all ethical & moral values in each and every aspects of marketing. Likewise, Islamic Marketing has been observed as value maximization approach based on the equity and justice for the welfare of society (Saeed et al., 2001, p.138). Saeed et al. (2001) have classified the marketing responsibilities within Islamic framework into four categories;

- Responsibility to be answerable towards (Allah) God.
- Responsibility towards the welfare of the society.
- Responsibility towards own marketing efforts.
- Responsibility towards environment.

Adding further, Rice and Al-Mossawi (2002) affirmed that honesty in communication (advertisement/promotion) and simplicity & friendliness towards the environment are the key fundamentals of Islamic marketing. In real, Islamic Marketing has been viewed as spiritual, ethical, and realistic & humanity oriented marketing approach to serve the community. It is considered being an instrument that mobilizes resources towards moral law and to meet consumers' needs within their spiritual and physical well-being (Gibbs & Ilkan, 2008). Authors are of the view that fulfilling customers' needs through Halal products and services with the mutual consent and welfare (Falah) of both parties is the real essence (Hikmah) of Islamic Marketing. Islamic Marketing suggests buyers and sellers to enter in agreement for the purpose of achieving material and spiritual wellbeing in the world here and the hereafter (Alom & Haque, 2011). Abuznaid (2012) viewed Islamic Marketing as the wisdom of satisfying the needs of customers through the good conduct of delivering Halal, wholesome, pure and lawful products and services with the mutual consent of both seller and buyer.

Elaborating the difference between contemporary marketing and Islamic marketing, Wilson, (2012b) presented 7P's of Islamic Marketing which include Pragmatism, Pertinence, Palliation, Peer Support, Pedagogy, Persistence, and Patience. These 7P's when integrated with the traditional 7P's of conventional marketing which includes, Product, Price, Place, Promotion, Process, Physical environment and People provide new insights to marketing researchers those who are in search of exploring new venues. Islamic Marketing, thus, provides the code of conduct for morally acceptable way of marketing (Hashim & Hamzah, 2014).

Existing literature on Islamic marketing has majorly enfolded issues like, Islamic branding and halal products (Baker, 2010; Wilson & Liu, 2010; Maha & Hatem, 2013), ethics in marketing (Saeed et al. 2001; Illham & Dalia, 2016; Sarah et al., 2016), the opportunity cost for marginalizing Muslim consumers (El-Bassiouny, 2014), etc. In

recent years, efforts have been made to inculcate Shari'ah laws (e.g. what is halal, what can be sold, how much profit can be charged, halal branding etc.) into marketing practices (Alserhan, 2010; Wilson & Liu, 2011; Mohd & Jusoh, 2014). Mohd & Jusoh (2014) commented that if the producer and country of origin (COO) is Muslim than people normally assume the products of that company as halal. On the other hand, if the producer or country of origin (COO) becomes non-Muslim than Muslim consumer may compel for authenticated certification to accept the product.

In addition to products, Islamic branding has also gain fabulous attention by researchers. For example, Alserhan (2011) comprehended the term Islamic branding and presented three dimensions, which includes; Islamic branding by religion, Islamic branding by origin and Islamic branding by destination. Adding further, Ahmed (2008) observed that Muslims in UK are more concerned towards the authenticity of halal food as compared to quality and price which otherwise thought to be the most important decision criteria's in conventional marketing. Even Muslims are willing to pay premium prices for trust, confidence and assurance on halal meat logistics (Tieman et al., 2013). Keeping the fact that term 'Halal' cannot be commercialized, Wilson and Liu (2010) have warned the marketers not to commoditize rather may use it out rightly. Similar concerned has been pointed out regarding the legitimacy of halal certifications, halal branding, labels (correct information) may wickedly be used to attract Muslim customers (Talib et al., 2008; Zakaria, 2008; Shafie & Othman, 2004). The scope of halal may not be limited to eatables rather it may include beverages, agriculture, logistics, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, hospitality and vegetarianism, etc. (Rajagopal et al., 2011).

As stated above, the scope of Islamic Marketing is not limited to *Halal* rather it may include all ethical, social and moral values. It means principles of Islamic Marketing must be based on *justice* and *equity* which equalizes to the fairness in dealings and righteousness in every aspect of marketing (Saeed, et al. 2001). Litertaure stressfully argued that companies must draft their marketing strategies regarding product, price, placement and promotion in accordance with the prinicples of Islam. Wherein, making flase promises, prentending something as neccestaity of life, over exaggertaion of information, exploitation of women as celebrities, provoking sexuality & nudity etc. in promotion compagins are against the fundamentals of Islam. Fashion is another key concern for Islamic Marketers. In muslim society, a women has different needs to be fulfilled than in western societies (Miremadi et al., 2011). For example, a women is required to covered herself and to wear Hijab, which is quite popular in muslim countries like, Pakistan, Afganistan, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, etc. and is getting popualirty in European countries like, Turkey, Germany and France (Gokarıksel & Secor, 2010). It is therefore, Islamic marketers must remained careful in their offerings.

Amazingly, the existing studies are more inclined towards the practicability of Islamic practices in marketing rather than theorizing the concept. The emphasis is on social welfare, welfare to consumers, environment, moral laws and ethical considerations. Somehow, it overlaps with the concepts of "corporate social responsibility" and "green marketing". Despite of all the efforts to probe various perspectives of 'Islamic Marketing' still the scope and span of Islamic Marketing is ambiguous and hence need further research. The exiting literature raise three critical questions, which are; isn't Islamic Marketing is the real need of the market, if it is so, isn't knowledge of Islamic marketing should be mandatory for all business graduates, and isn't knowledge of Islamic

Marketing provides any competitive edge in recruitment and selection. Through this paper an attempt has been made to uncover hidden truth regarding the fate of Islamic Marketing in Pakistan.

III. Methods

A. Sample and Data Collection Procedures

To have a real insight on above stated questions, expert opinion from key practitioners and academia were managed. Five professors and eight marketing professionals were interviwed. An avergae time for each interview remained 40 to 60 minutes, wherein, after due permission the responses were recorded electronically. Data were collected through participant observation methods and the Socratic elenchus as suggested by Wilson (2012a).

Based on extensive literature review, a structured questionnaire was developed. The questionnaire consist of *three* open ended questions followed by series of informal questions. To ensure the constuct and face validity, all the three questions were comprehensively discussed with two marketing professors. Their opinion were recorded and question statements were modified accordingly. Later, the content analyis has been used to comprehend the responses of the interviewers. Content analysis is the technique of analyzing written, verbal or visual communication messages as suggested by Cole, (1988). It refers to the understanding of *mute evidence* in texts and artifacts. It involves data collection through interviews by using open ended questions, reading and re-reading the data repeadtly to derive codes, making the first impression or initial analysis, labeling the codes, establishing links between codes, finally grouping the codes in clusters to sort meaningful objectives.

IV. Results & Discussion

This section present results and disucssion on each question.

RQ - 1: Please specify the market requirements regarding Islamic Marketing? How it can be attained?

Literature on Islamic Marketing suggest the blending of marketing strategies with Islamic principles. However, majority of the marketers still considered it Fad and Fashion and hence believed that the trend will be over soon. Subsequently, it is worth knowing that isn't Islamic Marketing has market implications and isn't it really required? In response to this question, experts have confirmed the need of Islamic Marketing. Commenting on the question, a marketing manager stated; *"knowledge of Islamic Marketing can help companies to attain best of the customer (muslism) satisfaction ……. customers are interested in companies' offerings but they cannot compromise on Islamic values".* Another manager remarked, *"muslim customers are really concerned about religious values and it should be considered as market opporunity* ". On the other hand, some managers believed that *"being muslim and resident of mulsim country, we (companies) undersatand the principles of Islam"*. It is an understood phenomanon that bsuinesses for muslim customers follow the principles of Islam and incase, if there is any discripency in its implementation (like, in case of promotion), it should be addressed.

Academia also supported the need of Islamic Marketing in market. Professor at UMT [University of Management & Technology, Lahore] mentioned; *"majority of our companies need to introduce reforms in their marketing stratgies especially product and*

pricing are the most critcial areas". Adding further, Professor at IMS [Institute of Management Scinces, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan] commented, "*the existing marketing practices e.g. increasing vulgarity in advertisment, sexual, emotional & women appeals, unnecessarily provoking the customers to buy products, making false promises, overcharging, price discrimination, hoarding, etc. are condratictory to the principles of Islam and hence knowledge of Islamic Marketing is a key to success".* During indepth disucsion, even academia has pointed out the need of independent degree program on Islamic Marketing. Moreover, specialized training sesssions like, workshops, symposiums and conferences have been recommeded for creating awarness among marketing students and practitioners. Well versed Ulmah and Mufti's may be hired to train marketers to address the future needs regarding Islamic Marketing.

Keeping the fact that muslim customers are really sensitive to religious values and they evaluate the companies offerings accrodingly. Any marketing strategy including 4P's which will be against the Islamic principles may straight forwardly be rejected by the customers. It is therefore, companies are seeking guidance in areas like, how they can ensured lawful (Islamic) manaufacturing, the real implication of halal in their businesses, understanding the profitability and setting profit margins as suggested by Islamic, how to tackle promotion issuse like, quality and authenticity of information without losing customers, etc. This reflect the need of Islamic Marketing.

It is recommedned that Islamic Marketing may be added in bsuiness curriculum. Business schools all over the world and especially in Mulsim countries like Pakistan may immediately offer independent subject on Islamic Marketing to equip marketing students with the lastest knowledge of Islam and it implications in marketing strategies. Muslim academia may take initiative and motivate their MS/Mphil and PhD students to choose their research topics/issues related to Islamic Marketing. High qaulity research and conclusively published material in the form of books and/or articles may add worth in the subject. Institutions responsible for higher education like Higher Eductaion Commission of Pakistan (HEC), Higher Eductaion Departement (HED), and Provional Higher Eductaion Commission and Institute of repute like, LUMS, IBA (Karachi), IMS (BZU, Multan), FAST, UMT, NUST, ZABAST, COMSATS may introduce independent degree programs. Special training sessions, semianrs, workshops and conferences on Islamic Marketing can help to address the market specificity of the subject.

RQ - 2: Isn't knowledge of Islamic marketing should be mandatory for all business graduates?

Interesting comments were recorded. Negligible difference of opinion has been observed between academia and practitioners on the above stated question. From the practitioner's world, a marketing manager of one of the leading FMCG, said, "*being in a Muslim market [Pakistan], it is very important that you may cope up with the needs of the market. And this course [Islamic Marketing] will definatly provide an edge to the student".* Despite of very strong favor by some of the marketing managers still the others do not feel it so important to make it mandatory. Mostly agreed to enrich business graduates with the knowledge Islamic Marketing but should not make it complusory. In similar tune, a manager representing local ladies grament brand, reinforce the opinion of others by stating, *"well, in the Fashion industy, knowledge of Islamic Marketing is not very much applicable …. rather, fashion is more a product of cluture and enviornemnt,*

hence, it makes no difference either student have studied Islamic Marketing (in his/her degree program) or not".

From the academia, a professor from LSE [Lahore School of Economics], said; " *…. No! knowledgle of Islamic Marketing should not be mandatory, rather, [marketing] teacher may shed light on ethical prespectives of marketing and may relate it with the Islamic principles".* Professor at Quaid-i-Azam University, Islambad, also argued similalry by stating; *"Islamic Marketing is an emerging area, however, can not be taught as an independent subject due to limitation like, it lacks theoratical foundation, fundamentals, and autheticated literature".* Expalining the limitation of Islamic Marketing, professor at IMS [Institute of Management Scinces, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan said, " *.... it is the prime responsibility of muslim scholors to extend the knowledge of Islamic Marketing. It is a gary area and [with little exception] no serious work has been done. I am worried, authors like Phillps Kotler and William J. Santon may not be intrested to write anything on Islamic Marketing ... we [muslim scholors] have to realize it, as the subject fall within the boundaries of Islam .... naturally we have to do something to establish it as subject.*

Above comments clearly suggest that knowledge of Islamic Marketing can not be made mondatory to all bsuiness gradutes owing the resaons that still Islamic Marketing lacks, fundamentals and theoratical foundation. Though, the phenomenon is the area of interest for many of the researchers in mulsim world still much need to be done. Practitioners and academia both are of the view that knowldege of Islamic marketing is cricual but can not be made mandotory till the subject groom up at the level, where it may have it's own fundamentals and theoratrical foundation.

RQ 2.2: Should it be taught as an elective (optional) subject in Business Education i.e. BBA, MBA, MS/Mphil, etc.

The above question was asked in sequence to gain deeper insight on the issue. Six out of eight managers wholeheartedly supported the question and stressfully argued for the need to equip the upcoming gradutes with proper and authenticated knowledge of 'Islamic Marketing'. Additionally, managers were of the views that the subject [Islamic Marketing] may be taught as elective [optional] subject. The response of remaining two managers remained natural. Managers are of the views that companies must incorporate the knowledge of Islam in their marketing startegies and this can only be possible through fresh, updated and talented marketing managers.

From the academia, four professors spoken in favour of Islamic Marketing and suggested it to be offered as an elective course. Explaining further, they pointed out that non-availability of the authenticated books and related material may cause hurdles in adopting it as mondatory course in business curriculum.

RQ 3: Isn't knowledge of Islamic Marketing can provides any competitive edge in recruitment and selection?

Hiring local talent with diversed knowledge will obviously be preferred. Any graduate/candidate having specialization in marketing blended with the autheticated knowledge of Islam should gain priority by the employer. However, till today, the knowledge of Islamic Marketing has not been incorporated in hirring & selection policy. Despite of market requirements, fewer companies have ever adverstise any post reagrding

Islamic Marketing. In contrast, Islamic Finance and Islamic Banking has gain fabulous attention by the bankers and financial institutions.

Marketing manager (also member of recruitment team), stated; *" honestly speaking, during talent hunt, I had never come across with this concept [Islamic Marketing]…. perhaps, unconiously, we have had a false believes that we are following all Islamic principles".* Simialr, statements were given by other managers, for example, *" we hire fresh (raw) graduates, if it [knoweledge of Islamic Marketing] is deem appropaite, they can be trainined".* Another manager clearly states; *"at present, it is not the part of our recuirtment and selection policy".*

From the above discussion, it can be conculded that 'Islamic Marketing' is an emegering discipline in Pakistan and it may take sometime to deepen it roots in startegy and policy formulation. It is far sure that students/candidates having proper and authenticated knowldege of Islamic Marketing will definatly get compatitive edge over other. Expectedly, academia stressfully argued for the need to incorporate knowledge of Islamic Marketing in hiring and selection and policy formulation.

V. Conclusion & Managerial Implication

Muslim customers all over the world are in pursuit of halal products. Today, the halal market is growing with rapid pace and it considered as big market opportunity for marketers. It is therefore, organizations are eagerly looking forward to include Islamic principles in their marketing strategies. On the other hand, unfortunately some organizations are trying to exploit the term 'Islamic Marketing' by commoditizing 'Halal' just to capture the Muslim segments. Accordingly, this paper was initiated to shed light on the hidden truth regarding the fate of Islamic Marketing in Pakistan. The purpose is to add debates on three key issues/questions commonly asked regarding Islamic Marketing, which are; isn't Islamic Marketing is the real need of the market, isn't knowledge of Islamic marketing should be mandatory for all business graduates, isn't knowledge of Islamic Marketing provides any competitive edge in recruitment and selection.

Results revealed that Islamic Marketing has been recongnized as the need of the time. Managers believe that Islamic Marketers can bridge a gap between companies' offerings and fundamentals of Islam. Despite of it's acceptance still companies are seeking authenticated information and managerial guidance to align their marketing strategies incordance with the principles of Islam. Amazingly, knowldege of Islamic marketing isn't declared mandotory due to inadequate theoratrical foundation and practical research. However, it is strongly argued that knowledge of Islamic Marketing will provide competitive edge to the candidates over others.

Islamic Marketing is required for better understanding of lawful (Halal) manaufacturing, profit determination, grasping promotion issuse like, avoding nudity and sexual appeals, quality and authenticity of information without losing customers, etc. It is suggested that business schools all over the world and especially in Mulsim countries may offer independent subject on Islamic Marketing to equip marketing students with the lastest knowledge of Islam and it implications in marketing strategies. Muslim academia may initiate research on topics related to Islamic Marketing. Higher education institutions may introduce independent degree programs, may conduct training sessions, semianrs, workshops and conferences on the themme of Islamic Marketing to grasp real benefits of

Islamic Marketing. The paper shed light on the need of Islamic Marketing in Pakistan and provide meaningful managerial implications for effective marketing stratgeies. Future researchers can extend the research domain by organizing indepth interviews from diverse industries and other mulsim and non-mulsim countries.

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