Where is "Islamic marketing" heading?
A commentary on Jafari and Sandikci's (2015) "Islamic" consumers, markets, and marketing

Noha El-Bassiouny

Marketing, Faculty of Management Technology, The German University in Cairo (GUC), Main Entrance Al Tagamoa Al Khames, New Cairo City 11835, Egypt

A R T I C L E   I N F O

A B S T R A C T

Developments in the growing field of Islamic marketing raise scholarly interest into its foundational principles and the many directions the field is taking. Guided by the diversity in general marketing thought and the related literature, as well as the abundant research approaches investigating the socio-religious and societal aspects of marketing, this article raises critical questions around the emerging field of Islamic marketing. The article is a re-joinder to Jafari and Sandikci's (2015) commentary on El-Bassiouny (2014) offering a critical account of Islamic marketing in an effort to guide the field's development trajectories and engage in intellectual dialogue with interested scholars, practitioners, and educators.

1. Introduction

In "A History of Schools of Marketing Thought," Shaw and Jones (2005) highlight the different paradigms governing the marketing discipline and their development, including the exchange school, macro-marketing, marketing management, consumer behavior, and others. The reader appreciates the diversity within the discipline and the dynamic developments, trajectories, and approaches underlying marketing thought. Scholars delve into the interdisciplinary overlaps between marketing and psychology; marketing and sustainability (Hamed, El-Bassiouny, & Ternès, 2015; Varey, 2011); marketing and public policy (Wilkie & Moore, 2003); and marketing and religion (e.g., Kuzma, Kuzma, & Kuzma, 2009; Lindridge, 2005; Mittelstaedt & Mittelstaedt, 2005; Wilkes, Burnett, & Howell, 1986). These intersections and diversity in the schools of marketing thought have resulted in emerging fields that aim to advance the discipline, while contributing and relating to the reality of our times. For instance, the discourse on "sustainability marketing" is gaining strong momentum (Belz & Peattie, 2009; Martin & Schouten, 2012; Schaefer & Crane, 2005). Those who watched the documentaries *Confessions of a Shopaholic* and *Supersize Me* can also relate to the modern shades, shadows,

and projections of consumption (Bruckheimer & Hogan, 2009; Spurlock & Spurlock, 2004). Roberto, Pomeranz, and Fisher (2014) lament the hazards of unhealthy food consumption (cf. Ammar, El-Bassiouny, & Hawash, 2015). Adib and El-Bassiouny (2012), Buckingham (2000), and Hawkes (2004), among others, address some of the problems related to young consumers (cf. El-Bassiouny, Taher, & Abou-Aish, 2008, 2011). Kotler (2011) highlights the "environmental imperative" in marketing. Additionally, marketing scholarship generally reflects these trends in unrestricted ways (Abela, 2006; Abela & Murphy, 2008; Mick, 2006, 2007; Mick, Broniarczyk, & Haidt, 2004).

Yet, despite the growth in critical marketing studies and trajectories such as public policy and marketing (Burton, 2001; Tadajewski & Saren, 2008; Wilkie & Moore, 2003), macro-marketing (Shultz, 2007; Wilkie & Moore, 2006; Witkowski, 2010), and sustainability marketing (Belz & Peattie, 2009; Schrader, 2007), the discussions are still confined to the groups of scholars advocating them (Shultz, 2007; Wilkie & Moore, 2003). This restriction includes the discourse on religion and marketing, though recent issues have led to calls in leading marketing journals for more research in this field (e.g., Benton, 2014; Engelland, 2014). Publications represent different religious paradigms and approaches, including Islam and "Islamic marketing," an emerging sub-discipline that caters to the growing needs of Islamic consumers, which is the focus of this article (Alserhan, 2011; El-Bassiouny, 2014; Jamal & Sharifuddin, 2015; Saeed, Ahmed, & Mukhtar, 2001; Wilson & Liu, 2011).

E-mail address: Noha.elbassiouny@guc.edu.eg.

According to Sandikci and Jafari (2013, p. 411), "in recent years, Islam has become highly visible in media, politics, and the marketplace. The increasing popular and academic attention to Islam is partly driven by the events of 9/11 and the related imperative to 'better' understand Muslims" (cf. El-Bassiouny, 2014; Esposito & Mogahed, 2007; Hofmann, 2001). However, approaches driving this "understanding" differ in much the same way as the approaches governing global marketing paradigms and thought differ. Mirroring the diversity in scholarship, research approaches, and methods, researchers delving into Islamic marketing have also been diverse. Jafari and Sandikci (2015), however, propose that the field be guided by cultural interpretivist encounter-oriented studies of Islamic consumers and marketspaces (see also previous communication of these views in Jafari (2012) and Sandikci (2011)). The authors critique El-Bassiouny (2014), as an example of most of the works in this field, for proposing (in the authors' perceptions) a more "exceptionalist" values-based religion-oriented approach. Such critique is welcomed, and indeed the advancement of growing disciplines requires such critical discourse. Jafari and Sandikci (2015) are acknowledged for their well-reflected commentary that aims to create dialogue and advance the field of Islamic marketing. Yet, key questions must be raised in this process. This commentary is thus structured as follows. First, questions underlying religion, morality, and sustainable society in marketing and the related literature are raised. Second, in an effort to guide scholarship in Islamic marketing, the development praxis of the Islamic marketing field is critically addressed. This is followed by briefly highlighting the different philosophical approaches to knowledge and research inquiry potentially guiding Islamic marketing studies. Finally, concluding remarks are offered supporting Jafari and Sandikci (2015) in opening new doors to scholarship in this field and harnessing the potential benefits that this has for marketing scholarship and practice.

2. Religion, morality, and sustainable society

At the World Economic Forum (WEF), 2010, faith was raised as an important component governing values for the "post-crisis" economy. The report notes:

> The current economic crisis should warn us to fundamentally rethink the development of the moral framework and the regulatory mechanisms that underpin our economy, politics, and global interconnectedness. It would be a wasted opportunity for all of us if we pretended that the crisis was simply a momentary hurdle. If we want to keep society together, then a sense of community and solidarity are more important now than ever before… (World Economic Forum (WEF), 2010, p. v)

This perspective resonates in popular movies and documentaries like *Too Big to Fail* (Swerdlow & Hanson, 2011) and *Inside Job* (Marrs. et al., 2010), which continue to provoke discussion around the moralities underlying the global financial system during the events of the financial crisis (Vásquez, 2008; Wallis, 2010; Wuthnow, 2004). On the other hand, scholars like Reuben (1996) note the "marginalization of morality" in intellectual thought. Ghoshal (2005) questions the immorality of amorality in business education in general. The discussions in the *Journal of Business Ethics* and others reflect the continuous global scholarly discourse around morality in management, which occasionally borrow from hypothetical theories such as that in John Rawl's *A Theory of Justice* (Doorn, 2010). In marketing, Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan (2010, p. 20) reflect that "supplying meaning is the future value proposition in marketing" and that marketing 3.0 (of the future) is "values-driven" within a global and culturally-diverse society (cf. Varey, 2011). Marketing consultancies also confirmed this when they emphasized that Muslim consumers, for example, "seek brands that embrace the values that are important to them: humility, transparency, purity and togetherness; brands that shape the communities they serve and demonstrate a higher purpose that goes beyond product delivery" (Khan & Janmohamed, 2011, no page).

Considerable research examines the overlaps between religions as sources of wisdom, morality, and sustainability (Minton & Kahle, 2013; Nasr, 1997; Tucker, 2008; Tucker & Grim, 2001). Scholars examine the many facets of how religion impacts behavior in the marketplace (Delener, 1994; Fam, Waller, & Erdogan, 2004; Lever & Miele, 2012; Minton & Kahle, 2013), and how different faiths shape or could shape management and marketing in practice and their implications (Friedman, 2000, 2001). This influential intellectual discourse has traditionally aimed to offer understanding, wisdom, and guidance, though has not traditionally been perceived as "exceptionalist" or as dichotomizing the other. Likewise, Islam is guided by a well-articulated moral code of conduct (e.g., Quran 6:119). Recent works in the emerging domain of Islamic marketing (Alserhan, 2010, 2011; El-Bassiouny, 2014; Koku & Jusoh, 2015; Wilson, 2012, among others) rely on this notion based on guidance from previous publications in the field (e.g., Saeed et al., 2001). In much the same ways that marketing scholars have attempted to define "marketing" and "macro-marketing" in terms of societal ends, and "sustainability marketing" in terms of the sustainability discourse, scholars within the growing field of Islamic marketing have also attempted to define "Islamic marketing" by referring to the relevant precepts of Islam. The following quotes are from Wilson's (2012, p. 6) definition: "An acknowledgement of a God-conscious approach to marketing: from a marketer's and/or consumer's perspective, which draws from the drivers or traits associated with Islam; a school of thought which has a moral compass which tends toward the ethical norms and values of Islam and how Muslims interpret these, from their varying cultural lenses; a multi-layered, dynamic and three-dimensional phenomenon of Muslim and non-Muslim stakeholder engagement, which can be understood by considering the creation of explicit and/or implicit signaling cultural artifacts — facilitated by marketing; And so, Islamic marketing is definitely more than simply 'meat and money' (Wilson & Liu, 2010). Muslims, like any other consumer segment or sub-culture, love fashion, entertainment, cosmetics and holidays — but most importantly exhibit unique and identifiable homogenous traits."

According to El-Bassiouny (2014), Islam is a global religion and way of life that goes beyond geo-political confines, and "because the Islamic ideology is a paradigm that transcends all acts of life, Muslim believers naturally expect that business conduct, and hence marketing as well, will be impacted by the precepts of their faith. If marketers are to relate more effectively to Muslim consumers, then some study of the distinctive aspects of Islam are warranted" (p. 43). This is relevant because congruence should exist between belief and action in much the same ways we expect consumer attitudes to match their behaviors (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004). According to the tri-component attitude model, attitudes have a cognitive, affective, and conative/behavioral component, i.e., "a positive answer to an attitude intention question impacts in a positive way on the actual brand purchase …. Consumers generally have favorable attitudes toward those brands/issues that they believe have an adequate level of attributes that they evaluate as positive …." (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004, p. 252–284). Some recent experimental consumer research examines factors affecting consumers' emotional versus rational decision-making processes (Hong & Chang, 2015). The attitude–behavior congruency is more pertinent in Islam since, from that perspective, man is God's (Allah's) trustee and is thus entrusted with the amanah (trust) of preserving His wisdom and guidance (Quran 33:72). In that sense, actions that are inconsistent with beliefs present an irrational predicament, and the Quran clearly stipulates that belief should be mirrored in action when addressing believers as those who "believe and perform good deeds" (e.g., Quran 2:82 and 103:3 among other verses). In addition, according to developmental psychology literature, "the moral behavior of older children, adolescents, and adults is more likely to be consistent with their moral judgments," providing room for "tentative predictions" from attitudinal dispositions to actual behavior (Mussen, Conger, Kagan, & Huston, 1990, p. 457).