Understanding New Religion-Compliant Product Adoption (NRCPA) in Islamic Markets

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ABSTRACT
This study examines the relationships between religious beliefs, brand personality, and new religion-compliant product adoption (NRCPA) in Islamic markets. Findings confirm that religious consumers tend to behave in accordance with a society or group that follows the same beliefs, and that these consumers' behavior and lifestyle are influenced by similar religious groups and social relationships. In addition, the more religious the consumer, the more likely they will adopt or favour/disfavour a new product in accordance with his/her religious beliefs. Finally, the three constructs—relative advantages, compatibility and complexity—are found to partially mediate the influential relationship between religious beliefs and new religion-compliant product adoption. International firms that target Muslim markets, with an aim to profit and fit in these markets, must take into account the Islamic values, standards and guidelines.

KEYWORDS
Religious beliefs; brand personality; new religion-compliant product adoption; Islamic branding; Muslim market

Introduction
A theoretical paper by Stolz and Usunier (2018) listed some limitations and obstacles for religious marketing and branding. They even stated that consumers in general or even the organizations themselves may not accept religious marketing. However, they may have been looking at the context of Western secular countries. Indeed, many scholars are of the opinion that religious beliefs have a significant impact on religious consumers' behavior and their purchasing decisions (e.g., Essoo & Dibb, 2004; Rehman & Shabbir, 2010; Sood & Nasu, 1995; Tang & Li, 2015). Mathras, Cohen, Mandel, and Mick (2016) proposed that religion would influence consumer psychology and behavior. However, despite the impact of religious beliefs on the lives of many people, studies looking at the influence they have on consumer behavior are still limited (Arham, 2010; Delener, 1990; Essoo & Dibb, 2004). As Sandikci (2011, p. 247) pointed out “in the consumer behaviour and marketing literatures, religion in general is an understudied area.”

Furthermore, studies examining the link between Islamic beliefs and consumption are even scarcer. Most of the marketing studies in the Middle-East have focused on comparing advertising and cultural values between the Middle-East and Western countries, namely the US (e.g., Chun et al., 2015; Kalliny, Saran, Ghanem, & Fisher, 2011). These studies show that although there are some similarities, there are significant differences in terms of culture. A review of extant literature also reveals a lack of studies with regards to Islamic branding. Alserhan (2010a) points out that there is a vital need for more studies to be conducted that are relevant to Islamic branding in order to understand such a market and the role of religious beliefs in the branding process. This is echoed by Aoun and Tournois (2015) who note that branding in faith-based consumer markets is largely