

## Chapter 8

# Practical Applications in Marketing Strategies and Consumer Behaviour in an “Islamic” Context

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### ABSTRACT

*The focus of this chapter is on marketing practices in an Islamic world. The chapter consists of two main parts: it begins by investigating the basic contradictions of the term Islamic marketing and continues by offering insights derived from a broad knowledge base of theory, research, and practice in the field of marketing in an Islamic context. It leads readers through the four fundamental elements of marketing—product, price, place, and promotion—using examples and short cases from the business environment in countries that call themselves Islamic. Such a journey can equip practitioners with the tools necessary for operating in more efficient and effective ways in Muslim countries.*

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter intends to analyse some of the fundamental elements of the marketing mix within an Islamic context. I deliberately avoid using the term ‘Islamic Marketing’ since it is saturated with the struggle between ‘spiritual’ and ‘material’ lives, between ‘fundamental truth’ and ‘relativism’, and between ‘faith’ and ‘reason.’

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Therefore, I prefer to describe the focus of this chapter as marketing practices *in countries which call themselves Islamic*. Based on my experience acquired through work as a marketing consultant in Iran and Morocco, this chapter provides insights into the marketing practices of the later countries.

Before I move to the empirical knowledge and my experience in the field of marketing, I would like to share three major concerns with the theory of ‘Islamic marketing.’ First, the term ‘Islamic’ seems to be too general. Specifically, which Islam do we mean? For example, “even when used to denote the religion of Islam ... Do we mean the collection of material known as the Qur’an and the *Sunna*, or is it the aggregate beliefs of the mass of Muslims in Iran today, or in Egypt five centuries ago, or rules and ‘Islamic codes’ as applied and reinforced by Islamic regimes?” (Khiabany, 2003, p. 416).

Second, the term ‘marketing’ is constantly changing. While the ultimate goal of marketing remains the same, the means of achieving it change through time and space altering the definition of the term ‘marketing.’ As Hussnain (2012) puts it, marketing is going through “a continuous evolution. If we closely follow this process of evolution by looking at its different definitions given in different eras we will come to know that the focus is shifting more and more to customers.” Of course, the developments of such relationships directed towards inciting customers’ purchases. The ultimate goal of marketing – the main drive of the capitalist system – is to sell more and more goods to consumers and to increase the level of consumption of products and services.

Third, the term ‘Islamic marketing’ consists of two incongruent concepts. ‘Islamic marketing’ seems oxymoronic since the former implies ‘spiritualism’ and ‘asceticism’ and the latter is related to ‘materialism,’ ‘excessive consumption,’ ‘individualism,’ and ‘hedonism.’ It brings together concepts that belong to two different paradigms. Some see the contradiction in the differences of values within Islamic and capitalistic societies. “Excess, waste and consumerism were considered as part of an alien culture and a service to the enemies of Islam” (Godazgar, 2007, p. 391). Some argue that Islam was not conflicting with capitalism; “on the contrary, for Gellner, ‘Islam is a religion well suited to an industrial social structure’ (Gellner 1981, p.7), because of the nature of the Islamic *umma*, and its characteristics of literacy, identity and egalitarianism” (Vezzadini, 2012, p. 7). Some emphasize the mutual influence and interconnection between the two (Vezzadini, 2012). Others find it ironic that some countries, such as Iran, widely accept consumerism, despite the strong desire of the Islamic government for the Islamization of society, and pursue hedonism and leisure together with or instead asceticism (Godazar, 2007). However, in the analyses of the term ‘Islamic marketing’ one has to go beyond the question of compatibility of the characteristics of capitalism and Islam and look at the fundamental principles of each paradigm.

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