

THE MOSLEM WORLD: THEORETICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEMS

KRISTINA YUNITSKAYA. SPECIFICITY OF ISLAMIC MARKETING // *The article was written for the bulletin "Russia and the Moslem World."*

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Abstract. Islamic market is rapidly developing, has good prospects, but is not sufficiently explored. Its potential is connected to the growing demand for goods and services under Sharia laws, which is an impetus for emergence and development of Islamic marketing. Urgent character of the article lies in the need for scientific understanding of the marketing aspects of Islamic markets.

The very definition "marketing" comes from English and is translated as "market trade." Philip Kotler, the father of modern marketing, presents it as a type of human activity aimed at meeting needs and requirements through exchange.

To achieve good results in marketing, it is necessary to take into account such a factor as religion, because consumers' preferences and tastes are also based on religious characteristics.

The most numerous religion – Christianity does not impose any restrictions on the consumption of goods and services. But here is the second largest religion - Islam has some features and requires a certain type of marketing activity. Many believe that Islamic marketing does not exist in theory, since it is only being produced. However, it definitely exists in practice.

Recently, the Muslim world has been one of the main consumers. For 2019, there are more than 1.9 billion Muslims in the world, which is about 25% of the total population. Muslims are a huge audience of consumers who have their own specific requirements and requests for goods and services related to the norms and traditions of Islam.

Definitely, all Muslim countries cannot be considered as entire, because they are all at different levels of development. Each country has its own school of Muslim law and operates in accordance with its laws. There are 4 such schools (madhhab) in the world: Hanafi, Malikite, Shafiite, Hanbalite. They all differ in degree of liberality. This article provides examples that are typical of the first school – the most conservative and strict. Representatives of this school are intolerant of any innovations. The Hanbalite school is official in Saudi Arabia and Qatar, as well as representatives of this school live in the United Arab Emirates, Oman and other Gulf countries.

Inclusion of Islamic countries in world trade makes them adapt ancient sharia norms to global standards and modern conditions.

Religion directly affects sales of products or service, as it is closely related to people's lives. In the Muslim world, religion has a primary influence on the behavior of buyers and business dealing in general. Therefore, a certain specificity of marketing in such regions has been developed.

All the norms that should be followed by every Muslim, including legal, ethical, material and religious, are enshrined in the Sharia. It is the Sharia that determines all human activity of Muslims, including trade.

The history of trade in Islam originates from the Prophet Muhammad, who was related to commerce and accompanied caravans from Mecca to neighboring countries. Sharia norms regulate banking, business, economics, politics, contracting and other vital function of people. All Muslims are obliged to follow these standards during business or marketing activities. In Sharia, trade is defined as an activity that can improve everyday lives of other Muslims. So, such an activity is not prohibited, but even welcomed and regarded as a virtuous act. Nevertheless, in order to conduct business, Muslims must abide by all the restrictions and prohibitions prescribed by religion.

According to Muslim traditions, advertising must comply with certain rules: advertising, including the logo that will be used in Islamic states, must be adapted to local cultural and religious values and traditions, translated into Arabic script. Moreover, companies planning to enter Islamic markets should translate their names into Arabic.

Islamic marketing prohibits trade in substances that may be harmful to health, especially, there is a ban on drugs, cigarettes and alcoholic beverages. Also, according to Islamic laws, dogs and pigs trading is prohibited, since these animals are recognized as unclean. In Islam, there is a ban on sale of musical instruments, as well as meat of animals killed not by the Sharia. In Islamic culture there are a number of unacceptable associations prohibited for use. This includes manifestations of supernatural power, which in Islam can be considered as equating with the Most High. For example, words such as "create" or "the greatest" have a special religious orientation and should refer only to the Most High. Thus, the use of these words in a different context is prohibited.

In Islamic marketing, it is considered unacceptable to show the body of a person and it is forbidden to use such a marketing tool in advertising, but it is allowed to show skin on the face, hands and feet.

The media in Islamic States were subject to strict censorship, and the covers of magazines and newspapers also fall under scrutiny and changes, if necessary. Participation of women in advertising is minimized, this applies to the use of photos or videos in advertising. Now some such prohibitions can be got around using pixelization – digital processing, which reduces the image resolution or part of it, or the use of sunglasses. All people who participate in films or advertisements should be dressed.

Trade also has its own rules and it is carried out in accordance with Sharia rules, that is, the principles of honesty must be used, and the consumer must openly provide information about goods or service.

In Muslim countries, such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt, there are fatwas – conclusions of an authoritative Muslim figure – prohibiting network marketing if it is a pyramid. Network marketing, as well as multi-level one, is the implementation of products or services based on the construction of a distribution network, which in turn is engaged in attracting partners to its network company. This prohibition is applied in respect of payment of bonuses and commission expenditures formed at the cost of lower-level contributions.

The reasons for ban on network marketing in Islam are the following.

Firstly, transactions in network marketing are regarded as uncertain, because the participant does not know in advance whether this event will be successful and will realize a profit, that means they are banned by Islam.

Secondly, transactions of this kind lead to the consumption of funds by other participants in this system, which may be unfair. And in the Quran it is written that trade should be carried out only by mutual agreement.

Thus, the minimum requirements of Sharia will be satisfied by a network marketing company that meets the following requirements:

1. There is a real sale of a product or service. The product must be competitive and also meet the needs of a Muslim.
2. The paid fee should be transparent and clear.
3. There is a ban on using any pyramid scheme.

Today, there is a huge number of different marketing tools in the world. And Islamic marketing has also found its place and is the main way to promote products and services in the Muslim world. Marketing research, branding (the process of forming brand image) and merchandising (determines the method of sales in stores) are now increasingly popular. All these instruments contribute to the successful promotion of goods and services in the Muslim market, but their actions are limited by Sharia law. Companies operating in such markets and using Islamic marketing principles successfully meet the needs of their consumers and explore new market segments to expand their business activities. Islamic marketing has its own mentality, which harmonizes with the emotional, cultural and value guidelines and customs of Muslim countries. Such marketing is distinguished by a high degree of customer centricity.

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