

THE EFFECT OF A MUSLIM ENDORSEMENT ON NON-MUSLIM'S ATTITUDES AND PURCHASE INTENTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Halal endorsements are certifications that a product was prepared in accordance with Islamic principles and that it does not contain an components that are prohibited by Islam (IFANCA 2011). Despite muslims being a minority in the United States it is projected that the percentage of Muslims in the United States will increase from 1% in 2011 to 1.7% in 2020. Furthermore, Islam is one of the fastest growing religions in the world (Foreign Policy 2007) and this growth in muslims around the world has lead companies to seek Halal certifications to target such a segment. For example, 75 out of Nestlé's 465 factories are currently halal certified and KFC, a major fast food chain, has conducted trials of halal restaurants in the U.K. (Economist 2009). Despite this growth in Halal endorsements in the market, there is a dearth of literature examining the impact of Muslim endorsements, often referred to as halal, on consumers' reactions to products that hold such endorsements.

In this study we conduct an experiment to examine how non-Muslims might react to a product with a halal endorsement. The results suggest that consumers' reactions to a Muslim endorsement are driven by perceptions of ambiguity, and that the level of familiarity with the brand will moderate this effect. For a brand that is unfamiliar to consumers the addition of an unambiguous endorsement had a positive effect, while the unambiguous endorsement had a negative impact for the familiar brand. Manufacturers adopting this endorsements must be aware that consumers' level of familiarity with the brand will affect how they respond to a Muslim endorsement.

References available upon request