

---

# Constructing marketing thought: the case of Islamic marketing

---

P. Sergius Koku

College of Business,  
Florida Atlantic University,  
777 Glades Road, Boca Raton, FL 3341, USA  
Email: Koku@fau.edu

**Abstract:** This study conducts a bibliographic and content analysis of articles published to-date in the *Journal of Islamic Marketing* and the *International Journal of Islamic Marketing and Branding* in order to assess the scope of coverage and topics/themes discussed. The study found that the highest number of articles have been published on banking and finance-related issues in both journals. On the other hand, such other areas as new product development and comparative analysis have not experienced much research activity. The results of these analyses serve as a guide to areas where researchers could shine more light and to editors on where to encourage more submissions.

**Keywords:** bibliographic analysis; content analysis; topic/themes.

**Reference** to this paper should be made as follows: Koku, P.S. (2020) 'Constructing marketing thought: the case of Islamic marketing', *Int. J. Islamic Marketing and Branding*, Vol. 5, No. 1, pp.17–27.

**Biographical notes:** P. Sergius Koku is a Full Professor with tenure at the College of Business at Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL, USA. He holds a PhD in Finance and Marketing from Rutgers University and the J.D. (Juris Doctorate) from the University of Miami School of Law. He is a member of the Florida Bar and the Federal Bar (Southern District). He is a national/international expert on boycotts and boycott actions. He conducts interdisciplinary research and has numerous publications. He served as a Fulbright Fellow in 2016/2017 in the Republic of North Macedonia where he taught, mentored early career academics and conducted research.

---

## 1 Introduction

Those who have studied marketing over an extended period have certainly observed several exciting developments that have taken place in the field, particularly during the past three to four decades. These developments reveal the critical underlying self-reflection and examination of the discipline that have taken place and are indeed ongoing. These examinations are necessary for the survival and growth of every discipline. The self-reflection and growth in marketing are evident in several areas, including the very definition of the subject. About three decades ago, marketing was generally defined as “the process of planning and executing the development, pricing, promotion and distribution of idea, goods, and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual organizational objectives” (Boone and Kurtz, 1998). However, these days,

according to the American Marketing Association, the premier marketing association in the world, “marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large” (American Marketing Association, 2017).

Other noticeable changes in the field include the creation of a distinct and separate subfield devoted to services alone referred to as ‘services marketing’ (see Berry and Parasuraman, 1993). This subfield, services marketing, now boasts of several respected scholars, highly regarded journals and is being offered as an area of specialisation in many business schools. Changes, such as these, do not take root overnight, rather they are nurtured and championed by several dedicated pioneers and visionaries (risk takers in a sense) who refused to accept the status quo, agitate, ask thought provoking questions and offer profound answers. An argument can be made that the growth and acceptance of the subfield of services marketing is partly due to the rigor and the extent of intellectual discourse and activities that have taken place in area. The intellectual activities in services marketing have led to several seminal articles, which in turn stimulate new and other lines of inquiry, which collectively further develop and enrich the field.

Another interesting development in the field of marketing which took place relatively recently and whose evolution will occupy the rest of this paper is the establishment of yet another subfield – *Islamic marketing*. What is Islamic marketing, and how is it being nurtured to become yet another vibrant subfield in broad area marketing? The objective of this paper is to attempt to answer this question by examining the scope of intellectual activities that are taking place within the domain of the subfield (Islamic marketing). Because scholarly papers that are published through the peer-reviewed process in any field are considered to be a reasonable approximation of the level of intellectual activities in that field, we used papers that are published in two of the better known journals in Islamic marketing (the *Journal of Islamic Marketing* published by Emerald, and the *International Journal of Islamic Marketing and Branding* published by Inderscience) as indicators of intellectual activities that are taking place in Islamic marketing. We argue that an examination of the scholarly papers published by the two journals will give readers a sense of how well (or poorly) Islamic marketing has engaged not only in reflexivity, but also in ‘dialoguing’ and interacting with marketing thought in general and with other disciplines. These activities are necessary, but not necessarily sufficient to ensure growth and development in this newly created subfield of Islamic marketing.

The remainder of this paper is organised as follows. In place of a literature review, which is typically done after the introductory comments, given the nature of the study, we think it is more appropriate that we devote a small section to revisiting the beginning of the subfield of Islamic marketing. This section is followed by a discussion of the methodology that we adopted for the study. Next, we discuss the analysis and results, followed by a discussion of the results, conclusory remarks and the limitations of the study.

## 2 From the beginning

Justification for establishing a separate subfield of Islamic marketing was made by Alserhan (2010) and other scholars who have argued that over 21 percent of the world’s population at the time (2009) composed of Muslims who accounted for over US\$2.7

trillion of the world's consumer market. Furthermore, it was estimated that Muslims would make up a third of the world's population by the end of 2020 (Saeed et al., 2001). Because of the phenomenal growth of this market as well as its purchasing power, and the fact that many countries with Islamic majority have adopted *Shari'ah* law which integrates Islamic principles and ideals into everyday personal and business life, it was logical to establish a subfield of marketing that addresses the specific needs and wants of this segment of the world's market. This is a persuasive argument that is reminiscent of the arguments made about three decades ago to justify establishing the area of services marketing as an independent subfield of marketing (see Shostack, 1972; Berry, 1980; Blois, 1974; Levitt, 1980).

So what exactly is Islamic marketing? Alserhan in one of the early issues of the *Journal of Islamic Marketing* attempted to provide a definition of Islamic marketing, albeit indirectly, by clarifying what Islamic branding (IB) meant (see Alserhan, 2010). In doing so, the author asserted that "IB is about blending the religious with the materialistic and the heavenly with the worldly. It is about religiously incorporating the brand into the lives of adherents, where it is incubated and lived with the sure anticipation of godly rewards". To clarify things, the author furthered that the term Islamic brand could be used to describe brands as 'Islamic' because, amongst other things,

- “1 these brands are *Shari'ah*-compliant, i.e., Islamic brands by religion
- 2 they originate from an Islamic country, i.e., Islamic brands by country of origin
- 3 their target is the Muslim consumer, i.e., Islamic brands by destination.”

These clarifications are useful however, definitions provide the anchor or the foundational pillar on which a school of thought is built, and this was yet to be provided for Islamic Marketing. Fortunately, it did not take long before a working definition of Islamic marketing emerged in the literature. In Volume 3, Issue 1, Wilson, suggested that Islamic marketing is “an acknowledgement of a god-conscious approach to marketing: from a marketer's and/or consumer's perspective, which draws from the drivers or traits associated with Islam”. He furthered that, it is “A school of thought which has a moral compass which tends towards the ethical norms and values of Islam and how Muslim interpret these, from their varying cultural lenses”. And “a multi-layered, dynamic and three-dimensional phenomenon of Muslim and non-Muslim stakeholder engagement, which can be understood by considering the creation of explicit and/or implicit signalling cultural artefacts – facilitated by marketing” (Wilson, 2012a). Undergirded with these working definitions, Islamic marketing (the newly established subfield) was prepared to move forward.

It must be noted that

- 1 the above definitions are not the only definitions available in the literature
- 2 are not etched in stone.

The reflexivity and growth in the discipline will suggest occasional changes as evidenced in the definition of *marketing* cited in the beginning of this paper.

**Table 1** *Journal of Islamic Marketing*

<i>Number</i>	<i>Theme/topic</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
1	Banking, finance, credit card, venture capital and related issues	70
2	Tourism, hospitality and destination marketing	19
3	Online marketing and e-commerce	3
4	Political marketing	3
5	Religiosity and spirituality	10
6	TV viewership	1
7	Organisational credibility	1
8	Retailing and shopping behaviour	15
9	New product innovation	1
10	Halal certification	5
11	Luxury good and ostentatious consumption	8
12	Social media/social network	2
13	Halal and food	24
14	Celebrity endorsement, advertising and IMC	16
15	Ethics	7
16	Education, marketing theory and practice	26
17	EWoW	4
18	Purchase behaviour	1
19	Measurement, scale and methodology	4
20	Brand experience	2
21	Culture/materialism, consumer behaviour and boycott	30
22	Trust	3
23	Marketing information system	1
24	Green marketing	7
25	Charity and corporate social responsibility	9
26	Internationalisation	4
27	Comparative studies	1
28	Service quality	3
29	Cause-related marketing	2
30	Services marketing	1
31	Logistics and supply chain management	5
32	Healthcare/medical/pharmaceutical	6
33	Segmentation	5
34	Fashion/cosmetics	7
35	Restaurant	2
36	Branding/brand personality	10
37	Islamic markets	1
38	Decision-making	3
39	Macromarketing	1
40	Sports/cricket	1
41	Power distance	1

**Table 2** Number of articles per each volume and issue of the *Journal of Islamic Marketing*

<i>Year</i>	<i>Volume</i>	<i>Issue</i>	<i>Number of articles</i>
2010	1	1	7
	1	2	8
	1	3	7
2011	2	1	9
	2	2	7
	2	3	8
2012	3	1	8
	3	2	7
	3	3	7
2013	4	1	7
	4	2	7
	4	3	6
2014	5	1	8
	5	2	8
	5	3	7
2015	6	1	8
	6	2	6
	6	3	8
2016	7	1	7
	7	2	6
	7	3	6
	7	4	7
2017	8	1	9
	8	2	8
	8	3	11
	8	4	13
2018	9	1	12
	9	2	14
	9	3	12
	9	4	12
2019	10	1	17
	10	2	17
	10	3	19
	10	4	17
2020	11	1	15
	11	2	Yet to be published

**Table 3** *International Journal of Islamic Marketing and Branding*

<i>Number</i>	<i>Theme/topic</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
1	Wow/eWoW	2
2	Internationalisation	2
3	Hospitality and tourism/hotels	7
4	Sustainability/CSR	2
5	Branding/brands	6
6	New product development	1
7	Consumer behaviour	8
8	Fashion	2
9	Religiosity	3
10	Gender/entrepreneurship	1
11	Online marketing	2
12	Endorsement	1
13	Social media	2
14	Halal label	2
15	Banking/financial institutions	16
16	Cosmetics	1
17	Education/theory	11
18	Leadership/management	1
19	Advertising	3
20	Logistics	1
21	Food/meat	4

**Table 4** Number of articles per each volume and issue of the *International Journal of Islamic Marketing and Branding*

<i>Year</i>	<i>Volume</i>	<i>Issue</i>	<i>Number of articles</i>
2016	1	1	8
	1	2	7
	1	3	5
	1	4	6
2017	2	1	4
	2	2	5
	2	3	6
	2	4	5
2018	3	1	5
	3	2	5
	3	3	7
	3	4	5
2019	4	1	5
	4	2	6
	4	3	Yet to be published

### 3 Methodology

To address the research question, we adopted a bibliographic analysis approach (see Koku, 2019; Fisk et al., 1993), which we combined with content analysis to track the content and changes in scholarly activities that have taken place in the subfield of Islamic Marketing as evidenced by articles published by the two leading journals in the field.

The bibliographic analysis approach is the appropriate technique to use in this context. The approach was used to track the evolution of services marketing and the scholarly activities that had taken place in the subfield over a period of 30 years (see Fisk et al., 1993). Similarly, Koku (2019) adopted the approach with suitable modifications to analyse the changes in scholarly activities that had taken place in the *Journal of Services Marketing* over a period of 25 years. Not having been involved in the editorial processes at the two Islamic marketing journals being studied in this paper, we are unable to adopt the participant observer aspect of tracking the changes in journals, the approach that was used by Koku (2019) and Fisk et al. (1993). However, the approach we have adopted is valid, and does not suffer from the possible observer bias criticisms that are levelled against the use of the participant observer technique.

The approach we took in this study involved accessing every issue of both journals published thus far. We read all the keywords to every article published in both journals (*Journal of Islamic Marketing* and the *International Journal of Islamic Marketing and Branding*), skimmed the articles and classified the study (such as consumer behaviour, celebrity endorsement, Halal, tourism, etc.) based on the overarching theme that emerged. Our analysis of publications in both the *Journal of Islamic Marketing* and the *International Journal of Islamic Marketing and Branding* are reported in Tables 1, 2 3, and 4.

### 4 Analysis and results

Our analyses showed that the *Journal of Islamic Marketing* has published a total 11 volumes over the past ten years, that is between 2010 and the first quarter 2020. The first six volumes, i.e., from 2010 to 2015 contained three issues per volume, while the remaining volumes, that is from 2016 to the present contained four issues per volume. On the whole, a total of 39 issues of the journal and a total of 335 articles have been published thus far.

Approximately 41 distinct themes/topics were covered in the articles published thus far in *Journal of Islamic Marketing* (see Table 1). Note that these themes/topic are not arranged in any order, but were recorded as they emerged from the analysis of the articles which were examined in the order of publication (i.e., Volume 1, Issue 1, before Volume 1, Issue 2 ... and before Volume 2, Issue 1, etc.). Four main areas seemed to have attracted a disproportionately larger attention out of the 41 areas. The banking and finance-related area seemed to have attracted the most inquiry. Approximately 70 articles (21%) of all the articles published to date in *Journal of Islamic Marketing* were in this area.

The second most popular area was 'culture/materialism, consumer behaviour and boycott' in which approximately 30 articles (8.9%) were published. Halal and food products area had 24 articles (7.6%) published, while education, marketing theory and

practice had 26 articles (7.7%). Note that because we do not know the rejection rate or the total number of articles submitted in each area, our comments are limited to only the number of articles published in each field. However, we can assume that the rejection rate is uniform, and that the number of articles published in each area is a reflection of the number articles submitted in that area. This being the case, we can surmise that the banking and finance related area attracted twice as much submission as the area 'culture/materialism, consumer behaviour and boycott'.

With regard to the *International Journal of Islamic Marketing and Branding*, publication started in 2015 with 4 issues per year. A total of 79 articles have been published to date. Analysis of the articles revealed that approximately 21 themes/topics have been covered (see Table 3 for a breakdown). Similar to the *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, the majority of the articles published (16 of the 79 that is approximately 20%) spoke to issues on banking and finance. Eleven (13%) were on education and theory. Consumer behaviour and boycotts had 8 articles (10%) and hospitality/tourism and hotels had seven articles. The breakdown of number of articles published by volume and issues is reported in Table 4. Again, we were not privy to the number of submissions or the rejection rate, so we can only comment of the number of articles published in each area.

Based on the richness and the number of articles that are being published in the two journals, we can say that the subfield (Islamic marketing) is well established. We noted that the issues of the *Journal of Islamic Marketing* increased from three to four per Volume since Volume 7 (2016), and the number of articles published per issue also increased significantly since Volume 8, Issue 3, which published 11 articles. Volume 10, Issue 3 alone published 19 articles, and the average number of articles per issue since Volume 8 is approximately 13.5. A steady trend of an average of 5.3 articles per issue is also noted to be published in the *International Journal of Islamic Marketing and Branding* that was founded only four years ago. These are indeed celebratory news, however, there several nagging and important questions. For instance, why has the banking and finance related area attracted a disproportionately larger percentage of articles in both journals? Vice versa, why has product innovation attracted the lowest percentage of articles in both journals?

## 5 Discussion and conclusions

We cannot directly answer these questions, nonetheless, we can offer some thoughts on 'knowledge extension' that may be relevant to answering them. Even though constructing new knowledge is an essential part of the academe, it is not an easy undertaking, and it does not necessarily follow a predetermined path. Given the nature of the academe, many who engage in knowledge construction are, for several reasons, risk takers. Thus, it is logical that some of them may start with the 'low hanging fruits'. They will first take care of the easy tasks and settle for the difficult ones later. We do not by any means wish to suggest that it easier to write papers in the area banking and finance in Islamic marketing, however, we know that *Islamic finance* as an area of study was well established before *Islamic marketing*, hence it could be easier to relate the two subfields. This may perhaps be one of the reasons for a large number of papers from that area. The reverse of the same logic could also explain the paucity of papers on new product development or comparative studies in Islamic marketing as revealed in the bibliographic analysis of both journals.



Some scholars in the field have reflected on how the newly constructed knowledge of Islamic marketing could take root and grow. Some expressed the need to engage in theory building, and some even attempted to chart the course for this initiative in the earlier volumes of the *Journal of Islamic Marketing* and the *International Journal of Islamic Marketing and Branding*. For instance, Arham (2010) laid the theoretical groundwork for intellectual space of Islamic marketing. Amin et al. (2014) argued for the development of a theory of Islamic consumer behaviour, attempted to develop one, which the authors applied to the mortgage market in Malaysia. Jafari (2012) called for going beyond the obvious and the need to engage in critical examination to generate insight.

Similarly, Wilson (2012b) argued for theory building and observed “that theory building has to incorporate and build upon the concepts and elements unique to Islam and Muslims. This is a more arduous task, which no doubt will take some predications, iterations, reflexivity and conceptualisation over time”. Wilson and Grant (2013) provided further insights into the first author’s previous arguments. Koku et al (2014, 2015a, 2015b) talked about the need to borrow theory and develop curricula as a way to ensure growth of the subfield. Along the same lines, Boulanouar et al. (2015) urge scholars in the field to think ‘outside the box’ in order to come up with new theories that address market imperfections and inequities, while Alserhan et al. (2016) attempt to present a list of existing theories in the subfield (Islamic marketing) in order to serve as a pointer scholars who are on the quest to develop a more defined theory for the subfield. Of course, the list of authors discussed above who have addressed need for original thinking and theory development in the subfield is all-inclusive, and it is not intended to serve as one. However, their work is cited merely to highlight the earlier calls and evidence for need for Islamic marketing to go beyond ‘meat and money’ and the mere application of received concepts and theories. After ten years of existence, perhaps there is no better time than now for us to start redeveloping Islamic marketing theories. As observed by Wilson (2012b), building a good theory may require several attempts, several iterations, and indeed several modifications, nonetheless the *journey* must be continued. We should not be afraid to take a step back to re-examine how far we have traversed in order to move forward.

In discussing the evolution of scholarship in services marketing, scholars have used metaphors from evolutionary biology such as ‘crawling out’, ‘scurrying about’ and ‘walking erect’ – to describe the three distinct phases that characterised the development (see Fisk et al., 1993; Koku, 2019). The ‘crawling out’ phase naturally referred to the beginning when scholars started to assert the right of the subfield to exist. The field is in its embryonic, and the literature in this phase comprises primarily conceptual work (Fisk et al., 1993). The ‘scurrying about’ phase is also characterised by high interest and enthusiasm, while the ‘walking erect’ phase refers to the field’s coming into its own, and characterised by explosive growth.

As observed by Fisk et al. (1993), “the academia is by its nature conservative and hidebound. New ideas and concepts gain acceptance slowly”. However, judging by the performance of the two journals, we can say without equivocation that the field of Islamic marketing has won acceptance, but we are still in the ‘crawling out’ phase, albeit at the threshold of ‘scurrying about’. Not only do we need to dig deeper to come up with appealing and sound theories in Islamic marketing, but we still need to embark on serious interdisciplinary orientation. Areas such as Islamic studies and Islamic finance are the

obvious areas, ripe for borrowing from, but we will need to cast our nets wider into the social sciences.

As evidenced in the bibliographic analysis, there are still obvious gaps that need to be bridged. Research interest in Islamic marketing in such areas as comparative studies, marketing information systems, services marketing, new product innovation, services innovation, Islamic markets, digital currency, sports marketing, political marketing are sorely needed. Perhaps, the editors of the two journals that we analysed can hold publication workshops at future conferences to coach and encourage participants to truly think ‘outside the box’ and pursue research in the areas in which we are abjectly lacking.

The high interest and enthusiasm that we look for in order to cross the threshold into ‘scurrying about’ phase should translate into a higher volume of submissions to the journals and possibly in the introduction of other journals in the subfield. As it is with any study, this study is not without limitations. First, it must be noted that the classification of the emerging themes/topics is somewhat arbitrary as we relied more on our judgment, nonetheless they are a close approximation of themes/topic discussed by the underlying articles. Secondly, while every effort was made to ensure an accurate count of articles, etc., because the analysis and counting were manually done, without the benefit of modern technology, there might be arithmetic and other minor errors, ‘here and there’, however, such errors are absolutely unintended and do nothing to limit the general insight that a study of this type intends to generate.

## References

- Alserhan, B. (2010) ‘On Islamic branding: brands as good deeds’, *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp.101–106.
- Alserhan, B.A., Mohammed, O.A. and Boulanouar, A.W. (2016) ‘Theories of Islamic marketing’, *International Journal of Islamic Marketing and Branding*, Vol. 1, No. 4, pp.297–304.
- American Marketing Association (2017) [online] <https://www.ama.org/the-definition-of-marketing-what-is-marketing/> (accessed 15 January 2020).
- Amin, H., Abdul-Rahman, A. and Abdul Razak, D. (2014) ‘Theory of Islamic consumer behaviour: an empirical study of consumer behaviour of Islamic mortgage in Malaysia’, *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, Vol. 5 No. 2, pp.273–301.
- Arham, M. (2010) ‘Islamic perspectives on marketing’, *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp.149–164.
- Berry, L. (1980) *Services Marketing Is Different*, Business, 30 May–June, pp.24–29.
- Berry, L. and Parasuraman, A. (1993) ‘Building a new academic field – the case of services marketing’, *Journal of Retailing*, ‘Vol. 69, No. 1, pp.13–60.
- Blois, K.J. (1974) ‘The marketing of services: an approach’, *European Journal of Marketing*, Summer, Vol. 8, pp.137–145.
- Boone, L.E. and Kurtz, D.L. (1998) *Marketing – Contemporary Marketing Wired*, 17th ed., Cengage, Boston, Mass.
- Boulanouar, A.W. (2015) ‘Islamic marketing and branding: thinking outside the box’, *International Journal of Islamic Marketing and Branding*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp.123–130.
- Fisk, R.P., Brown, S.W. and Bitner, M.J. (1993) ‘Tracking the evolution of the services marketing literature’, *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 69, No. 1, pp.61–102.
- Jafari, A. (2012) ‘Islamic marketing: insights from a critical perspective’, *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, Vol. 3, No. 1, pp.22–34.

- Koku, P.S. (2019) 'View from the trenches', *Journal of Services Marketing*, Vol. 33, No. 1, pp.125–130.
- Koku, P.S. and Jusoh, O. (2014) 'Where do we go from here? Towards a theory in Islamic marketing', *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, Vol. 5, No. 3, pp.366–378.
- Koku, P.S. and Jusoh, O. (2015a) 'Towards a curriculum and pedagogy in Islamic marketing', *International Journal of Islamic Marketing and Branding*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp.149–159.
- Koku, P.S. and Jusoh, O. (2015b) 'Where do we go from here? A research agenda for Islamic marketing borrowing from social marketing', *International Journal of Islamic Marketing and Branding*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp.5–15.
- Levitt (1980) 'Marketing intangible products & product intangibles', *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 59, No. 3, pp.94–102.
- Saeed, M., Ahmed, Z.U. and Mukhtar, S-M. (2001) 'International marketing ethics from an Islamic perspective: a value-maximization approach', *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 32, No. 2, pp.127–42.
- Shostack, G.L. (1972) 'Breaking free from product marketing', *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 41, No. 2, pp.73–80.
- Wilson, J. (2012a) 'Looking at Islamic marketing, branding and Muslim consumer behaviour beyond the 7P's: the call for supportive course content and more P's please', *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, Vol. 3, No. 3, pp.212–216.
- Wilson, J. (2012b) 'The new wave of transformational Islamic marketing: reflections and definitions', *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, Vol. 3, No. 1, pp.5–11.
- Wilson, J. and Grant, J. (2013) 'Islamic marketing – a challenger to the classical marketing canon?', *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, Vol. 4, No. 1, pp.7–21.