

# The influence of Islam on shopping behaviour for sports apparel: An empirical study of Muslim immigrants

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## Aim of paper and research questions

With the increased level of globalisation and multiculturalism in today's society, entering foreign markets has become an important strategy for businesses in the sport industry (Luna & Gupta, 2001). Cross-cultural differences provide challenges for marketers. Variations in consumers' behaviours need to be explored. The way individual consumers buy and use products is influenced by their culture. Culture, in its turn, mirrors influences from factors such as ethnicity, race, religion, and national or regional identity (Blackwell et al., 2001). Religion is one of the key drivers in Muslim culture (e.g., Kotler, 1994), and consequently affects Muslims' consumer behaviour (e.g., Lee, 2002; Lindridge, 2005). For instance, Islam imposes a dress code which affects the wearing of clothes in general, and sports apparel in particular. This paper therefore analyses how Islam influences sports apparel consumption behaviour.

## Literature review

The relationship between culture and consumer behaviour is well documented in literature (e.g., Arnould & Thomson, 2005), but few studies have addressed the relationship between religion and consumer behaviour (Cutler, 1991). With high population numbers, high birth rates, young age profiles and high purchasing power (CIA, 2007) the Muslim market is an attractive target market for sport marketers. It should be noted, however, that within the Muslim market, the level of religiosity varies, and therefore impacts Muslims' lifestyle, consumer behaviour and purchasing decisions to different extents (e.g., Essoo & Dibb, 2004; Mokhlis, 2006). Muslims with a high level of religiosity will follow the rules of religious obligation more rigorously than Muslims with a lower level of religiosity. The first segment will purchase cloths and sports apparel which strictly match Islamic requirements. For instance, women are required to cover their bodies completely except for their face and hands, while men are required to minimally cover between the navel and the knee (Khan, 2003). Moreover, clothes need to be loose, thick, clean and decent (About.com: Islam, 2009). Variation in the level of religiosity may be more apparent among immigrant Muslims living in non Muslim countries (e.g., Salzman, 2008). Thus, the purpose of this study is to analyse the effect of the degree of Islamic religiosity on shopping behaviour for sports apparel of Muslim immigrants living in a non-Muslim country. Age, gender, income and level of sport participation are also taken into account since previous studies have indicated that these variables affect consumption in general (Solomon et al. 1999), and sports apparel consumption in particular (Ohl & Taks, 2007). The model to be tested is represented in Figure 1.

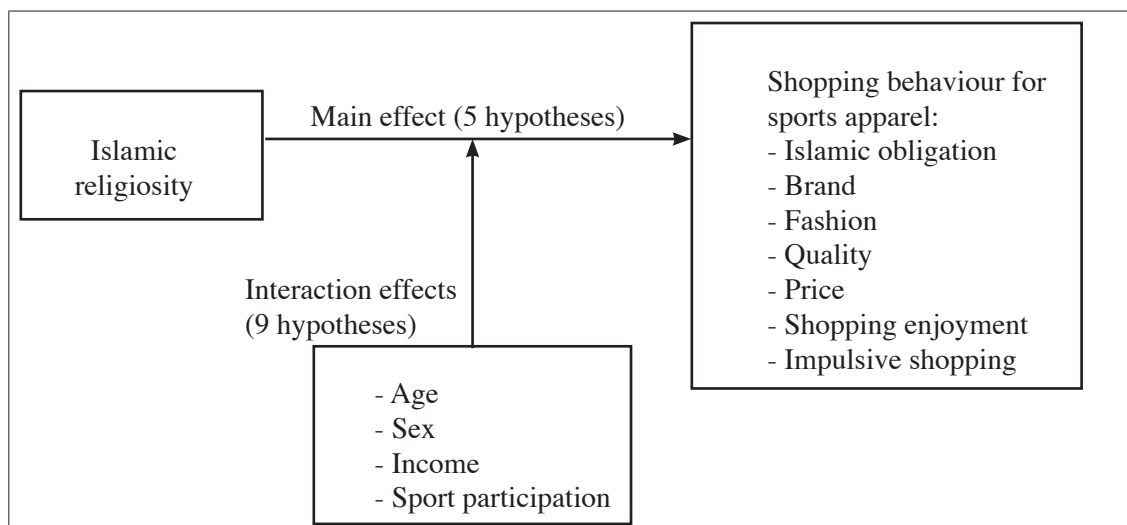


Figure 1: Model to be tested.

### Research design and proposed data analysis

240 Adult Muslim immigrants residing in a medium sized Canadian city are invited to participate in the study. Both, men and women, 18 years of age or older, will be targeted. All respondents are active sport participants involved in one of the sport programs offered by one of the four Muslim Associations in the city. A 20 minute paper and pencil survey is used to collect the data on: (a) religiosity; (b) sports apparel shopping behaviour; (c) sport participation; and, (d) demographics. Islamic Religiosity (IR) is measured through the Religious Commitment Inventory (RCI-10) (developed by Worthington et al., 2003). Seven dimensions measure sports apparel shopping behaviour: brand, fashion, quality, price consciousness, shopping enjoyment and impulsive shopping are measured with four items each (adapted from Mokhlis, 2006); religious obligation is measured with six items (self developed, based on the concept of 'ethical obligation' by Valor, 2007). Four questions on sport participation enquire about sport preference, intensity, level and organisational context of participation, as well as expenditure on sports apparel. Finally demographics include age, sex, income, marital status, education and profession. The questionnaire is tested in a pilot study. First, the inter-reliability of the five shopping behaviour constructs will be tested. Factorial ANOVA will be conducted to test the influence of Islamic religiosity on sports apparel shopping behaviour (main effect) as well as the interaction effects. Post hoc multiple comparison tests will be employed. The data will be collected in the summer of 2009. Preliminary results will be available for presentation.

### Discussion of progress

The expected theoretical results of this study will fulfil the call of several studies in their encouragement to examine the relationship between religion and sports consumption behaviour (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Essoo & Dibb, 2004). From a practical perspective, the results will allow sporting good manufacturers to design new products that meet the needs and wants of the Muslim consumers. This strategy of diversification by combining product development (i.e., creating new products) and market development (i.e., tapping into new markets) allows companies to increase their market shares and become more profitable (cf. Ansoff, 1957).

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