

2011

3RD ANNUAL AMERICAN MUSLIM CONSUMER CONFERENCE

PRESS KIT

“MULTICULTURALISM IN THE AMERICAN MUSLIM CONSUMER MARKET”

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2011

at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, New Brunswick, NJ



The American Muslim Consumer Conference provides the only platform for industry professionals to examine this potent market sector, and explore its rich potential. The objective of AMCC is to “Understand and Address the needs of American Muslim Consumers and promote companies and entrepreneurs who are developing products for this market”. It effectively raises awareness of the Muslim consumer, their buying power so that the market can gain some visibility and presence in mainstream media, the advertising industry and in-turn influence companies in developing products for Muslims.

It is clear that this market is growing and maturing. The consumer preferences of the world’s nearly 1.5 billion Muslims are faith-based, and the concept of Shariah-compliance as a marketing strategy has started to take root in the global and national marketplaces.

Ogilvy and Mather’s 2010 report on “Brands, Islam and the New Muslim Consumer” states that the “generation of educated, savvy young Muslims across the world who are quantifiably different in their world views, attitudes and expectations from the generations before them. With Muslim youth now accounting for 11% of the world’s population, they are the voice of the future that global marketers cannot afford to ignore”.

Ogilvy and Mather’s 2010 research “A little empathy goes a long way: How Brands can engage the American Muslim Consumer” reveals that 86% of American Muslim Consumers believe that American Companies “need to make more of an effort to understand Muslim values” but at exactly the same time they are feeling largely ignored by American brands and companies with 98% feeling that “American brands don’t actively reach out to Muslim Consumers”.

JWT’s 2007 study of ‘one of America’s biggest hidden niche markets’ revealed that the American Muslim consumers represent “a neglected market with huge potential for brands that are willing to connect with them.”

The report, based on face-to-face and telephone interviews, uncovered various important points about American Muslims attitudes to brands:

- » 70% felt that brands play an important role in their purchasing decisions, compared to 55% for the average American
- » 59% say they make a point of knowing which brands are popular, compared to a 42% average
- » 55% felt that brands make ‘life more interesting’ compared to a 43% average
- » 71% said they rarely see anyone of their own faith or ethnicity in advertising
- » 73% said they could not think of one mainstream brand that showed a Muslim in its advertising
- » 77% rated price as important, as against 91% of the general public, making their brand choice less dependent on price

According to an article in Advertising Age, “In the coming years, the U.S. market will likely begin to recognize and court the \$170 billion purchasing power of American Muslims.”

MEDIA INQUIRIES: INFO@AMERICANMUSLIMCONSUMER.COM



ABOUT THE AMCC ORGANIZER

MLink is a Networking platform to connect Muslims and Muslim Communities. Launched in 2007, MLink has approximately 2,000 registered members, majority of the members are professionals and highly educated.

U.S. MUSLIMS: A NEW CONSUMER NICHE

RACHEL ZOLL, ASSOCIATED PRESS

This article was also carried by USA Today, MSNBC, Boston Globe, Bloomberg, Forbes, LA Times, Chicago Tribune, Washington Post, and many other newspapers around the world.

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. — In the ballroom of an upscale hotel a short train ride from New York, advertisers, food industry executives and market researchers mingled — the men in dark suits, the women in head scarves and Western dress. Chocolates made according to Islamic dietary laws were placed at each table.

The setting was the American Muslim Consumer Conference, which aimed to promote Muslims as a new market segment for U.S. companies. While corporations have long catered to Muslim communities in Europe, businesses have only tentatively started to follow suit in the U.S. — and they are doing so at a time of intensified anti-Muslim feeling that companies worry could hurt them, too. American Muslims seeking more acknowledgment in the marketplace argue that businesses have more to gain than lose by reaching out to the community.

"We are not saying, 'Support us,'" said Faisal Masood, a graduate of the University of Illinois, Chicago, and management consultant. "But we want them to understand what our values are."

There are signs the industry is stirring: Masood, a Wall Street executive who organized the gathering, had attracted only 200 or so attendees when he started the event last year. This year, he had to close registration at 400 to keep from going over capacity.

The worldwide market for Islamically permitted goods, called halal, has grown to more than half a billion dollars annually. Ritually slaughtered meat is a mainstay, but the halal industry is much broader, including foods and seasoning that omit alcohol, pork products and other forbidden ingredients, along with cosmetics, finance and clothing.

Corporations have been courting immigrant Muslim communities in Europe for several years. Nestle, for example, has about 20 factories in Europe with halal-certified production lines and advertises to Western Muslims through its marketing campaign called "Taste of Home." Nestle plans to increase its ethnic and halal offerings in Europe in coming years.

In the United States, iconic American companies such as McDonald's (which already has a popular halal menu overseas) and Wal-Mart have entered the halal arena. In August, the natural grocery giant Whole Foods began selling its first nationally distributed halal food product — frozen Indian entrees called Saffron Road.

Along with new customers, however, the companies draw critics and can become targets in the ideological battle over Islam and terrorism.

Abdalhamid Evans, project director with the World Halal Forum Europe, which works with the global

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RACHEL ZOLL, ASSOCIATED PRESS

halal industry, said a recent backlash has prompted some mainstream businesses in Europe to keep a lower profile about their halal products or scale back their offerings.

In the U.K., after Kentucky Fried Chicken rolled out halal menu options in several dozen stores, the restaurant chain pulled the items in a few locations in the face of protests. Critics dubbed the menu "terror chicken."

Last September, the Daily Mail of London reported that many British supermarkets, fast-food chains, hospitals, schools, pubs and sporting arenas such as Wembley Stadium, were serving some halal meat and poultry without notifying the public. A large share of meat sold in Britain comes from New Zealand, where the slaughterhouses have expanded halal production as they try to boost their already robust exports to Islamic countries.

In the uproar that followed, Barnabas Aid, a group that fights Christian persecution worldwide, started a petition in Britain against what it called the "imposition" of halal. It "may be interpreted as an act of Islamic supremacy," the group said.

U.S. companies have also faced some resistance, although on a smaller scale.

Last year, Best Buy Inc. was inundated with calls, e-mails and letters complaining that the company was anti-American after acknowledging a Muslim holiday — "Eid al-Adha," or the Feast of the Sacrifice — for the first time in a national advertisement. That year, Eid al-Adha fell around Thanksgiving, so the ad, a

small bubble at the bottom of the page, appeared in the company's Thanksgiving flier. Critics seized on the timing in their complaints.

"They used very abusive language," said Nausheena Hussain, a marketing manager for Best Buy in Minnesota. "It was pretty sad."

Best Buy executives stood by their decision. The company saw the holiday greeting as part of a larger goal of reaching consumers from different cultures. Soon, Muslims started calling to thank Best Buy and set up a Facebook page honoring the company, which continues to acknowledge Muslim holidays.

"It's a very viable customer segment," said Zainab Ali, senior marketing manager with the money transfer company MoneyGram, which ran a special Ramadan promotion this year for Muslims in the U.S., Europe and elsewhere. "You just need to get over some of the fear and look at them as just another consumer."

The potential for profit is drawing more companies to the idea.

This year, Ogilvy & Mather, the global advertising firm, started an international Islamic branding consultancy called Ogilvy Noor that includes an emphasis on U.S. Muslims. ("Noor" means "light" in Arabic.) Muslims came to the United States in large numbers for doctorates, engineering and medical degrees, after the federal government eased immigration quotas in the 1960s. Studies have found that a significant percentage of Muslims are better educated and wealthier than other Americans.

Joohi Tahir, vice president of marketing and sales for

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RACHEL ZOLL, ASSOCIATED PRESS

Crescent Foods, the halal chicken producers based in Chicago, said Wal-Mart executives approached Crescent Foods two years ago looking for a halal chicken supplier, then invited Crescent executives to Wal-Mart headquarters in Arkansas to advise them on reaching Muslim consumers.

That same year, Wal-Mart opened a supercenter in Dearborn, Mich., an area with one of the largest Muslim and Arab populations in the country. The store is geared for Mideast consumers, with a range of halal products, including specialty foods.

"Mainstream is coming to halal," Tahir said.

Wal-Mart spokesman Bill Wertz said the merchandise in each store can vary according to the needs of the surrounding community, so it is difficult to know the exact number of U.S. stores that carry halal products. But several in Michigan and at least one store in Canada have advertised that they offer some halal items.

Manufacturers entering the field hope they can appeal to non-Muslims as well.

Jack Acree, executive vice president of American Halal Co., which produces the Saffron Road products, emphasizes that the entrees are not only halal, but also all-natural and humanely farmed, and free of antibiotics and hormones.

"Muslims are highly educated and live in metro areas, and they're shopping with us already," said Errol Schweizer, senior global grocery coordinator for Whole Foods. "If we have a customer base where there's a big Muslim population, it makes sense for us to service that population."

Schweizer would not answer directly when asked if anyone complained to the company over its Muslim outreach. He said only that halal foods will be judged like any other products — by whether the items sell.

For Muslims, the issue is not just a matter of convenience. Recognition by major companies is an important sign of acceptance as they struggle to establish themselves in the U.S. They are following in the footsteps of American Jews, who struggled for decades for mainstream acceptance of kosher food — and of Judaism.

Despite the sometimes unfriendly climate for Muslims, Evans, of the World Halal Forum, said it is inevitable that a large number of businesses will reach out Muslim consumers, given the wealth and size of the Muslim population — more than a billion people worldwide — and their presence in the West.

"It isn't a question of whether they're going to do it," Evans said. "It's a question of where and when and how."

Forbes

MARKETERS SHOULD COURT MUSLIM CONSUMERS, SAYS AD CHIEF

MELANIE WELLS

30 OCTOBER 2010 Just one day after explosive devices were found in packages sent from Yemen, UPS probably isn't talking about the Middle East as a marketing Mecca. But the head of its ad agency, Ogilvy & Mather, says he believes more marketers should tailor messages to appeal to Muslims, a powerful consumer group.

I spoke with Miles Young, global CEO of Ogilvy, today before he was slated to be the keynote speaker at the 2010 American Muslim Consumer Conference in New Brunswick, N.J.

Young, whose agency is part of WPP Group, says he wants to emphasize "the importance of Islamic branding and why the market should be appreciated by marketers." Says he: "There has been some apprehension and fear about engaging properly with this audience."

This audience is a big one. Nazia Hussain, head of strategy for Ogilvy Noor—Noor means "light" in Arabic—says there are 1.8 billion Muslims in the world and as many as 8 million in the U.S. One reason it may be important for marketers to communicate with them: A growing number of young Muslims are online and feel free to express their views on the Internet, Hussain says.

The ad executives want to raise awareness of Ogilvy Noor, a consulting practice the agency launched in May to focus on Islamic branding. The group is peddling results of a study on the subject for \$9,400. It has been purchased by Coca-Cola, Unilever, Nestle, Ford Motor, and American Express. The agency has released

a report benchmarking the appeal of 35 specific brands to Muslims. Among the brands getting the highest marks for being Muslim friendly: Lipton, Nestle, Kraft and Pringles. Brands that aren't so appealing? Financial service companies Citibank, HSBC and RBS.

UPS isn't on the brand index and Young said he didn't know if the company, which tapped Ogilvy for global ad duties a year ago, had seen its study.

Authorities on Friday intercepted two U.S.-bound packages on UPS and FedEx cargo planes in the U.K. and Dubai. That event, says Young, shouldn't keep marketers from stepping up efforts to engage a powerful group that may someday be as mainstream in the U.S. as the Hispanic market. It would be "disgraceful" for marketers to "exclude a whole community," says Young.

THE AMERICAN MUSLIM CONSUMER CONFERENCE

WWW.ELANTHEMAG.COM

MONIZA KHOKHAR

1 NOVEMBER 2010 We're rich. We're well educated. And according to one of the conference's moderators, Shahid Khan (Chairman for MediaMorph), we're all very good looking (Statistics are still being compiled on the last point). The American Muslim Consumer Conference was held at the Hyatt Regency in New Brunswick, this past weekend. The idea behind the conference was to not only connect young Muslim professionals but to also provide a platform for marketers to discuss the buying power of Muslim Americans. It was an intimate gathering of more than 350 people, but all major players were involved from Ogilvy & Mather Worldwide to CNN to PepsiCo. That's right, multinational corporations are choosing to engage with us... and it feels really good.

The conference started with a keynote from Magali Rheault, a senior analyst from the Gallup Center for Muslim Studies, who spoke about interesting statistics concerning the Muslim American market. Some surprising statistics included a quarter of the Muslim American consumer market is self-employed or owns their own business but the most unique statistic provided by Gallup that morning was there is a very small income disparity between Muslim American men and women. That's right sisters, we don't need to ask what Destiny's Child did, "Can you pay my bills, can you pay automobilles..." And then a discussion about halal products ensued, where it was determined that there needs to be a standardized body that certifies halal products. Dr. Mehmood Khan, Senior Vice President and Chief Scientific Officer at PepsiCo had thought-provoking questions to ask throughout the panel, to help come to a definition of what a halal product actually was.

A sweet and honorable moment took place in the middle of the conference, where Best Buy's marketing manager, Nausheena Hussain, was awarded for recognizing, Eid-al- Adha, in a national advertisement for Best Buy. Not only was our community proud of Best Buy reaching out, but we also followed up with some serious buying power.

The most fun part of the conference was the AMCC SME Showcase: Presentations by upcoming entrepreneurs followed by distinguished panel discussion and analysis. Young professionals presented their business ideas and were schooled by an experienced panel. Adnan Durrani, Chief Halal Officer at the American Halal Company; James Kocsi, District Director at the US Small Business Administration; Bami Bastani, Chairman at B2 Global Consulting, and Tariq Farid, Founder and CEO of Edible Arrangements all played Simon Cowell, Paula Abdul and Rande Davis. Though there was a consensus that Adnan Durrani was officially the Simon Cowell of this panel.

Finally, the AMCC closed off with a keynote from the CEO of Ogilvy & Mather Worldwide. He had great things to say about the buying power of the Muslim community worldwide. Recently, Ogilvy Noor was launched in May of 2010, calling itself the "world's first specialist Islamic branding consultancy." Proving, Muslims are a market that cannot be denied...mostly because we are rich, there are a lot of us and more importantly, we are very brand conscious!

All in all the conference was a huge success. The attendance brought the best of the best and more importantly they were all making connections. The conference organizers at MLink did a great service to the Muslim community and we're looking forward to what next year will be like.

SEE YOU AT THE SECOND ANNUAL AMERICAN MUSLIM CONSUMER CONFERENCE!

NAAZISH YARKHAN

28 SEPTEMBER 2010 The American Muslim Consumer Conference broke ground last year with a conference that was titled “American Muslim Consumer: Who? What? Where?” and drew a crowd of over 250 participants. This year they are back, and I hope to be one of the attendees. The conference is a platform for industry professionals to examine the American Muslim market sector and explore its rich potential. This year’s conference is titled “Charting the Landscape.”

According to Zogby International, there are approximately 7 million American Muslims living in the United States (or 9 Million, according to IFANCA), with an estimated buying power of \$170 billion. The American Muslim Consumer Conference focuses on promoting dialog and raising awareness of this multicultural niche where many mainstream companies are now seeing a growing opportunity.

In a recent interview on CNBC’s Street Signs titled “Muslims & Their Money,” Mostapha Saout, CEO of Allied Media Corp., highlighted why big business should focus their attention on the American Muslim market. The Muslim demographic is relatively younger, with 89.3 percent below the age of 50, compared with 45.2 percent for the general population. They are also well educated, with 77.9 percent having a Bachelor’s degree or higher as opposed to 43.7 for everyone else. This translates to a very affluent niche market, with 44 percent of American Muslims earning \$75,000 or

higher each year.

There are several companies globally that are starting to take notice of this untapped market with abundant opportunities across all industries, including the financial sector, food, fashion and even Hollywood. Ogilvy & Mather, a leading international advertising, marketing and public relations agency, has launched Ogilvy Noor, the world’s first marketing consultancy service focused on Islamic branding practices.

John Goodman, Ogilvy & Mather’s regional director for South and Southeast Asia, puts it into perspective: “It’s like being in 1990 and telling people that China doesn’t matter. Twenty years ago you might have said that, but now you’re being foolish.”

Miles Young, CEO of Ogilvy & Mather Worldwide, will be the keynote speaker at the second annual American Muslim Consumer Conference. He stresses the strategic value of the Muslim consumer: “A market of 1.8 billion people that has scarcely been tapped, Muslim consumers offer enormous potential to businesses around the world -- but only if their values are fully understood.”

To be held at the Hyatt Regency in New Brunswick, New Jersey on Saturday, October 30th 2010, the show promises to be as important to multinational companies as it is to large- and small-scale entrepreneurs.



BUYING MUSLIM IS BIG BUSINESS – BRANDS NO LONGER ABLE TO TURN A BLIND EYE TO MUSLIM CONSUMERS

LISA MABE

4 NOVEMBER 2010 In just its second year, the recent American Muslim Consumer Conference made exceptional strides in highlighting not only how substantially underserved the Muslim market in the United States is, but also the tremendous and tangible value that it represents to a variety of brands. The Conference hosted diverse participants and attendees; from mainstream consumer brands (such as Western Union, Pepsi and Best Buy), Muslim-operated brands (Saffron Road, Zaiken Jewelry and Guidance Residential), to marketing communications professionals and leading Muslim lifestyle journalists and bloggers.

While addressing the audience of around 400 during one of the anticipated panels, Halal: Challenges and Opportunities in North America, I specifically addressed the opportunity that the online space represents for brands that are actively vying for the attention of Halal consumers. While it is true that Muslim lifestyle media in the U.S. is still in its developmental stage, it is maturing, expanding, and growing very quickly – both in the quality of content and its specific and credible applications for Muslim consumers and also in the quantity of media outlets (especially online). In addition to highlighting where Muslim consumers are online, I also believe it is critical to address how brands can effectively engage with them online – providing content that is relevant and sharable.

Overall, some of the key tenets from my presentation,

which were echoed throughout the day at the conference, relevant to brands and marketers include:

- » Brands who simply acknowledge its Muslim consumers stand to gain a tremendous amount of brand loyalty and buzz among the American Muslim community.
- » Muslims want to purchase products and services that won't make them compromise their faith. From Halal options in food to tailor-suited financial products and more.
- » Targeting Muslims in your marketing efforts DOESN'T mean you have to alienate others. In fact, doing so in many ways will simply be complimentary to brands' current efforts.
- » The expanding Muslim lifestyle media is providing more opportunities to reach this niche efficiency.
- » It's not necessary for brands to be religious in their outreach, but rather appeal to Muslims as a lifestyle demonstrating understanding of their traditions and values. Our research indicates that overt religious appeals actually alienate a lot of American Muslim consumers.
- » Once targeted and converted to loyal brand advocates, Muslims have a remarkably high propensity to spread buzz about the brand –through word of mouth both online and off.



BUYING MUSLIM IS BIG BUSINESS – BRANDS NO LONGER ABLE TO TURN A BLIND EYE TO MUSLIM CONSUMERS

LISA MABE

The reality is American Muslims are a consumer group hungry for brands to acknowledge them and provide products and services that fit into their lifestyles. From food, to fashion, to finance, buying Muslim is a big opportunity and consumer brands in the U.S. who are smart enough to embrace them will experience firsthand their spending power, brand loyalty and brand advocacy.

The increased support and buzz around this emerging consumer segment is good for the Muslim community, brands seeking to court them and the U.S. economy. And as the outlook for significant top-line growth and overall economic recovery still looks gloomy in many sectors, look for more brands, mainstream and Muslim-owned, to begin to make efforts to gain the attention and loyalty of a significantly important and underserved demographic in the marketplace – the American Muslim consumer.



SHEDDING LIGHT ON ISLAMIC BRANDING IN THE MARKETING WORLD

NAZIA HUSSAIN, DIRECTOR OF CULTURAL STRATEGY, OGILVY & MATHER WORLDWIDE

27 SEPTEMBER 2010 Noor means ‘light’ in Arabic. It evokes openness, peace and learning. It is in this spirit that Ogilvy Noor was recently launched as the world’s first bespoke Islamic Branding practice. A specialist unit within Ogilvy & Mather, Ogilvy Noor aims to offer expert guidance on how to build brands that appeal to Muslim consumers globally.

In doing so, the practice aims to shed light on an area that has been fraught with much confusion to date.

The Muslim consumer market is, at almost 1.8bn people, is one of the largest consumer groups in the world – 20% of the world is, today, Muslim.

Yet to date, marketers from the non-Muslim world have often stumbled in their attempts to connect and engage with this group – falling into traps of oversimplification, stereotyping, or just plain prejudice. Ogilvy Noor seeks to redress the balance, and, for the first time, provide a guide to marketers that’s based on what Muslim consumers themselves want.

Radically simple in approach, Ogilvy Noor focuses single-mindedly on Muslim values. By understanding a consumer’s values, you prove you’ve taken the time to understand them as people first, and especially when those values are shared consistently amongst Muslims across the globe, that’s a most promising starting point for exploring consumer behaviour.

And that’s why our definition of Islamic Branding is simply branding that is empathetic to Muslim consumer values. What this will lead to, we hope, is an equal and

respectful relationship between global brands and the Muslim consumer.

The size of the opportunity isn’t in question - the halal market alone is worth US \$2.1tn and America’s own 7 million Muslims have a combined spending power of over US \$ 170bn. The real challenge is in cracking the market knowledgeably and sensitively in order to be profit sustainably in the long term.

Ogilvy Noor was launched in July 2010 with a publication, ‘Brands, Islam and the New Muslim Consumer’. Built on a bank of rigorous global research conducted by TNS, the study delivers practical guidance on successful brand-building to appeal to Muslim consumers.

It includes probing investigations of brands who are getting it right in consumers’ eyes – like Lipton, Nestlé and Nokia. These are some of the brands that rank highly in the Noor Global Brand Index 2010, a ranking of how ‘Muslim-friendly’ certain global brands are perceived to be by Muslims themselves. The brands that succeed do so because they align with Muslim values at heart.

So what are these values and how is success to be achieved? We believe that Shariah values, that form the core of Islam, are shared by all Muslims, and they include such things as trust, honesty, humility, peacefulness and community.

A Senegalese, American or Indonesian Muslim will believe equally strongly in Shariah values, which is



SHEDDING LIGHT ON ISLAMIC BRANDING IN THE MARKETING WORLD

NAZIA HUSSAIN, DIRECTOR OF CULTURAL STRATEGY, OGILVY & MATHER WORLDWIDE

why Ogilvy Noor's practice focuses on helping brands understand and empathise with core Muslim values first, before then tailoring that understanding to specific Muslim markets.

Ogilvy Noor's advice is also to consider the entire spectrum of brand building, not just advertising – the brand's story, its community role, its product offering, its customer service, its visual identity, its communications, its endorsements, even the fundamentals of the company's business practices.

As the Noor Index demonstrates, provenance matters much less to Muslim consumers than the product itself (quality and Shariah-compliance) and the values embodied in the brand's entire approach. Emirates, despite being of Middle Eastern origin, appears in the bottom ten; one of our respondents referred to the airline as 'a bar in the sky'. Brands that are perceived to embody Shariah-friendly values appear higher on the Noor Index, and are fast becoming an imperative in order to genuinely connect with the global Muslim community.

In America, today's evidence suggests that Muslim consumers are yet to feel well-understood, respected and specifically catered for by most brands and companies in their lives. Yet there is also evidence on the fringes to suggest that companies who are getting it right with these consumers, such as Best Buy, are gaining enormously through increased loyalty and positive word-of-mouth circulation – many of our

respondents have cited their Ramadan activations as examples of a brand that's getting it right.

Younger, savvier consumers actively seek out brands that demonstrate real understanding and engagement like this – the kind of consumers we call 'The Futurists'. They are young, educated, and deeply proud to be Muslim. Unafraid and unashamed, they challenge, ask questions, demand better.

To them, genuine empathy matters more than anything else. They are the consumers who demand that brands understand them, first and foremost, before trying to sell them a thing. Once convinced, they are loyalists for life.

It is a shared focus on tomorrow that has led Ogilvy & Mather to sponsor the upcoming American Muslim Consumer Conference in New Brunswick on the 30th of October 2010. At this event, Ogilvy Noor will present a point of view on how American brands can step forward into this new field, and build enduring relationships with the Futurists.

Success will mean that enormous benefits can be enjoyed not only with Muslim consumers, but with all consumers who want a fairer, more ethical, honest relationship with brands.

Sentinel

North Brunswick • South Brunswick

MUSLIM CONSUMER CONFERENCE TO HIGHLIGHT CONTRIBUTIONS TO U.S. ECONOMY

JENNIFER AMATO

21 OCTOBER 2010 Muslim professionals, entrepreneurs, and media and marketing executives will meet to share their experiences during the second annual Muslim Consumer Conference on Oct. 30.

From 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency in New Brunswick, the focus will be on dispelling negative stereotypes of Muslims by highlighting their contributions to America's society and economy, according to the conference's organizers. There are 6 million to 8 million Muslims living in America, mostly in New York, New Jersey, Houston, Chicago, Detroit and Los Angeles and about 150 to 200 mosques in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, including South Brunswick, New Brunswick, Old Bridge, Passaic County, Teaneck and Trenton.

The objective of the conference is to create an awareness of Muslim consumers, their buying power and their presence in mainstream media and the advertising industry, and in turn influence companies and Muslim entrepreneurs to develop products and services for Muslims, based on Islamic principles.

"In the late '90s, much was written about the Hispanic market, and it was lost in the mainstream media without any action until early 2000," said Faisal Masood, who founded the conference with his wife, Sabiha Ansari. "At this time the ethnic market started to reach a sizable opportunity for companies to target, and today this market stands at \$1.4 trillion. American Muslim consumers today stand at \$170 billion, according to JWT, one of the largest advertising agencies, and this is expected to grow rapidly as population expands and younger Muslims start working."

Masood, of North Brunswick, is also the founder of MuslimLink.org, a social media platform that connects Muslim professionals, businesses and organizations.


He decided to hold the conference last year after reading a 2007 New York Times article that mentioned that Muslims spend \$170 billion in America and that the American Muslim market is highly educated and fast growing.

"This is important because we want to highlight how Muslim Americans are contributing to the growth of the economy and how they are a very important fabric of this society. Muslims are entrepreneurs, doctors, engineers, technologists, scientists, teachers and professors, to name a few. This is not a religious conference, but a marketing and business conference, which highlights the needs of Muslims based on their values and principles and how mainstream companies can take the opportunity to address their needs," Masood said. The keynote speaker this year will be Miles Young, CEO of Ogilvy and Mather Worldwide, one of the largest marketing and advertising companies worldwide.

Other guest speakers include Steven Pilchak, a general manager for Best Buy in Dearborn, Mich.; Dr. Mehmood Khan, senior vice president and chief scientific officer of PepsiCo; Adnan Durrani, chief halal officer for American Halal Co. Inc.; Tariq Farid, founder and CEO of Edible Arrangements International; Dalia Mogahed, senior analyst and executive director of Gallup Center for Muslim Studies; and Hollywood actor Faran Tahir who played Raza in the movie "Iron Man."

"Last year's event was very successful," Masood said. "Over 250 people attended, mostly attended by Muslim entrepreneurs, business leaders, community leaders and successful professionals. What was missing was the presence of mainstream companies and marketing/advertising firms."

Tickets for the conference are \$89 in advance or \$99 at the door, including breakfast and lunch.

American Muslim
Consumers 

AMERICAN MUSLIM CONSUMER CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS AN UNTAPPED NICHE MARKET

12 OCTOBER 2010 According to Zogby International, there are approximately 7 million American Muslims living in the United States, with an estimated buying power of 170 billion dollars. The American Muslim Consumer Conference focuses on promoting dialog and raising awareness of this multicultural niche where many mainstream companies are now seeing a growing opportunity.

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There are several companies globally who are starting to take notice of this untapped market with abundant opportunities across all industries such as the financial sector, food, fashion and even Hollywood. Ogilvy & Mather, a leading international advertising, marketing and public relations agency, has launched Ogilvy Noor (<http://www.ogilvynoor.com>) as the world's first marketing consultancy service focused on Islamic branding practices.

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Muslim Conference. He stresses the strategic value of the Muslim Consumer - "A market of 1.8 billion people that has scarcely been tapped; Muslim consumers offer enormous potential to businesses around the world - but only if their values are fully understood."

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Other speakers include Adnan Durrani, Tariq Farid and several others. Adnan Durrani is the founder of three multi-million dollar companies such as Stonyfield Farms Yogurt. Tariq Farid is the founder and CEO of Edible Arrangements. The conference will also have an Entrepreneur Showcase to highlight upcoming businesses targeting the American Muslim Consumer.

To receive more information on the 2nd Annual American Muslim Consumer Conference, visit <http://americanmuslimconsumer.com>.

The National

CORPORATE US GETS TO KNOW MUSLIMS

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SHARMILA DEVI, FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT

9 NOVEMBER 2009 Getting corporate America to recognise the purchasing power of Muslims, rather than running scared because of stereotypes, was difficult but not impossible, said Michael Hastings-Black, the co-founder of the Desedo Advertising Agency, which specialises in minority markets.

Addressing more than 200 delegates at the American Muslim Consumer Conference recently, he recounted a tale illustrating the high passions generated by a television advert last year by Dunkin' Donuts, which did not even specifically address Muslims.

The commercial was pulled after viewers complained about an item of clothing that the non-Muslim celebrity chef, Rachel Ray, happened to wear – the keffiyah.

In the eyes of the complainers, the headscarf was a terrorist symbol. The controversy “caused big brands to pause” already meagre attempts to include or address Muslims in any marketing campaigns, Mr Hastings-Black said.

But, he said, large corporations as well as niche Muslim companies now have new opportunities to tap into the estimated US\$170 billion (Dh624bn) American Muslim market through social media. Such websites as Facebook and YouTube, plus blogs and instant messaging provided valuable means of communicating directly with the large and diverse US Muslim community, which also had the chance to create and define its own identity, he said. “To shop is to be American,” he said. But marketing campaigns along with Hollywood movies often perpetuate stereotypes. “New media allows a more accurate depiction of minorities. Dialogue is supplanting monologue.”

The American Muslim Consumer Conference, held at a conference hall at Rutgers University in New Jersey, was billed as the first of its kind by its volunteer organisers, a group of US Muslim professionals. Their aim was to educate non-Muslim businesses about the demand for Islamic products and encourage Muslims to exert their market power.

“Muslims want to be acknowledged in mainstream media. You don't need to change your product or show Muslims in your ads,” said Mohammed Abdullah, the conference's director. “Instead, consider advertising in a Muslim media outlet. Say ‘Eid Mubarak’ or ‘Ramadan Kareem’ during the holidays. The Muslim community will respond. When we see an ad we like, we send it to our friends and share it with each other.”

Mr Mohammed is a 28-year-old assistant vice president at Deutsche Bank and was born in India. A couple of years ago, he was going home by train to New Jersey from an Arabic class when a passenger noticed his books and said “Salam Alaikum”. He soon developed a friendship with the passenger, Faisal Masood, founder of MuslimLink.org, a social media platform that connects Muslim professionals, businesses and organisations.

The men joined forces with several others to organise the consumer conference, which they hope will be annual. Mr Abdullah said he was gratified by the positive response to the conference, which was attended by company executives, entrepreneurs, analysts and journalists, of whom 75 per cent were Muslim.

The potential for growth within the halal and Islamic finance sectors were discussed at length as was analysis

The National

CORPORATE US GETS TO KNOW MUSLIMS

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SHARMILA DEVI, FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT

of the US Muslim consumer market and strategies to reach it.

Mr Hastings-Black pointed out that many purchasing decisions made by Muslims have nothing to do with religion, such as buying a television. There was also no single profile of a US Muslim as evidenced by conference attendees, who included all races and ethnicities. “You can even be Muslim and a skateboarder,” he said.

But the lack of accurate data about the size of the community continued to deter many companies and advertisers. Numbers range between two million and seven million. Polling companies underestimate the total because they are dependent on telephone surveys, and community and mosque leaders often exaggerate their figures to win influence. Several speakers said they preferred to use a mid-range figure of around three million to four million Muslims in the United States.

One speaker was Monem Salam, the president of Saturna Brokerage Services, which manages mutual funds aimed at US-based Islamic investors. He did not see any big impediments to the growth of Islamic finance in the country, shrugging off a lawsuit filed last year by a Christian group that challenged the government’s bailout of the American International Group because the insurer offered Sharia-compliant financial products. “We’re seeing a change in the psyche of the American Muslim consumer,” he said. “When there were no products out there in the 1970s, scholars said to use regular products. My parents had a conventional mortgage. That’s changing and the second generation is demanding more.”

Syed Rasheeduddin Ahmed is the founder of the Muslim Consumer Group, which provides listings of food products according to whether they are halal (allowed), haram (forbidden) or mushbooh (questionable).

He said educating US food companies was a slow process because many equate halal with kosher though the regimes have differences; for example, alcohol is not banned under Jewish law. “Companies don’t want to pay extra for the [Islamic] certification.” He urged consumers to call companies to request information and new products without pork or alcohol, for example.

About 30 per cent of kosher food in the United States is bought by Muslims and the kosher industry was held up as an important model because it encompassed dietary laws with high-quality and socially conscious products that appealed to people of all faiths.

The conference was further proof of greater unity within the US Muslim community, said Tayyibah Taylor, the founder and publisher of Azizah magazine, which is aimed at Muslim women but is read by women of all faiths who dislike the values promulgated by mainstream women’s publications.

Ms Taylor, who is African-American, said Muslims drew closer to each other in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks.

“Those Muslims flying under the cultural radar and who thought they were ‘white’ woke up to the African-American experience,” she said.

Mr Abdullah said some British attendees told him they hoped to replicate the conference in the UK.

MARKETING TO MUSLIMS POSES A CHALLENGE FOR RETAILERS

RAJA ABDULRAHIM

25 JANUARY 2010 *As Best Buy recently discovered, reaching out to Muslims can cause a backlash. Even those who champion the targeting of ads to the community steer corporations away from the mainstream media.*

Leafing through a Best Buy flier over the holiday season, Celena Khatib spotted a small greeting near the bottom of the page: "Happy Eid al-Adha."

The good wishes for the important religious holiday celebrated by Muslims seemed a milestone in U.S. marketing. "I finally felt that they are recognizing Muslims like we are a part of this community," said Khatib, 31, a suburban Detroit mother of two. "We live here, we spend our money here."

But on Best Buy's website, people around the country posted contrasting views. "You insult all of the heroes and innocent who died 9/11 by celebrating a holiday of the religion that said to destroy them!" wrote one. Many others said they would no longer shop at Best Buy.

The controversy underscores the continuing obstacles that retailers and other companies face in marketing to a U.S. Muslim population estimated at more than 2.3 million by the Pew Research Center.

Even an advertising-industry study three years ago that urged companies to cash in on what was then the community's estimated \$170-billion purchasing power got little traction.

Best Buy is believed to be the first major retailer to market to Muslims nationwide, and only a few are even dipping their toes into direct ethnic local advertising.

Rather than pave the way for more national advertising, the Best Buy ad seems to have reinforced the pariah status that Muslims have in mainstream marketing and to serve as an example of why "Happy Eid" won't join "Merry Christmas" and "Happy Hanukkah" as a mainstay in holiday advertising any time soon.

"Obviously the Muslim market has some unique sets of challenges. . . . That's not something to be glossed over," said Rafi-uddin Shikoh, founder of DinarStandard, a consulting firm specializing in the Muslim market.

Other immigrant and minority groups have faced similar treatment from advertisers, but the U.S. Muslim community carries heavier baggage. Since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks and with more recent incidents, such as the Ft. Hood shooting and attempted Christmas Day plane bombing, the word "Muslim" for some Americans is synonymous with terrorism. And that's an image that corporations don't want attached to their brand names.

A recent study by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life found that 35% of Americans have a negative view of Muslims and 45% believe Islam is more likely than other religions to encourage violence.

Even those championing marketing to Muslim consumers -- like Shikoh -- advise Western companies not to do what Best Buy did. Instead, in a move that seems both practical and defeatist, they recommend directing advertising in ethnic and religious media and away from the mainstream.

"At this point, I don't know if there's a real need for a national campaign," Shikoh said. "They are curious to see if there is a way to tap into this market without risking their reputation or it backfiring in any way."

Best Buy has refused to discuss its holiday advertising, though a brief statement on its website indicates it stands by its Eid greetings: "Best Buy's customers and employees around the world represent a variety of faiths and denominations. We respect that diversity and choose to greet our customers and employees in ways that reflect their traditions."

Other companies have recently come under some fire for marketing to groups that some considered out of the mainstream. A Gap ad during the holiday season angered a conservative Christian group for being too inclusive by referring to Christian, Jewish, secular and pagan holidays with the line "Go Christmas, Go Hanukkah, Go Kwanzaa, Go solstice." Gap didn't directly address whether it had considered mentioning Eid al-Adha, which was celebrated two weeks after the ad first appeared.

"We've been down this road before with other groups," said Jerome Williams, a professor of advertising and African American studies at the University of Texas at Austin.

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MARKETING TO MUSLIMS POSES A CHALLENGE FOR RETAILERS

RAJA ABDULRAHIM

In the 1960s, studies looked at whether advertising that featured blacks would scare away white customers. Companies don't rush into new and unfamiliar markets, he said, but rather tiptoe into them. And what will ultimately sway advertisers is money.

"They're not in the business of social justice," he said. "An advertiser does not want to do anything that will have negative impacts on sales. . . . At the end of the day, they have to see if they've gained more than they've lost."

Mohammed Abdullah, event coordinator for the first American Muslim Consumer Conference, believes the Best Buy ad campaign will spur more outreach. The chain's 13% revenue increase in December over the previous December, he believes, is a sign that the retailer wasn't affected by any backlash.

"The growth strategy being employed by Best Buy will be copied, and few will look at the Eid al-Adha holiday ad as a negative or a misstep now," said Abdullah, an assistant vice president at Deutsche Bank. "There will absolutely be more outreach for this market segment."

Some companies have begun to test heavily Muslim markets. Crescent Foods in Chicago, for instance, started selling its halal chicken products at six Wal-Mart Superstores in Michigan and at ShopRite, a regional chain in the Northeast.

During Ramadan, Western Union launched a travel sweepstakes that would give customers who send money to the Middle East, Pakistan and Bangladesh the opportunity to fly home or undertake the annual Islamic hajj pilgrimage to Mecca. The sweepstakes lasted through the Eid al-Adha holiday in November and awarded a \$1,800 ticket voucher to each of 14 winners.

"We know this is a very special holiday for our Muslim customers," said Maher Kayali, marketing manager for U.S. to Middle East and Pakistan region. "So we gave them that opportunity so they can go to Mecca."

To promote the sweepstakes, Western Union representatives visited mosques and held Ramadan dinners in Los Angeles, New York, New Jersey and Detroit.

"If it's Ramadan-specific and Eid-specific, it's directed

to the ethnic media," Kayali said, insisting that such targeted marketing isn't done out of fear of fallout from the mainstream.

But promotions beyond the small Islamic community face roadblocks. About six years ago, Syed Rasheeduddin Ahmed, president of food certification firm Muslim Consumer Group, added his halal symbol to the packaging of bread loaves with the full name of his company written out.

Soon the company was getting complaints, and Ahmed changed the symbol to include just the initials MCG for loaves sent to the U.S. Those shipped to the Middle East still retain his original symbol.

Constraints that advertisers face here don't exist in the Middle East, where Ramadan and the two Eid holidays are times when brands such as Coca-Cola, Nestle and McDonald's are merged seamlessly with holiday greetings.

In Turkey, Nestle launched a campaign during Ramadan, which began in late August, that urged customers: "Enjoy the pleasure of Ramadan with Nestle Chokella." After sunset, when Muslims are allowed to break their fast, Nestle employees went to public squares and neighborhoods to give out samples of the chocolate spread on pita bread.

But a Nestle USA spokeswoman said she wasn't aware of any plans to target Muslim consumers here.

Despite their large buying power, U.S. Muslims remain a small percentage of the consumer market. And for now, it appears advertising and products targeted toward them will remain in small markets and niche media and publications.

"It's almost like a policy thing when you're treated like a voting bloc or a consumer bloc instead of just a quote-unquote Muslim or a shady person in the background," the American Muslim Consumer Conference's Abdullah said about marketing to U.S. Muslims. "It's almost like a validating stance -- 'Hey, you are American.' It just makes you feel more accepted."

AMERICAN MUSLIMS: DEFINING A COMMUNITY

31 OCTOBER 2009 I just returned from the American Muslim Conference in New Jersey. It's the first one and so I must commend them on an excellent job. Like many market segments such as African Americans, gay/lesbians or Hispanic marketing they started out small and fragmented but grew strong and profitable. The American Muslim community is beginning that process. First they must define who they are.

Did you know that Hispanics are the fastest growing part of American Muslim population? It is so diverse from an ethnic point of view and yet we think of Muslims as being from Middle Eastern countries.

From a religious angle I strongly identified with the balance between living your beliefs and fitting into society. It's interesting and inspiring to see the passion and strong desire in many to live their faith in everyday life. It's certainly much more challenging for them than it is for me! It was nice to not be the only one who does not drink. I also liked the emphasis on healthy eating (great food).

According to the Pew Foundation, the more someone gets to know Muslims the more they view them favorably (from Rafi Shikoh of Dinar Standard). I felt many times I needed a guide to the sayings and culture (or even how to pronounce unfamiliar names) and that I needed to get to know Muslims better myself. There is not a strong community of Muslims in Utah (that I know of) or anywhere I've lived.

Is this faith-based marketing? Cultural marketing? Socially responsible marketing? All of the above? I'm not sure.

How can you advertise to Muslims? There is an ad network: www.muslimadnetwork.com and a social network called Muxlim that is based in Finland and is doing deals with big brands around the globe. Interestingly they got VC funding from investors in Sweden. They plan to expand into other niche content on mobile phones, television, etc.

Issues facing advertisers:

- » The market is fragmented, non centralized
- » There is a lack of major nationwide brands (still a very entrepreneurial community)
- » Some brands may not fit — some Muslims are

very selective about the products they are open to. For example, some are not open to highly processed foods or soft drinks.

» Their dietary laws are very specific and different from mainstream society.

» I enjoyed the parallels with socially responsible business practices where many dimensions are considered. For example, there is common ground with vegetarians, those concerned about high food prep standards, the environmental movement, healthy eating, etc. I thought that a business like Niman Ranch natural beef could easily reach this community (they have a gluten-free line and could have a Halal line also). Then they could advertise on a site like this site about Halal food that gets 1 million hits/month & yet no ads.

» To pitch Muslims online, target specific Muslim terms (Halal, holiday names, wudu, financial terms, etc) in content (news, ads, press releases).

» There is quite a large presence of Muslims on social networking sites like Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. This makes a strong test market where marketers can engage with the community, ask questions and build trust. So for example, if Niman Ranch decided to release that new line, they could tell Facebook Groups such as I [heart] Allah a group with over 800,000 members. They could partner with brands like Crescent Foods that concentrates on Halal chicken but wants to get into beef products. Both want restaurants to carry their lines.

» The community is open to marketing messages and engagement and this to me is the most interesting. Why do Muslims welcome advertising targeted at them? Because to be marketed to is a form of acceptance, marketing is part of the fabric of our society. So when we specifically market to Muslims it's a signal that they are part of the mainstream rather than feared, misunderstood, marginalized, etc.

Please forgive and correct me in the comments if I got any of these facts wrong. Most of the time I was taking in the scene and not reporting on it and this is a market that I knew almost nothing about. Thank you for inviting me to be your guest today.

1ST AMCC EVENT GETS OFF TO A FLYING START

3 NOVEMBER 2009 These events always remind me of cooking. You put selected ingredients together, and although you have some idea of how it is going to taste, you really don't know until the meal is served. And of course the audience brings an unpredictable array of additional flavors and spices that mix and simmer throughout the day.

The Muslim market, or Halal market (because it has huge areas of overlap) is an emerging global market force. Many of the world's largest corporations and many of the world's governments have recognised the economic and political significance of this new commercial paradigm.

And while many would argue that its all about the huge consumer markets and cash-flows of the Middle East or South East Asia, I have long held the opinion that some key components of this market force will come from the minority markets of America and Europe.

This is not just a numbers game; it is also about harnessing the ideas, the expertise and the passion to bring about new collaborative dynamics that will catalyze this new market paradigm. These key ingredients are to be found, in abundance, in the USA.

The AMCC event was the first of its kind – anywhere – to look at this market from the perspective of reaching the target consumers, and the topic was approached from all sides. Both Muslim and non-Muslim speakers unfolded their perspectives on the issues at hand, and while their perspectives varied, there was the common thread... we are seeing something powerful coming into view.

For me there were some key take-aways:

» Michael Hastings-Black's array of cultural reference points on the 'identity politics' of this new market, showing, from the outside if you like, how the Muslim American identity is finding its place in popular American culture – and therefore in the market.

» Crescent Foods President Ahmad Adam's passionate call for integrity throughout the entire Halal production process, from idea to ingestion. All too often these words have a slightly hollow ring, but here you could recognise that we are witnessing the unfolding of a new Islamic corporate identity, built on putting the highest of values into action in the marketplace.

» Shahed Amanullah's slide showing the map of the real-time inquiries from the zabihah.com iPhone app, pinpointing all the Halal restaurant searches along the East coast of the US, was real eye-opener. Not just because of the density of all those little pins, but because here we could see unfolding before our eyes the research of tomorrow. His graph of the growth of Halal restaurants in the USA over the last 10 years is heading, literally, through the roof.

1ST AMCC EVENT GETS OFF TO A FLYING START

» DinarStandard's founder Rafiuddin Shikoh gave a strategic analysis of the dynamics of this market. The high calibre of this analysis could not have been produced by any of the 'big name' market analysts; they may have the tools, but they do not have the insight. There is a new league of experts with a profound understanding of this market phenomenon. If the words of the old song, "you know something is happening here, but you don't know what it is..." ring true for you in any way, then pay attention to DinarStandard.com, and start reading between the lines.

» Muxlim.com is showing every sign of becoming a leading force in shaping a new wave of social media for the Muslim world, and the potential impact of this, while hard to predict, is likely to be significant.

» Adnan Durani brought drive and high energy to the podium, and we wait with interest to see his gameplan unfold for the American Halal Corporation. If it is anything like what he did with Stoneyfield Farm organic yoghurt, it will be worth the wait. Watch this space.

» Perhaps the most telling question of the day was raised by Time correspondent Carla Power, who, after taking us on a guided tour of the global Halal market landscape, asked, "Can the Muslim consumers change the political and social landscape?" For me, this is where the real question lies. And the answer is Yes!

There is no doubt that this is a big market. It is now being driven by government policies, corporate market-share ambitions, and a favourable social and economic climate. Almost a third of the world's population are now emerging as a 'market demographic - albeit a complex one, but with core values that are shared by many of the other two-thirds!

This is where the Islamic Sharia meets the marketplace, and in a way that Islamic Finance could never do, the Halal market is going to become a place of newly defined shared values; values that are Divinely inspired, and deeply human in application.

At the AMCC there was a high level of shared awareness that this is the real issue. The articulation and application of this deep understanding is going to be at the cutting edge of this unfolding market paradigm.

So, as an important footnote, I would like to applaud and thank the organizers of the AMCC for their smooth and highly professional handling of the event. And as I said at the beginning...better book early for the AMCC 2010!

THE UNTAPPED AMERICAN MUSLIM CONSUMER MARKET

RAFI-UDDIN SHIKOH

6 OCTOBER 2009 A while ago, as I was going through my subscribed Time magazine, I was reminded of marketing sophistication in action. I noticed that the Ford Taurus advertisement on the back of my copy was different from another copy of Time magazine (same Edition) that was subscribed by a female colleague. Hers had a female in the ad (mine had no person) and the car was of a different color. Ford obviously was trying to appeal to us differently. Ford does more than customize its marketing communications as it also develops its products for various segments (rugged trucks, Mustang sports car, family mini-vans etc.)

America has indeed been the world's most sophisticated consumer market and so no wonder its marketers are the most innovative. From major brands such as Ford, McDonalds, Coca-Cola, Disney, Apple, Citibank to smaller emerging brands, the level of market segmentation and target marketing in this vast/ diverse market is incredible. Customers are communicated and products customized based on needs that are categorized by demographic (gender, age, income, education, life-stage, ethnicity), psychographic (values, personality, lifestyles, hobbies), and behavioral (readiness, attitude, usage patterns, etc.) segmentations.

FAITH-BASED MARKETING PRECEDENTS

Among the various segmentations, faith-based marketing in the US has undoubtedly been another way to better reach and stand out with large segments of audiences. Christian magazines today reach over 100 million Christian readers throughout the US every day (National Mail Order Association, 2008). Marketers from all categories of products and services advertise here and find this an effective way to build brand loyalty. A point to note here is that these publications do make exceptions not allowing advertising for sex, gambling, alcoholic beverages, or tobacco products. In addition to marketing messaging to reach this

segment, there's also an over \$4.2 billion market (EPM Communication, 2004) of products specifically geared to the Christian market (books, gift items, music, school curricula, etc.)

Similarly, the market for 'kosher' food products in the US is estimated at more than \$9 billion catering to Jewish faith based needs.

There are an estimated 5-6 million Americans of Jewish faith. According to the US Bureau of Census (2005), 40% of US grocery sales were certified kosher. Also, the average number of kosher products in American supermarkets is 17,000 and 40% of the retail food products sold in the US today bear some type of kosher certification. Today, the kosher market has a much wider appeal than just for American Jews and is not limited to food products only. According to data compiled by Integrated Marketing Communications, consumers spent approximately \$165 billion for kosher products in 2003.

AMERICAN MUSLIM CONSUMERS: THE UNTAPPED POTENTIAL

Today there is a large and growing population of American Muslims who also provide marketers – mainstream and niche – tremendous opportunities. Opportunities that are, 1) related to better accessing them through right media, custom messaging and services, and 2) delivering products and services unique to their needs.

Estimates of the American Muslim population vary widely from 2 million to 7 million, with Muslims active in all walks of American society as doctors, entrepreneurs, lawyers, educators, athletes, and musicians. A 2007 JWT (major marketing agency) study showed that Muslim Americans spend about \$170 billion on consumer products and estimated that this figure is expected to grow rapidly as the population expands and younger Muslims start working.

THE UNTAPPED AMERICAN MUSLIM CONSUMER MARKET

RAFI-UDDIN SHIKOH

Also, the 2007 Pew survey found that Muslim Americans generally mirror the U.S. public in education and income levels, with immigrant Muslims slightly more affluent and better educated than native-born Muslims.

Given the above, it would seem logical that both mainstream and niche marketers are including the American Muslim segment in their marketing mix or business plans.

There is indeed a growing 'Halal' product category (similar to kosher - products in compliance with Muslim religious laws) emerging in the US covering Halal food deli's, finance, clothing, media etc. Walk the streets of New York city (Manhattan) and you will find a Halal food stall on every other corner. 'Halal' mortgage offerings are now maturing. Amana Mutual Fund (managed based on Islamic rules of non-interest bearing, ethical investments) has even become a recognized quality fund amongst all US funds.

However, conspicuously missing are main-stream American consumer brands focus on this segment. No major brand has effectively targeted this segment in a consistent way. It's surprising that the 2007 JWT study that substantiated the size and potential of this market hasn't yet drawn any attention from major marketers. An AdvertisingAge, November 2008 article, (magazine read by major US marketers) aptly asked "It's a \$170 Billion Market, Why Aren't You Targeting It?"

2009 AMERICAN MUSLIM CONSUMER CONFERENCE – ANOTHER LOOK

Perhaps the American Muslim market had been hard to reach (given its fragmentation and diversity), perhaps the right media channels weren't available, perhaps the post-9/11 environment made it difficult for mainstream marketers to pursue it. Much of this however is changing – in an environment of economic crisis, the growing potential of American Muslim consumers is getting harder to ignore; a variety of media channels to access this market are maturing; and the post 9/11 environment of mass-media negative perceptions of Muslims is fading.

An upcoming conference, American Muslim Consumer Conference (AMCC), October 31st, 2009 in New Brunswick, NJ, USA is set to present this changing environment and the new market opportunity. This event is bound to provide marketers with another convincing look at this market.

The event has a great lineup of speakers of marketers, analysts, and experienced Muslim market entrepreneurs who will cover American Muslim markets scope, trends and opportunities, and ways to effectively reach them.

In an economic environment where any new idea or opportunity is worth evaluating, this market is bound to provide invaluable opportunities for both main-stream marketers and niche Halal market entrepreneurs. It's the proverbial 'elephant in the room' for US marketers, one which they will increasingly run into. The question is: who are the few who will creatively and effectively ride it?