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Editorial

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Islamic encounters in consumption and marketing

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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. The interest is also stimulated by broader socioeconomic developments, in particular neoliberal transformation and the so-called Islamic resurgence. Beginning in the late 1970s and accelerating in the 1980s and 1990s, Islamization has become a major social and political force impacting the Muslim world and beyond. Studies conducted in various fields of social sciences discussed the rise of Islamist movements and the spread of political Islam in connection to globalization and as an expression of resistance to Western-style modernization and secular modernity (e.g. Comaroff and Comaroff, 2000; Dekmejian, 1995; Esposito, 1998). For example, in his influential book, *Globalized Islam*, Olivier Roy (2004) linked the rise of contemporary Islamism to cultural disruptions and dislocations of a globalizing world, which made people, uprooted from their original cultures, susceptible to "fundamentalist" forms of Islam.

Another perspective, however, argues for a more co-constitutive relation between Islamism and globalization, suggesting that rather than seeing Islamism as a refuge from or resistance against neoliberal transformations, it is more productive to explore how socioeconomic restructuring and capitalist development inform religious piety and everyday experiences of Islam (e.g. Osella and Osella, 2009; Rudnyckyj, 2009). To this end, several scholars document how forms and practices of Islamization are shaped by the social transformations that accompanied the shift toward a free-market economy in countries as diverse as Turkey, Egypt, Malaysia, and Indonesia (e.g. Fischer, 2009; Ismail, 2013; Navaro-Yashin, 2002). Moreover, studies show that contemporary Islamist movements are not merely reactionary collectivities; on the contrary, they are rational and strategic activist structures based on mobilization of various resources such as political parties, religious organizations, nongovernmental organizations, schools, and social networks (e.g. Bayat, 2005; Wiktorowicz, 2004; Yavuz, 2004). An important observation made by these studies has been the

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compatibility between Islamic ethics and neoliberal logic and the role of markets in rendering Islam visible in the public sphere (Smith-Hefner, 2007).

Indeed, with increasing presence of Islam in the marketplace, marketing scholars' and practitioners' interest in the topic intensified (see Jafari, 2012; Sandıkcı and Ger, 2011; Wilson et al., 2013). In recent years, studies addressing different aspects of Islam–consumption–marketing linkage appeared in journals such as *Journal of Consumer Research*, *Marketing Theory*, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *Journal of Business Research*, and *Journal of Consumer Behaviour* (e.g. El-Bassiouny, 2013; Hirschman et al., 2011; Izberk-Bilgin, 2012; Jafari and Süerdem, 2012; Karababa and Ger, 2011; Sandıkcı and Ger, 2010; Sobh et al., 2012). Furthermore, the specialized *Journal of Islamic Marketing* and several books addressing academics and/or practitioners were introduced (e.g. Alserhan, 2011; Nestorovic, 2009; Sandıkcı and Rice, 2011). The organization of academic conferences and executive workshops in various parts of the world and the production of high profile consultancy reports underlined a shift from "omission" to "discovery" of Muslim consumers and Islamic markets (see Sandıkcı, 2011).

Inevitably, the bracketing of "Muslim" and "Islamic" in studying consumption and marketing phenomena raises the question "what it is about Islam that calls for a focused approach?" Given that there is no comparable interest in "Christian," "Jewish," or "Buddhist" marketing (Jafari and Süerdem, 2012; Sandıkcı and Ger, 2011), we believe that the Islamic encounters in consumption and marketing need to be critically approached and assessed. Beside the arguments about the rise of Muslim middle classes (Nasr, 2009) and Muslim entrepreneurs (Osella and Osella, 2009) as powerful economic actors, another explanation comes from Talal Asad. Asad (1993) argues against the study of Islam as a "religion"—an analytical category he considers to be a Western invention that carries the risk of leveling the specific features of different religious traditions. Instead, he argues that *din*, the Muslim notion of religion, is a discursive tradition created by the generations of Muslims debating the correct form of practice. As such, Islam "is both vaster and narrower than the social scientific category . . . Vaster because it involves many more fields of life, and narrower because it is a normative notion" (Schielke, 2010: 3). Beyond questioning the heuristic value of the term "religion," Asad's conceptualization draws attention to the dangers of ahistorical and totalizing approaches to the study of Islam and Muslim societies. Indeed, as Schielke (2010: 4) points out, the focus on Islam as a peculiar entity

> carries an Orientalist heritage: an assumption that Islam is something significantly different from 'the West'. Instead of being the backward other of European modernity, Islam may now be taken up as the pious other of secularism, the resisting other of neo-colonialism or the methodological other of comparative social science. Elevated to such a position of significant alterity, the religious traditions of Muslims gain particular brilliance and importance for the sake of highlighting their particularity through their difference. But at the same time, the faith and lives of Muslims in their own uniqueness, their specificity in their own right—and not just comparatively—become opaque, reduced to their Islamic-ness. To study Islam as 'something' makes it much easier to enter sophisticated theoretical debates, but it also makes it much easier to overlook the ways Islam actually matters in the lives of people who adhere to it.

It is such concerns, debates, and questions about the interconnections between Islam, everyday life, and markets that gave the inspiration for this special issue. Our aim has been to contribute to this emerging field of inquiry by bringing together scholars from different cultural contexts and academic disciplines that share a refrain from essentializing, stereotyping, and orientalizing Islam

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and are interested in developing a dialogue between Islamic concepts and practices and marketing and consumption theories. The articles illustrate complex, multiple, and even contradictory positions, articulations, and perspectives on the linkages between Islam and markets. Hopefully, they will open up more questions than they provide answers. We hope that the collection will stimulate further research on religion–market intersection, a domain that has remained understudied and undertheorized. Before we introduce individual contributions, we will briefly look at the sociological and anthropological debates on Islam, modernity, and capitalism.

Islam, modernity, and capitalism

The relative lack of critical attention to religion in marketing and consumption research can be seen as a reflection of the prediction in the social sciences that modernity will render the importance of religion minimal. Classical theorists such as Marx, Weber, and Durkheim postulated that as societies modernize, religion would lose its power. Indeed, in the second half of the 20th century, during the heyday of modernization, the ''secularization thesis'' (e.g. Berger, 1967; Luckmann, 1967; Wilson, 1966) became dominant in sociological thinking. Modernity and secularization have been regarded as not only inevitable but also universal processes, representing the future of all societies. As such, Muslim societies were expected to follow a similar path. For example, Ernest Gellner argued that Muslim society would over time eschew ''traditional'' and ''ecstatic'' forms of religion for the more modern and rational forms and that Islam would be compatible with modernity (Gellner, 1981). Similarly, in his anthropological investigation of religious change in Indonesia and Morocco, Clifford Geertz (1968) argued for a transition from mystical–magical religious styles to a religiosity focused on scripture. He mentioned colonialism, Western dominance, and the rise of nationalism as important forces shaping such a shift. Despite their shortcomings, Gellner's and Geertz's work drew attention to the importance of religion under conditions of social transformation and suggested modern ways of being a Muslim (see Soares and Osella, 2010).

Toward the end of the 20th century, secularization thesis came under attack. Noting the revival of religions in the public life of the modern world, Jose Casanova (1994) argued that religion has undergone a process of ''repoliticization'' and ''deprivatization,'' and became a key contributor of the civil society. While Casanova focused on Catholicism and Protestantism in Spain, Poland, Brazil, and the United States, his arguments resonated in other religious traditions. For example, Salvatore and Eickelman (2004) report the appearance of ''public Islam,'' an Islamic public sphere, which enables Muslims to make their voices heard in civic debate, thus facilitating a modern political and religious identity. According to Eickelman and Piscatori (1996), instrumental in this development is the change in the nature of religious authority. They argue that with mass education, increased literacy, and the spread of new media technologies, the authority of religious leaders have diminished and Muslims have become more self-conscious about their religion. Eickelman (1992) calls this heightened self-consciousness a process of ''objectification.'' With objectification, three questions arise in the minds of believers: What is my religion? Why is it important to my life? And, how do my beliefs guide my behavior? Eickelman argues that debating of these questions is a distinctively modern phenomenon and opens up new ways of thinking about Islam and Muslims.

Indeed, moving away from the question of whether Islam is compatible with modernity, recent scholarship focuses on understanding the ''ways in which Muslims produce themselves as 'modern' in everyday life'' (Soares and Osella, 2010: S5). Scholars interrogate what being modern

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entails as well as its realization in daily life, in particular the domain of consumption (Fischer, 2009; Moors, 2007; Navaro-Yashin, 2002). The focus on consumption for exploring Muslim subjectivity and new forms of Islamic identification contrasts with earlier sociological perspectives that cast Islamism in opposition to capitalism (e.g. Barber, 1995; Turner, 1994). For instance, Turner (1994: 90) argues that "consumerism offers or promises a range of possible lifestyles which compete with, and in many cases, contradict the uniform lifestyle demanded by Islamic fundamentalism". According to Turner, the cultural, aesthetic, and stylistic pluralism fostered by the spread of global system of consumption contradicts the fundamentalist commitment to a unified world organized around incontrovertibly true values and beliefs. While these sociological analyses perceive the relation between Islam and consumer capitalism problematic at best, "Islamic economics", a body of literature grounded in medieval Islamic thought (see Kuran, 2004), regards the incompatibility between the two as essential and valuable. Treating Western consumer culture as crass, decadent, immoral, and fostering individualism and hedonism, advocates of this school of thought instruct Muslims to live modest lives and refrain from conspicuous and excessive consumption.

Yet, anthropological research conducted in different parts of the Muslim world reveals the ways consumption and market are implicated in the production of religious subjectivities and Islamic lifestyles (e.g. Fischer, 2009; Ismail, 2013; Navaro-Yashin, 2002). The emphasis on consumption and market dynamics in studying Muslim societies coincides with the general increase in consumerism in many of these countries, along with the neoliberal restructuring. It is in this socioeconomic context that new forms of Islamic identification and lifestyles and public displays of piety through fashion, leisure, and other consumption practices emerge and gain popularity. Overall, the last decade has witnessed the development of "a new market for commodities, media, advertising, businesses, and consumer segments identified as 'Islamic'" (Gökarıksel and McLarney, 2010: 1). The rise of "Islamic" fashions, leisure spaces, coffee shops, media, and brands attracted the attention of marketing scholars as well.

Studying consumption in the Muslim world

Two research approaches characterize the literature on Muslim consumers in the marketing field. One stream adopts a managerial perspective and explores Muslim consumers as a distinct segment (e.g. Delener, 1994; El-Bassiouny, 2013; Esso and Dibb, 2004). The focus lies in identifying values, beliefs, and attitudes of Muslim consumers, comparing them with consumers of other religions and predicting brand and product preferences and shopping and purchasing behaviors. While useful, this framework is limited in its exploratory power as it conceptualizes Muslimness merely as a segmentation variable, used to demarcate one group from another (see Sandıkcı and Ger, 2011). Moreover, in line with much of the research in marketing, it treats religion as a "cognitive system" (Hirschman, 1983), a set of beliefs, values, and expectations shared by members of the same religious affiliation. This results in a view of Islam as a monolithic and homogenizing force across Muslims and ignores different interpretations and complex negotiations that individuals engage in while crafting their religious identities in the marketplace (see Jafari, 2012).

The second stream of research builds on this very point and, adopting a critical cultural perspective, interrogates the relationship between religion and identity projects and how consumption is implicated in constructing, maintaining, and communicating Muslim identities (e.g. Hirschman et al., 2011; Izberk-Bilgin, 2012; Jafari and Süerdem, 2012; Karababa and Ger, 2011; Sandıkcı and Ger, 2007, 2010; Sobh et al., 2012). Abandoning a totalizing view of Islam, these studies acknowledge the multiplicity of the interpretations of Islam and focus on understanding how Islam

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is experienced and practiced in daily life and in particular sociopolitical contexts. For example, in an early study, Sandıkcı and Ger (2002: 467) trace the emergence of an ''Islamic consumption space'' and ''an Islamic bourgeoisie, conservative in values but avant-garde in consumption practices'' in Turkey following the process of economic liberalization in the 1980s and 1990s. In a later study (Sandıkcı and Ger, 2010), the authors look at middle-class Turkish women who voluntarily adopt one of the quintessential symbols of Islam, the veil, and discuss how this stigmatized practice transforms into fashionable and ordinary clothing. Izberk-Bilgin's (2012) study shifts the attention to lower classes and offers an account of how political and religious ideologies mobilize disadvantaged consumers to reject Western brands and construct an identity immune to the harms of consumerism. In another instance, Jafari and Süerdem (2012) argue for a historical and sociocultural reading of the interrelatedness of consumption and religiosity in Muslim geographies. Rejecting the clichéd Orientalist and ''self-orientalist'' (Jafari, 2012) interpretations of Muslim societies, the authors contend that religiosity is not uniform as it forms based on people's diverse interpretations of religion based on history, identity projects, and political/institutional dynamics, to name but a few. Overall, the emerging critical perspective emphasizes the complexities and contingencies of religions and consumer identities and illustrates how a focus on Islamic discourses, practices, and aspirations can provide new insights to marketing- and consumption-related phenomena.

Contributions in this issue

The articles in this special issue are located within the critical perspective and aim to contribute to the debates surrounding the relationship between Islam, consumption, and markets. Following the call for a situated understanding of everyday consumption experiences of Muslims, three empirical articles explore the interplay of religion and consumption in the contexts of gift-giving, hospitality, and consumer socialization.

In the first article, through her ethnographic research, Mona Moufahim examines the notion of gift-giving in the context of pilgrimage, a site where the sacred and the profane are intermingled. She demonstrates how religious experience is constructed and imbued with meaning through charitable donations and gift-giving, and ''materialized'' via the consumption of sacred and profane objects. Pilgrims view the purchasing and consumption of gifts as activities intrinsic to their pilgrimage. As an integral part of pilgrimage rituals, the consumption of material objects transforms pilgrims' intangible spiritual experience into something ''palpable.'' The gifts are intended to embody the sacredness of the sites visited by the pilgrims and allow family and friends to partake in their sacred experience.

Although Islamic rituals such as prayers, fasting, and pilgrimage are highly visible in public, only few studies (e.g. Hirschman et al., 2011; Sandıkcı and Ömeraki, 2007) look at their implications for marketing theory and practice. Undertaking Islamic rituals is not merely a way of asserting religiosity in everyday life; it is a practice mediated by the market, as in the case of commodification of Ramadan celebrations in many Muslim majority contexts (Armbrust, 2002). Indeed, Rana Sobh, Russell W. Belk, and Jonathan A. J. Wilson pursue this path. In their ethnographic study of Arab hospitality in Qatar and United Arab Emirates, the authors investigate rituals of home and commercial hospitality as understudied phenomena in consumer research. Their work reveals that different types of hospitality are distinguished by the boundaries of privacy between the home and nonhome contexts. They also demonstrate how hospitality is determined by many factors such as degree of affinity between the host and guest, gender relations, patriotism, cultural code of practice, and social status. The authors use the term ''hyper-ritualization'' to

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acknowledge the multiplicity of dynamics that influence hospitality. A valuable contribution of the article is that it critically unpacks the complex phenomenon of hospitality, a key cultural characteristic of Arab societies which has to date been taken for granted if not exaggerated. Such analysis corresponds to several calls (Fischer, 2009; Jafari, 2012; Jafari et al, 2012; Jafari and Goulding, 2013; Jafari and Süerdem, 2012; Karataş and Sandıkcı, in this issue; Sandıkcı, 2011; Süerdem, in this issue) for a shift from naive interpretations of people's consumption practices in the light of religiosity toward a critical understanding of the sociocultural and political dynamics and power relations that influence their everyday life situations.

While these two studies concentrate on personalized forms of consumption and piety within the framework of individual choice, Mustafa Karataş and Özlem Sandıkcı's work focuses on community and examines young people's experiences in an Islamic network. Through an ethnographic study of a Turkish-based Islamic community, the authors focus on the collective experiences of religion and investigate the multiple ways consumption shapes and is shaped by a communal religious ethos. They demonstrate the role of consumption in attracting individuals to the community, socializing them to the communal ethos, and drawing symbolic boundaries between the community members and outsiders. This article contributes to the existing literature on the communal aspects of consumption (see Jafari et al., 2013, for a summary of this literature) and enhances our understanding of the role of religion in shaping communal consumption practices. Besides illustrating how consumption contributes to the formation and maintenance of a distinct religious subcultural identity, their study shows the constraining impact of a religious network. As the authors report, members' consumption choices are communally structured and tend to converge into a limited set of alternatives. Karataş and Sandıkcı argue that the sense of moral satisfaction that derives from serving Islam appears to ease any feeling of deprivation that might stem from giving up some choices. The appeal of a strictly ordered life underscores the notion of Islam as a "complete system governing all religious, social, political, cultural and economic orders and encompassing all things material, spiritual, societal, individual, and personal" (Hasan, 2009: 52) and problematizes the coupling of consumerism and Islamism, a point raised by Ahmet Süerdem's commentary.

In his compelling essay, Süerdem draws our attention to the problems of conceptualizing the relationship between Islam and consumption. He warns against populistic accounts of Islam as a homogenizing ideology, a stance that essentially dichotomizes the globe into the West and Islam (see also Jafari, 2012; Sandıkcı and Ger, 2011). Referring to the socially constructed nature of markets (see Peñaloza and Venkatesh, 2006), Süerdem views Muslims as part of the larger community of human beings whose actions—including their market activities such as consumption—should positively contribute to the betterment of life for all on earth. He criticizes contemporary research's exaggerations about the formation of a liberal consumer culture among Muslims. Such exaggerations, he argues, ignore the policies and politics of the production and consumption of cultural signs, which, apart from their profit-seeking goals, tend to manipulate (in a populistic way) the masses' identity and lifestyles based on politicized forms of piety and religiosity.

The issue of politics extends to the next essay in which Ger views the emergence of "Islamic Marketing" at the interface of global capitalism and global Islam, two forces implying secularization and de-secularization, respectively. Religion has never been apolitical; throughout history, religion has played an important role in shaping societies' economic, cultural, and political behaviors. And in today's society, where the boundaries of the global and local are loose (because of the global cultural flow), religious signification has becomes even more prominent as religion is more visible through market contents (e.g. products and services that carry symbols of identity, piety, and religiosity). Ger further contends that Islamic marketing should not be viewed merely as a

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reaction to the (secular) global marketing. Instead, given the established background of Islamic capitalism and modernity, Islamic marketing should be seen as a field in which to study market cultures and marketing practices in the context of history, politics, ideologies, economics, and multiple forms of religiosity that have shaped different societies, not only in Muslim-majority countries but also among Muslim expatriates in other countries. Finally, she recommends critical ethnography as a useful tool to develop new knowledge in the realm of Islamic marketing.

Ger's emphasis on the importance of understanding historical trajectories that have shaped markets and consumption practices becomes tangible through Matthias Zick Varul's essay. Varul suggests that the roots of consumer culture among Muslims may be searched for in Sufism. He argues that Rumi's Sufism gave rise to individualism, aestheticism, and creative imagination as the 18th century Romanticism paved the way for the emergence of the spirit of hedonism, individualism, and imaginative thinking in the West. Sufism, he argues, transformed the nature of religion from a strict set of codes to a love-based story-telling and liberatory tradition. Although Varul "suspects" (as he himself uses the term) that this might be the case for the emergence of consumer culture, his emphasis on the importance of understanding history resonates with Jafari and Süerdem's (2012) analysis of different types of religiosity among Muslims. As the authors contend, some people may pursue Rumi's love-based religion to let their wings of imagination fly and imagine different types of lifestyles.

The same notion of "history" is repeated in the final essay, in which Elizabeth Hirschman reflexively analyses the nature of religious identity as a historical and social construction. She argues that the history of the world has witnessed many conflicts between religions and these conflicts have all accelerated imaginary differences among people. She is also skeptical about the juxtaposition of religions in the existing literature as they overlook the historical periods in which religious differences were not as important as they seem today. Hirschman forcefully argues that a majority of such differences have political reasons as they have been used by rulers of countries; in other words, religion has been used by politics. The author concludes that we should learn from history to put all ideological wars aside and see differences as opportunities to offer each other better and more enjoyable lives. In this regard, markets should be seen as such instances where people can have more opportunities to live their desired lives.

Conclusion

In our call for this special issue, we invited contributions that would go beyond treating religion merely as a segmentation variable and explore the multiple and complex ways that religion, markets, and market-making factors (institutional dynamics, business practices, consumption patterns, etc.) inform and are informed by one another. We hope that the articles will serve this goal and encourage a more critical, situated, and dynamic engagement with Muslim consumers and businesses and research in order to advance marketing theory in general.

While the events of 9/11 had accentuated the representations of Islam, stereotypes about Muslims and Muslim societies have a long history. As Soares and Osella (2010: S2) point out

> representations are never simply reflections on or descriptions of reality, of social and religious processes necessarily already 'out there' in the world; they have generative power. In reshaping conceptual categories, they are orientated towards producing something which is given concrete ground, thereby intensifying a reality already alluded to in discourse itself.

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Therefore, we believe that it is very important for scholars to attend to various discourses that shape how Muslim societies are understood, studied, and represented, and be wary of privileging Islam at the expense of other aspects of identity, such as gender, social class, age, and their interactions. Such an approach to balancing individual experiences of Islam and the macro structures of identity, politics, and culture is likely to advance current understandings of not only "the Islamic" but markets in general. "The global religious revival" (Asad, 2006) necessitates more critical research into the complexities of religion–market relationship. Finally, we hope that such a critical approach to knowledge generation within the broad realm of marketing and consumer research will even more fructify in that stream of research that investigates religion–market–society relationships at large. The case of Islam (as a religion) in this special issue should be treated only as an example; other religions should similarly be studied in the light of incoming knowledge and ever-changing landscape (e.g. of the political, cultural, economic, ideological, aesthetic, global, and local dynamics) surrounding us in society.

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