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A Review Study of Developing an Advertising Strategy for Westerner's Companies among Middle East Countries: the Islamic Perspective

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Abstract: The burst in the number of commercial advertisement has been growing over the last few years. The western companies, obviously, have the most shares of market among the Middle Eastern. Hence, it is critical for the companies to adopt an applicable advertisement strategy for their market. The marketers must be aware of both cultural and religious values of the target customers in their advertisement strategy. In the other word, there are many ambiguities and challenges exist to discover such values among Middle East countries. This study aims to provide a guideline for the companies to plan appropriate advertisement strategy in Middle East countries. In-line with the research objective, the study explores standardization and localization advertisement strategy aligns with the Muslim countries' advertisement strategy. The study also presents the importance of both regional culture and religion in advertising strategy in Muslim countries. As the paper's outcome, an Advertising Multi-Views Model has introduced to assist multi-national companies to develop their business among Middle East countries. The model advocates the higher ads effectiveness by supporting humor, fairness, morality and incentives in companies' advertisement strategy.

Keywords: *Advertising, Advertising Strategy, Islamic value, Regional value, Religion value*

1. Introduction

Over last decade, the number of advertisement being broadcasted or printed has increased enormously in public. The reasons for such a huge surge can be deliberated in using of global promotional strategies, growth of new media and widespread communication advertisement message (Waller, 2005). Once Westerner companies gained appropriate market share locally, they are eager to emerge in a new market for business expansion and globalization. There are some other potential opportunities such as immediate sale and economic prosperity tempted the firms to penetrate into new markets (Swami, 2009). Muslim countries and particularly Middle East countries are considered as a good target for multinational companies; as so, this market is very lucrative for firms to emerge (Erdem, 1998). In business perspective, effectiveness of any organization advertisement can lead to huge success (Akhter, 2011).The effectiveness of advertising should be regarded by two key characteristics. The first and most important characteristic of advertising is to engage customer and deliver relevant organization messages in-line with customer ambitions. These cond characteristic is that the advertisement must fulfill the firm's objectives (Ramalingam, 2006). Advertising is paid non-personal communication from an identified sponsor using mass media to persuade or influence an audience (Ramalingam, 2006). In order to more influence on audiences and reach firm's objectives, advertisement should be effective and its objectives derived from well planning, creation and execution (Ramalingam, 2006). The scholar believes that a firm can be considered successful in global scope when operates successfully in all continents (Waller, 2000).

In addition, while other issues in advertising are general and soluble, lawful regulations on advertisement like images, claims and media are the major concern of executives in their advertising practice (Waller, 2000). This type of restriction can substantially affect the firm global marketing program. To achieve firm's objectives, global advertising agencies usually employ some attractive advertising techniques such as erotic images, adventure, and romantic language, etc. (Akhter, 2011). This type of advertisements is controversial in terms of public view and there is no impassion to talk about such matters openly in public locations. The image of this advertisement in Muslims' point of view is obscene and offensive. Additionally, the resentment feeling appears toward associated brand and advertisement (Akhter, 2011). The study argued that Islam could be an influential mediator for eliciting advertisement message. There is another study stated the need

for better evaluation of religion in designing advertising strategies. Therefore, that religion plays a significant role in attitude formation toward value and reason of consumption (Rice, 2002). Even though Muslim countries are absolute target market for westerner companies; however, Islamic perspective in global business has been largely ignored (Seed, 2001). By investigation through literature, it becomes obvious that there is a gaping the studies on Islamic perspective in designing advertisement strategy in the market. Therefore, this research aim to investigate a good standard strategy for Westerner Company applied in Middle East society based on religion and regional culture. The study formatted in following order. The research background provides some insights about advertising strategies in Muslim countries, besides exploring region and religion importance in Middle East countries. An Advertising Multi-Views Model has introduced to assist multi-national companies to develop their business in Middle East region. The study concluded critical points at the last section.

2. Literature Review

Standardization vs. Localization Advertisement Strategy: Multinational companies are consistently challenging with this question that how they should form their advertising strategies or whether they must use standard strategies or adapt another one based on local and geographical values (Rice, 2002). There are bodies of literatures that discuss regionalization versus globalization in advertising strategies (Fastoso, 2010). In addition, there are many serious debates between marketing experts on whether companies must standardize or localize their advertising activities in international scope. Adoption and acceptance of one advertisement strategy for all markets indicate standardized methodology for international advertising. Standardized methodology encourages advertisers whom they can get advantages with universal advertising (Moon, 2002). Some stimuli describe some advantages of standardized approach for international advertising:

- Cost saving in advertisement
- Economies of scale from centralizing advertising authority at the home office
- Take maximum advantage from advertising experts in home office
- Constant united image of product or service
- Utilizing similar Medias for broadcasting advertisement for target market across nations.

Despite the facts, profitability and time consuming are the other ramifications for advertiser propensity toward standardization. Rice, 2002 argued that there are not enough scientific signals to certify the validity of advertising standardization concept. For more than one century, Americans' company wants to stand on the top export companies in the world. Americans' companies export numerous items and product to all around the word, which promoted as a representative of American culture, individualism, freedom and progressive Ideals (Hsiu, 2009). The greatest oversight for American advertising experts is the wrong perception of similar opportunity provided in other cultures by choosing same approaches (Taylor, 1996). However, there is numerous evidence in international marketing that shows advertising worked in a country may fail in other countries regarding cultural discrepancy in each of them (Taylor, 1996).A result of a recent study reveals that managers get aware of importance in shifting strategy from standardized to regional and its effectiveness(Story, 2007). Regional or localized methodology mentions that each market needs its own advertising strategy based on local market condition (Yin, 1999). Thus, the lack of knowledge for understanding a foreign culture can lead advertising strategy failure (Moon, 2002).

This is a commencement for changing advertising executive perception, whom trying to focus on using cultural aspect in their advertisement, particularly for Muslim individuals (Story, 2007). Cultural beliefs between American and Middle Eastern are significantly different from each other as well as their values confliction. Therefore, advertising executives are unable to precisely define advertisement boundaries that confirmed by both groups of people. The only obvious thing is that Middle Eastern advertisement emphasizes on traditional Muslim value; however, American advertisement focuses on ideals and places in contrast with traditional religious value (Lambert, 2009). Advertisement for each nation is warranted based on discrepancy in cultural norms and these differences cause a lot of ambiguity for marketers to form their optimized strategies. Standardization and localization debates can be resolved with marketing scholars' propositions and multinational advertiser tries to assimilate cultural differences and advertising strategy while capitalizing on standardization privileges (Moon, 2002).

Advertising strategy for Muslim country: Based on statistics, one-sixth of people around the world are Muslim and the number of individuals who adopt Islam as their religion is growing very fast. Islam is a manner of acting like a vast number of people. Therefore, these consumers are the appropriate targets for Westerners enterprise. On the other side, it is proposed that consumer behavior and response to advertisement message can be affected by religious attitude (Rice, 2002). A good marketing strategy for Muslims is to boost the sales and advertising align with society changes (Story, 2007). The number of studies proves that emotional behavior has a significant role in molding consumer perception. Increasingly, the emotional responses to an advertisement can become very complex issue. A consumer feeling can be waked with an advertisement, which can impact customer perception toward the advertised brand (Orth, 2004).For instance, using the term golden as name of restaurant can conceive the possibility of serving bear in restaurant or maybe use golden utensil which is forbidden in Shariah (Alserhan, 2010). Effective advertisement assists a company to achieve their targets (Ramalingam, 2006). McCracken also notified that each culture has its own insight. Hence, before emerging to one market, understanding the conventions and rules are mandatory for the firms (Taylor, 1996).

Marketing experts declare that various regulations in Muslim country can restrict approval for global standardized advertisement (Walters, 2008). Based on ethical Islamic regulation, Media are not allowed to print or broadcast advertisements with content of emotional and sex appeals, using romantic language, using a female model with sexy attire in order to grab customer attention and get higher market share and profit. This kind of promotional activities is considered deceptive and unethical, and some individuals regard them as fraudulent. Apart from this, the study argued that such advertisements are obscene and in contradictory with shariah (Akhter, 2011). The study has done on multinational companies in Middle East countries in 2000 and indicated that firms must glimpse Middle East as a region with resembled culture and religion and tend to form standardized strategies with sustaining advertisement objectives, message, positioning and theme. In this case, decisions on creative execution and media strategy are often made locally (Frazer, 2002). In addition, another issue related to global advertisement is to use local language and product traits as Middle Eastern consider them as an important cultural value (Yin, 1999).

Importance of Regional Culture: Culture means a way that people of one particular district communicate and improve their knowledge about attitude and lifestyle. Culture actually is human interpretation about experience and their action (Rice, 2002). Some source elements of culture are nationality, ethnicity, language, social class. Based on recent paper, considering regional advertising strategies is very important for Multinational Corporation and advertising practitioners are emphasizing on suitable identification of regional issues (Collinson, 2008). Previously, the advertising standardization defined as one particular advertisement, which is used in all markets with only different translations; however, more recently the definition has been modified to the similar advertisement theme rather than identical (Fastoso, 2010). Advertising strategies are inspired by people customs and conventions. For instance, advertising practitioner in France tries to release consumer response correctly, Germany mostly emphasize on catering information about the product, and in United States, the function is to exaggerate about the product (Taylor, 1996). Thus, there are two important issues related to regionalism: the first one is geographic and later is geocentric (Fastoso, 2010). Hence, it is strongly recommended that multinational firms scout out geographic and geocentric of Middle Eastern before they want to hold their campaign. For the first step, local language mix and local culture make an advertisement tremendously effective, and as a next step, the company must be taken localized product features, models or advertisement theme (e.g. music, humor, adventure).

Once firms want to emerge in a new market, they have to be aware of difficulties might be faced during the initial steps such as media restriction or cultural or legal factors. In Muslim countries particularly in Middle East, nudity advertisement, indecent languages are strictly restricted (Waller, 2000). There are some regulations that almost all Persian Gulf countries applied in their media that adhered in following order:

- Demonstrating terror or violence is not acceptable for advertisement
- Demonstrating or use of any indecency, obscenity, or striptease will not broadcast via Arabic media
- Advertising movie which didn't get permission for public exhibition
- Attack to any race or tribe
- Attack a member of any government and so many other items that must be a head of multinational marketers.

Number of consumer with high purchasing power is growing in Middle East country like Iran, Egypt, India, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan and so on. Thus, such market has been targeted by many west companies and enterprises. Based on Quran advertising is not prohibited, but it is recommended for promoting Islamic value (Rice, 2002). The study suggested that there are more possibilities for localization if companies stay longer in market and achieve more knowledge about market attribute (Yin, 1999). Recently, multinational corporations implement their promotional activities in contrast with social and cultural of Islamic system (Akhter, 2011). They emphasized on the role of female models in advertising, which effect on product quality perception and increase purchase intention and bring credibility and likeability (Orth, 2004). Alternatively, American advertisement conveys American lifestyle, which promotes American individualism and freedom. In order to reach an accurate consequence about Middle Eastern advertisement kalliny and chanem carried out a research that the result demonstrates much more success for the firms when they applied cultural value in advertising conception and put them into practice. Since Arab people are very prejudice to hijab issue, a woman portray in Saudi Arabia TV advertisement is veiled with long clothes, just face and their hands are observable. An assessment of Arabic advertisement shows 83% of all advertisement women wearing long clothes. Arabs believes western advertisement use women's body as a tool for personal achievement not delivering the message (Khraim, 2012). Ikea Company had trouble to draw Muslim attention, so they decided to communicate with them to manipulate their needs. Therefore, they release Arabic catalogue and let Muslim employees wear hijab. As a result, Ikea was recognized as a corporation that cares about their customers' value.

Importance of Religion Factors: Islamic lessons are giving wisdom about economic operation and marketing activities in terms of both domestic and global scope. All business activities have been interpreted by Quran, Sunah and the documents from holy Mohammad's practices (Seed, 2001). Islamic business principles provide a moral filter for those who believe the judgment day (Akhter, 2011). Islam provides some ethical regulation and put some practical limitation to human actions. Some of these points are like gambling, free admixture of males and females, and fraudulent (Qardawi, 2001).The-advertising practitioner's attention to religion arises with persistency in globalization and tries to focus ethical issues. Alternatively, each religion has to put its own impact on their follower decision-making attitude. A study found that there are some differences in purchasing behavior of Muslim people from Jewish when they want to purchase a good or service (Rice, 2002). One of the objectives of advertising agencies is to release types of messages that considered appropriate by Muslim groups. Creative message can be released with use of execution elements (Cline, 2003). Muslim shapes their decision-making attitude base on Islam's principles. There are two reasons for difficulty of choosing advertising strategy in Middle East region with Islam's religion: the first reason is religious people have sensitive attitude, and the second one is the unclear influence of religion on firms' advertising. To make the matter more obvious the study refers to an example exactly after grand opening of Mattel office in Dubai. A radical religious person in Kuwait gave Fatwa that said buying this doll is haram. Also in Iran,

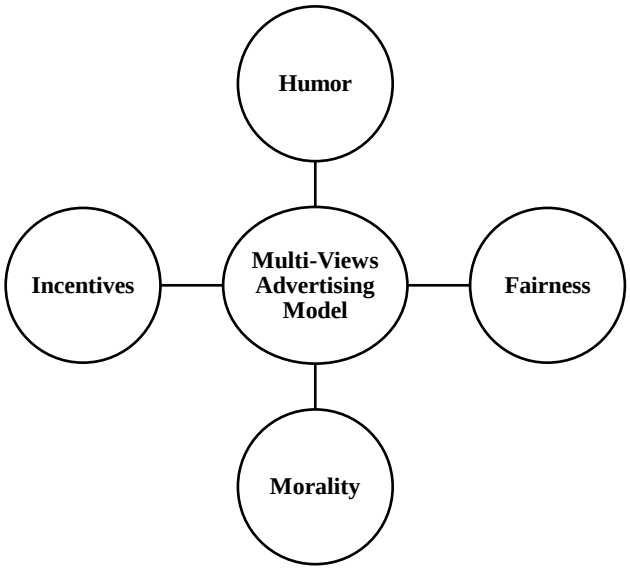
It was said that the dolls have bad implication on children mind (Rice, 2002). Religion is good guidance to understand what is proper to do and impede people from doing some certain things. Some idea or elements or some messages of advertisement might be considered offensive or against religious beliefs (Rice, 2002). Some of these advertising messages invade very sensitive norms in Muslim society, which is called taboo. These types of advertisement are using images, or chants to arouse sensitive issues for section of the target audience. It is a violation of religious norms and can shock people and interpret as a controversy. These advertisements like funeral services, sexy pictures, condoms, adult services trigger guilt and excitement feeling in audience (Sabri, 2006). These sorts of advertisement are derogatory (Salimi, 2012). Other researchers also confirm that feeling like shame, embarrassment, anger created when people see their Islamic principles breached and sneered. However, in non-Muslim societies, taboo advertisement can arouse emotional ambivalence (Sabri, 2006).Advertisement using indecent language or including alcohol beverages, adult services, underwear, and contraception is forbidden to broad cast on TV (Waller, 2005). Apart from this, in Islamic principles it is totally prohibited stereotype of women in advertising or for attracting the audience. It is perceived as sexual discriminated for both group of men and women (Salimi, 2012). Islamic values in advertising messages involve appropriate communication, fairness and justice, and appreciation of all ethnicity and role of women as the holy creatures not a tool for attracting audience. Based on Islamic value deceptive advertisements are strictly avoided and exaggeration in advertisement is regarded as lying.

Therefore, an advertiser must avoid any exaggeration in their placement. According to Quran male and female has the same value (Rice, 2002), hence role of women in advertising should not disdain just for using sexy images for attracting the audience.

3. Multi-Views Advertising Model

According to literature review, the study explored the advertisement strategies, importance of regional culture, and described religion effects on commercial advertising. In general, there are substantial differences between advertiser and consumer's scope. Those advertisers who want to get more participation from their consumers must grab their customers' attention and persuade them to alter their purchasing intention and move them toward their products (Ramalingam, 2006). To achieve a suitable advertisement approach for multinational firms and provide insights for the companies that want to promote their product or service in Middle East, this study proposes integrated guideline elements namely Advertising Multi-Views Model as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Advertising Multi-Views Model



Humor Factor: There was tendency that "people won't buy from clown ", but some studies declare that existence of humor in advertising effectively increased attention (Cline, 2003). Using humor in advertising is a complex topic (Wienberger, 1992).Further research in various media such as radio, TV, or web-based portals show that humor might influence on customer responses, increasing attention, and making ads more favorable and memorable (Cline, 2003). An advertisement with humorous content can also cause well comprehension of advertisement messages (Wienberger, 1992). Nonetheless, humorous content does not always conceive positive perception about brand and increase purchase intention (Frazer, 2002). The impact of humorous content advertisement depends on how humor applied, and what relation of humor to product (Cline, 2003). As a communication language, humor appeals to wit of day and beyond innovative methods like mascots and cartoons, depiction of humor is strongly recommended (Pandeya, 2007). In terms of increasing brand awareness, humor content adsare considered very effective in Islamic countries (Olsson, 2005). There is evidence that humor used in advertisement is positively associated with attention and recognition. Using humorous in advertising can be effective if the multinational advertisers recognize Middle Eastern taste to grab their attention. For instance, in 2010 MacDonald broadcasted an advertisement in which two romantic couple of sacrifices everything for one big mac in a funny way.

Fairness Factor: Lying considered as a big sin in Islam, thus, exaggeration in advertisement counted as a form of lying. Based on Islamic value, exaggeration is allowed only when it won't lead to customer deception, yet many advertiser practitioners believe that little exaggeration in goods performance make an advertisement more fascinating. It is obvious that truth in advertisement is culturally evaluated. The study

reveals that many people considered American advertisement as a misleading approach in performance of product, which is not acceptable in Middle East (Taylor, 1996). Therefore, that deceptive advertisement is prohibited and must be avoided in Muslim countries (Rojas-Méndez, 2009). It is not acceptable to lie to the audience about product performance (Taylor, 1996). Therefore, it is a promoter obligation to disclose the product defects before the sale as the Islam principles foundation based on promoting justice (Seed, 2001). This negligence frequently occurs in detergent ads. Ali sermon the first imam of Shia in his expressive, great, brief and interesting treatise emphasized on honesty about products or services. Overall, it is regarded unfair when some information being concealed or exaggerated about product performance (Akhter, 2011). As a result, those advertisers who use fairness and justice in their ads get better customer response in Middle East countries (Rice, 2002).

Morality Factor: Advertising messages must be designed in a perfect way. It is recommended to use Islamic phrase; however, the advertiser must be conservative about using such phrases (Rice, 2002).The advertising messages must create Islamic value and emphasize on both family and Islamic value. Communication in advertising should not be aggressive or offensive; unlike, it must be kind and polite (Rice, 2002). American people have less attention to religious value, thus, using sexy or immoral images can be common in their advertisement (Hsiu, 2009). Sexual ads brought higher profits and had wonderful out come in brand awareness in United stated. The positive role of sexually suggestive messages has been proven in many other literatures (Lambert, 2009). However, using such messages in Middle East countries that attribute to the importance of religion value will have reversed out comes. It is critical for an advertising agency to develop less offensive methods to deliver their messages in Middle East countries (Waller, 2005). Islam emphasized on unified of individuals with different diversity and stressed on equality of all people with different race (Rice, 2002). It is highly recommended that advertisement must include and respect all races and ethnics to illustrate unified of Muslim. Since an advertisement acceptance rate goes up, advertisers encourage using cultural value, custom or dressing style in their advertisements. IKEA employed the method in its advertisement and attracted many people to the brand by providing a mixture of traditional and westerner clothes.

Incentives factor: The last piece of the model in this paper is related to giving the audience some incentives to make them accept the product or brand easier. It is recommended that to partly localize the product or using some incentive local chant in Middle East region. In 2000, Ford sport car marketers hold a campaign, which used the notion “ma’ashallah”. This phrase is commonly used among Arabs when something amazing happened or someone gets brilliant achievement. As another example, IKEA uses the phrase “happy Ramadan” in their advertising to give incentives to customers. Thus, this kind of chant can stimulate a sense of patriotic among Muslim groups. In another way, some firms try to adapt their product based on Muslim rules. These firms also employ advertisement techniques to attract Muslim groups towards their product. To sum up, being a successful company in Middle East needs to fulfill some criterion, which is totally in conflict with those in western countries.

4. Conclusion

The main objective of the study is to investigate an applicable standard strategy for Westerner Company applied in Middle East society based on religion and regional culture. To achieve success in terms of advertising message acceptance, companies need to select most influential media and try to find a fewer offensive ways to broadcast their messages. Taking a unified advertising strategy for Middle East countries is strongly recommended for company’s .However, this strategy must be formed base on Islamic and cultural value. There by an Advertising Multi-Views Model has introduced to assist multi-national companies to develop their business in Middle East region. Respecting all races, being moral, and using fairness in advertising are the substantial factors in advertisement acceptance. Furthermore, using humor in advertisement along with presenting some incentive to arouse audience patriotic feeling can be effective in line with business objectives.

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