

Chapter 10

The Rise of Islamic Luxury: Current Trends

Muhammed Bilgehan Aytaç

Aksaray University, Turkey

ABSTRACT

As one of the essential elements of culture, the role of religiosity in consumer behavior has long been established and number of consumer research on Muslim individuals has been increasing rapidly in recent years. With the rapid increase of the Muslim population and the developing welfare level of the Islamic countries, it is observed that Islamic luxury consumption has also become widespread too. In this chapter, it is aimed to determine the conceptual framework of Islamic luxury consumption together with current trends. Three halal concepts which are considered as include more explicit examples of Islamic luxury are chosen and analyzed: halal fashion, halal cosmetics, and halal tourism. Throughout the text and in the conclusion part, it is aimed to create insights for marketers who interested in Islamic luxury.

INTRODUCTION

In the last decades, the world has witnessed significant shifts in social and cultural arenas, and socio-technological developments as well as intense and complex immigration have opened the way for transformation of diversity to super-diversity (Blommaert & Varis, 2015). In parallel with this trend, Islamic societies also have transformed and, especially with acculturation (Hirschman & Touzani, 2011), have become super-diversified. On the beaches of Dubai one can find a lady wearing a burqa and having a good time with family, alongside a single British lady wearing a bikini lying on the sand and enjoying her sunbath. Market transition of Islamic countries—especially the Gulf countries, Turkey, Malaysia and Indonesia—has been the main driving force of significant changes, with the adoption of a western lifestyle in which consumption of western-oriented consumer goods plays a central role. In consequence, the Islamic world created certain consumption patterns as well as a luxury consumption concept in which a western consumption lifestyle is blended with Islamic motives. Before delving into Islamic consumption and Islamic luxury, the role of religiosity in the consumer behavior literature should be analyzed.

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Religiosity is the level of the individual's compliance with specific religious values and beliefs along with the related rituals. As one of the elements of culture, religiosity is accepted as a significant determinant of the decision-making process of consumers (Delener, 1990, 1994). According to Mittelstaedt (2002), religion affects (1) what consumers trade, (2) how they trade, and (3) when and where trade takes place. Religiosity is often used as an explanatory variable in consumer studies globally; and in general, religiosity and consumer behavior studies can be divided into two categories: (1) those that deal with individual level of religiosity and consumer behavior, and (2) those that compare consumer behavior of individuals in different cultures or subcultures (Moschis & Ong, 2011).

Although the effect of religiosity on consumer behavior has long since been established (Bailey and Sood, 1993; Wilkes et al., 1986) and Muslims have existed for centuries and have been involved in trade from their very beginnings, their relationship with marketing and consumer behavior have not been sufficiently investigated (Aslanbay et al., 2011; Prokopec & Kurdy, 2011).

Although not specific to Islam, Hirschman (1983) put forward three possible explanations for why religion and consumption have not been adequately analyzed¹ in tandem: (1) researchers are not aware of possible links between religion and consumption; (2) there is perceived prejudice against religion, and it is seen as a sensitive subject; and (3) because religion is everywhere, it may be overlooked by researchers. According to Mokhlis (2009), these explanations were valid for the year 2009; however, by the year 2020, it can be said that the paradigm is changing. It is observed that the ever-increasing population of Islam and the immigration of Muslims to non-Muslim countries, especially in the last decade, along with the economic growth of Islamic countries, have multiplied the number of studies on the Muslim market. As an example, since 2010 the *Journal of Islamic Marketing* has published three or four issues yearly and attracts scholars not just from the Islamic countries but all over the world. In addition, there are many academic and business events related to Islamic marketing being organized around the globe, including the Global Islamic Marketing Conference which has been organized yearly since 2011.

Nevertheless, some subjects are still ignored by Islamic marketing literature. One of these untouched subjects is luxury consumption. It is observed that, especially in rapidly growing economies like Turkey, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates, a new high-class society has emerged, referred to in Turkish as “Süslüman”² (Meşe, 2015). This new social class is inclined to engage in luxury consumption within the halal context, such as halal tourism, halal cosmetics, or halal restaurants. Halal refers to anything that is permitted by the Shariah (Islamic Law), and means “lawful” or “permitted” (Battour et al., 2010).

This chapter aims to analyze the conceptual framework of Islamic luxury and current trends of luxury consumption in the Islamic world. Following this introduction, previous literature about Islamic religiosity and consumer behavior will first be briefly reviewed. Second, the term luxury will be analyzed. Third, the position of the concept of luxury in Islamic teaching will be examined according to the different perspectives of various scholars. Following this, three halal concepts—fashion, cosmetics, and tourism—will be analyzed within the luxury consumption context together with current trends among Muslims. In the concluding section, an overview of luxury trends in the Islamic world will be discussed together with implications for researchers and practitioners.

Islamic Religiosity and Consumer Behavior

It is known that religion-based values shape lifestyle and consumption patterns. Moreover, religiosity plays a crucial role in shaping consumer behavior by forbidding the consumption of some products or

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