The ethics of marketing in Muslim and Christian communities

Insights for global marketing

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper takes advantage of the closeness of two secular, separated communities on the island of Cyprus to study how controversial products and forms of offensive advertising can be related to levels of religiousness, time usage and temporality. The resulting observations are then offered as insights into the notion of ethics in the two religious groups and how these might influence marketing to multicultural communities.

Design/methodology/approach – The findings are based on a small-scale survey of 530 students (211 Christians, 302 Muslims and 18 undeclared) who responded to a questionnaire distributed at two privately owned, English speaking institutions, one in the north and one in the south part of Cyprus.

Findings – This study indicates a high degree of commonality between Muslim and Christian students living in the adjoining communities in Cyprus. In general, overall reactions were tolerant of most products and forms of advertising, but where there were differences occurred there were specific reactions to the forms of the advertising. Significant differences were found across the communities when devoutness was tested especially regarding products that were of a sexual nature.

Research limitations/implications – The relatively small numbers studied in the special case of Cyprus and the focus on students could limit the generalisation of these results.

Practical implications – The results raise some issues for marketing segmentation and image use. For instance, positive and forward-looking images would stimulate most of the group regardless of their level of faith.

Originality/value – This paper identifies commonalties and also ontological differences that could have implications for global marketing campaigns.

Keywords Cyprus, Advertising, Target audience, Islam, Christianity, Ethics

Paper type Research paper

Background

Society in the European Union (EU) is rich in its religious and philosophical diversity. Christianity's main forms in the EU are Roman Catholicism, Orthodox Christianity, Protestantism and to a recent European Commision survey about 5 per cent of EU residents identify themselves as Muslims (http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_225_report_en.pdf). In the same survey, nine in ten Greek Cypriot declare that they believed in a God and of the candidate countries, Turkey, where the vast majority

of the population are Muslim, ranks highest with 95 per cent declaring their belief in
a God.

The presence of Muslims in the EU is, according to Buijs and Rath (2002), mainly a
consequence of the influx of workers from the Middle East and the former colonial
territories in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean region. There are also relatively large
communities of indigenous Muslims in Europe (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albania and
Bulgaria). Muslim communities of Europe exhibit a variety of ethnic, linguistic and
cultural characteristics, and have multiple networks with other regions of the Muslim
world. In this respect the influence of Muslims in Europe is growing. The number of
Muslims in the EU is difficult to estimate, since according to the European Commission
no such figures are available. The figure of approximately 15 million Muslims in
Europe, quoted by Buijs and Rath[1] and attributed to Maréchal, is the closest current
estimate.

Cyprus is a micro socio-political system in Europe, where two religiously and
ethnically different communities inhabit one island in the Eastern Mediterranean with
a rich heritage of faiths and ideologies. The communities in the north are Turkish
Cypriot and Turkish (mainly Muslim), and in the south, the community comprises
Greek Cypriots and Greeks (mainly Orthodox Christian). Although there are various
forms of censorship in the media, for the most part marketing communications
transcend them. Both communities are secular, a notion of a separation of state and
religion, which as Ezzat and Abdalla (2004) point out, should not be confused with
atheism, neo-colonialism or liberalism. The context for this study is two English-
speaking secular universities one on each side of what has become known as the
"Green Line" that divides the island. This paper takes advantage of this closeness of
"otherness"[2] to study how controversial products and forms of offensive advertising
can be related to levels of religiousness, time usage and temporality. The resulting
observations are then offered as insights into the notion of ethics in the two religious
groups and how these ethics might influence marketing to multicultural communities.
The choice of universities is opportunistic and no claim for generalisability is claimed.

Introduction

This paper is situated in Cyprus, a country divided along political and religious lines,
and looks for differences that might reveal the ethical forms and content of advertising
that would appeal to both student communities. This paper does not attempt to review
the work on marketing ethics, religiousness and models of marketing ethics. This has
been well discussed elsewhere (e.g. Whysall, 2000; Gaski, 1999; Smith, 2001; Murphy
et al., 2005). It also takes as established the importance of culture and religion on
marketing ethics decisions (Hunt and Vitell, 1986, 1993), the differences that cultural
frameworks have on notions of time use (Hall, 1959; McGrath and Kelly, 1992;
Bluedorn, 2002) and in consumption (Kaufman et al., 1991; 1999) and the importance of
temporal orientation on consumer behaviour (e.g. Graham, 1981; Hirschman, 1987;
Bergadaà, 1990; Usunier and Vallette-Florence, 1994; Gibbs, 1998). Neither does it
attempt to review the literature on religiousness and marketing for, although it is fairly
sparse, its linkage to consumer decision making is again well established (Delener,
1994; Kennedy and Lawton, 1998; Longenecker et al., 2004; Michell and Al-Mossawi,
1999; Singhapakdi et al., 2000; Fam et al., 2004; Angelidis and Ibrahim, 2004).
Furthermore, the literature, albeit predominately American and Christian, indicates
that highly religious individuals (students or marketers) will be influenced by
their religiousness in their sensitivity to ethical evaluations and their disapproval

of unethical behaviours (Clark and Dawson, 1996). However the literature makes little comment on the linkage between temporality and the time patterns of consumers and their views on ethical marketing. This paper attempts to address this issue for, it is argued, the primordial nature of temporality can distinguish communities in ways that religious affinity alone cannot achieve.

Theoretical position

For Bourdieu (1994) the construction of our meaningful social existence is based on multiple, separately identifiable fields of social life, sharing commonalities, overlapping and in tension with each other. Although the notion of a field has no necessary or sufficient alignment of properties which constitute it as a field, it will contain power relationships which are manifest in: structured spaces and positions, directional processes to guide practices, competition regarding the creation, ownership and exchange of different forms of capital that have a specific social orientation or habitus, and function analogously to a game (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Within each field are structures based on its institutions, authorities and the activities that maintain it. Yet, a field is not fixed in time and space but is dynamic; it engages its populations, it is changed by them and changes them in ways that reflect the weight of capital each brings to the engagement. The way in which capital is employed is greatly influenced by the habitus, which encompasses the sub-cultural practices and protocols that build trust and security within a work group and shapes the form of activities that operate within a field. A specific approach to the investigation of the difference is formulated habitus, illustrated by the values of different religious affiliations within the field of religion and the potential permanence of each one on the meta-field of power. It is indicative of a separation of field that cannot be blended by a rhetoric of equivalencies, for like Bourdieu, the discourse of equivalencies as an attempt at totalisation on behalf of the discourse of logic. For Bourdieu it is in this sense that the secular state has taken from religion in role to legitimize and naturalize social difference. In the adoption of post-modernity consumerism as a main theme of identity in youth we believe that we will find sign that the state is losing that power in favour of consumerism itself (see Engler, 2003; Rey, 2004).

We approach this study from the position of temporality as the primary meaning of being; time forms the horizon in which beings are understood, by themselves and others (see Levinas, 1997; Heidegger, 1962)[3]. Conceptualised through the lens of sociology or consumer behaviour, the notion of a personal temporality entrapped by and defining culture through its rituals (McGrath, 1988), pacing and time use becomes a way of being in the world with others. Furthermore, the notion of temporality of the moral and the eternity of the divine is a key premise of monotheistic religions. Hence the eternal God of the Judeo-Christian and Muslim tradition is not temporal in any immanent way[4]. Human temporality – the human awareness of time and temporal orientation – is intimately connected with human ethical concerns. Ethics is about how we ought to use our time, how we ought to relate to objects in time, and what we ought to preserve or forget in time. In the sense of monotheistic religious belief, time and temporality are a manifestation of mortality not of divinity. As such the notion of time and its temporalisation is a common feature in both Muslim and Christian traditions where both religious traditions offer us an interpretation of human life that hopes that mortality can be defeated and time can be overcome. Real value, from this perspective, lies in the realm of the unchanging, essentially timeless, ideas. For instance, the Koranic vision is focused on transcendence rather than temporality and, as befits such

a world-view, the addressee of its discourse is a universal, archetypical and trans-historical human being. Even the covenant that God has with man is primordial and is contracted prior to the advent of the historical time. Man enters his/her historical existence only after submitting to the sovereignty of God (The *Koran*, 7, p. 172). The very notion of faith in Islam (which means to surrender to God), also presupposes a trans-historical and transcendent disposition of man (*fitra*). Time, according to the Koran, is not the perpetual flux that results in a linear or cyclical conception of temporality, but an eternal present that always carries with it the possibility of surrender to God.

Moreover, the notion of time usage is explored by Hall (1976) and others (including Bluedorn, 2002) who make the assumption that cultural difference will be made manifest in time usage. That is, in low-context cultures (Hall, 1976), explicit, verbally communicated messages are emphasized, as is punctuality and adherence to schedules and monchronicity is likely to dominate. In direct contrast, in high-context cultures, establishing relationships through a flexible approach to time is the rule. Thus cultures of higher religiousness where common values are implicit in their way of being, ought to lean towards higher polychronicity than those cultures where religion is less identified as being and more with acting. This leads to our first set of hypotheses:

H1. That consumers who claim high levels religious devoutness will be less influenced by the temporality of the present and future and will look to tradition for their temporal location.

Furthermore, given the monotheistic nature of both religions the subsidiary hypothesis is

H1a. There should be little difference within the religions

H2. Higher levels of religiousness should correlate with higher levels of polychronicity.

A notion of religion and markets

Christian Orthodoxy and Islamic ethics examine marketing with respect to whether it is deceitful, fraudulent, truthful and whether it provides adequate disclosure. Both try to make sense of the world of commerce within the cannons of their specific faiths. Christians, for instance, have conceptualised the selling process as an act of charity for it is a responsibility of a Christian to ensure that the good or service gives real value to the buyer (Elegido, 2003). Aquinas (II-II, 77.1) for instance argues that the price of a product ought to bring advantage to both parties to the transaction. For both faiths, the nature of others as neighbours (with the obligations that neighbourliness brings), are important drivers of their relationships in all aspects of life including commercial transactions. Indeed this interdependence is evident in the notion of the market ideology that gains its genius from Smith's Wealth of Nations. We argue here (as does Sauer, 1999), that the application of the moral prescriptions of religious texts to economic transactions in Christian and secular societies put economic development under the illegitimate control of religious idealism, whereas the market has its own constitutive logic. This is not to deny the rootedness of justice and fairness in the model of the market, just that when the Christian Holy texts are applied to the market they may require different ontologies than the development of the neo-liberal market has

come to encourage (see Audi, 2000, Chapter 2, for a further development of this argument). The separation of the secular and the divine problematicises the values that market participants bring to the market. It can be argued, we believe, that Christian benevolence and Muslim metaphysics fundamentally differ from the neo-liberal notion of the market where the notion of being is interactive rather than substantive. Thus, the understanding of the world focuses on the relations of things, rather than on their nature or essence. What a thing is is framed by its relationships in processes not by its essence or necessary structure. This metaphysics is based on the view that creation is the locus of God-centred purpose. The created order is relational. God has not only created the universe as a natural world but has also framed its functions and purpose. God's revelation as law and word govern the created order, and human activity must be ordered in the universe, i.e. to divine reality or order. For instance, the core world view of Muslims is the notion of unity and the divine truth of God as revealed through the Koran and its interpretation by those empowered with its authority (Choudhury, 2000a, b). In the Muslim political economy, ethicizing marketing is a concept where, the notion of ethics gets "induced on the consumption, production and distribution sides" (Choudhury, 2000a, p. 26) of the market model, thus increasing the social levels of market interaction.

Compared to modernity's notions of positivism, rationalism and Cartesian separation of transcendental and the immanent futures differences are most evident in a reality that seeks societal and collaboration goals (Saeed *et al.*, 2001) rather than self-orientated and competitive ones. In Christian texts like the Bible human fulfilment cannot be obtained by the unrestrained satisfaction of our desires. On the contrary, temperance and self-control are presented as necessary. Such self control is especially evident in the Greek Orthodox faith, a central dimension of which is the growth towards God-likeness and the virtues, constitutive of this personal dimension of its ethos and found in the 102 canons of the Penthekre Ecumencial Council (Harakas, 1999a, b). The most often quoted justification for this for Muslims is the Koran's advocacy of fairness and prohibition of self-interested disruption of the market mechanism for the enrichment of one to the disadvantage of others. This creates a notion of a market and its accompanying economics that places social welfare at the centre of the mechanism and which, in many senses, is incommensurate with the notion of the market as it is commonly interpreted in capitalist states. By adopting a capitalistic market's epistemology of deconstruction, a specific ontology, related to this epistemological stance, is revealed. Given the growing hegemony of the capitalistic neo-liberal model any other truths or claims that might be made are obscured. Applying an epistemological approach based on a neo-liberal market ideology to religious consumers will be seen as an ideology to entrapment.

Where the market ideology is robust, complex and unified such an approach risks that those who devoutly identify with the target ideology will see the epistemological fraud. This view of bad faith will be stronger in highly religious Muslims because of their different notion of the value distortion functions of market participants. For instance, the notion of *Isfar* (waste) is deeply related to the whole economic system so that removing images of waste from advertising does not change the implicit notion of the careless and excessive consumption of certain products, or of the planned obsolescence of many goods. The same applies to *Haram* business activities. The repackaging of a forbidden activity does not change its nature nor the inappropriateness of the activities of the supplier or the purchaser. In this sense, the market mechanism in Islam is morality. In other words, the market mechanism

cannot be restructured to appease ethical concerns. Christianity is not silent on these issues either. Although the wisdom of the divine is unquestionable, it is clear in the writings of Aquinas that humans have the means to evaluate their actions since "not every object of pleasure is good in the moral order which depends on the order of reason (Summa heologiae I-II, Q.34, a.2) (Aquimac, 1997).

Interpreted in terms of a Muslim market, marketing is an instrument that mobilises resources towards the moral law, whereas advertising for self, contested markets and undue competition is not allowed since such advertising then becomes an act impeding the fair flow of resources for the common good. Advertising seeks for all to be best informed and an undue claim by some on the resources (whose ultimate owner is God) is inappropriate, because man is trustee for its good and fair use. Marketing thus seeks to satisfy customer need within his notion of spiritual and physical well being. The contrast is illustrated in the difference between the self-interested notion of buyer beware and the Muslim obligation to broker all information in a sales transaction. Muslim marketing ethics have best been discussed in the literature based on the role of Islamic banking in the community (e.g. Choudhury and Hussain, 2005; Harahap, 2003) and are similar to the views expressed by Saeed *et al.* (2001) and Rice and Al-Mossawi (2002) in the international marketing context of Islam, and Gibbs (2004) relating to the well being of consumers.

The few authors (e.g. Rice, 1999; Rice and Al-Mossawi, 2002; Marta *et al.*, 2004) who have addressed the notion of Islamic traditions in the marketing ethics literature have had relatively little concern for the epistemological position of the ideology but they have shown how pragmatic methods can be used to "colour" an existing neo-liberal capitalist approach with a gloss of Islam. This approach is transparent to the faithful for it concentrates on the surface value and can lead to misleading ways of seeing the world. To offer an alternative requires an understanding of the phenomenological ontology of being a Muslim and how that constructs the nature of being. Recently Rawwas *et al.* (2006) explored ethical beliefs in students in secular and religious universities in Japan. They found that religiousness would be positively related to notion of ethical behaviour.

To explore this we propose the following set of hypotheses:

H3. That in a set of controversial products and services and their forms of promotion there would be differences in acceptance dependent on devoutness.

H4. There would be difference between Christians and Muslim based on the different habitus that contributes to their identity within secular markets.

Methodology
Research setting
The findings are based on a small-scale survey of 513 students (211 Christians, 302 Muslims) who responded to a questionnaire distributed at the two largest English speaking institutions of higher education in Cyprus, one in the northern part and one in the southern part of Cyprus. The students surveyed were taking courses as part of their undergraduate degrees. The sample consisted of 45 per cent females with the following age distributions: 44 per cent were 20 or under, 32 per cent were between 21 and 23 and 20 per cent were 24 and older. Between religious groups, Muslims student were more likely to be male (70 per cent) and there was no significant difference in age although Christians tended to be older as was expected since males would

have undertaken national service before attending the University. Both institutions were secular with no religious requirements for admittance, attendance or dress. The sample was opportunistic and no attempt was made to match samples with local demographics of the host communities other than recognising that both institutions mirror their local entrance requirement for all higher education institutions and that these requirements are compatible. The students were surveyed during lessons that were not part of the research team's teaching schedule. The respondents voluntarily participated with no pressure, penalty or reward used for those who did or did not wish to do so.

Data collection
The survey was conducted using a questionnaire design based on existing instruments used to reveal subjects' reaction to controversial products[5] and their religious intensity (Fam *et al.,* 2004; Williams *et al.,* 2005)[6]. The choice of the controversial products and the reasons for offence taken emerged from the work of Waller *et al.* (2005). Also shared with this study is the rationale that university students are used mainly because of their accessibility to the researchers and their homogeneity as a group (Waller *et al.*, 2005, p. 8). The method used to indicate temporal orientation was taken from Trompenaars (1993), where visual representation of temporal notion was found to be easier to express than textual and oral explanation. Final the use of time as monochronic and polychronic was taken from a sequence of papers culminating in Lindquist *et al.* (2001)[7], where a short instrument to test tendency to one or the other was presented. In addition, demographic data was collected on declared religious affiliation, age, sex and resident city. The data were analyzed using the SPSS package.

Notions of offensiveness were measured on a five point Likert scale, levels of religiousness were taken from a self rating scale based on perceived personal devoutness, polychronicty was constructed following Lindiquist's method using three interrelated questions and temporal influence was revealed by the drawing of circles of past, present and future on everyday behavior on a grid. Examples were given to the student to understand the process. These drawings were then evaluated by the authors and an independent confederate and a rating of the dominance of temporality was constructed. If, for instance, the student indicates only one state then this would appear in the data collection as three repeated numbers, 1 was used to indicate the past, 2 the present, and 3 the future. Therefore, someone fixed in the past would have a profile of 333, while someone balanced would have a profile of 123.

Results
General characteristics of the two groups
Both groups showed no significant difference in age or gender distribution. The overwhelming religious affiliation was Christian in the south (82 per cent Christian, 1 per cent Muslim, 12 per cent others and the rest no response) and in the north Islam was the dominating affiliation (92 per cent Muslim, 7 per cent other, 1 per cent Christian). As such the sample was considered valid in representing the views of two student populations with different religious affiliations.

The group statistics for responses to the products and images are remarkably similar (see Table I). Although there are some significant differences in respect to alcohol, cigarettes, (which are prohibited for Muslims) charities, male underwear and pharmaceutical products, the reaction to controversial products are similar, but in all cases tolerant.

The common feature of those images that can give offence is their low score albeit higher than controversial products. Significant differences tends to appear only in evaluation, not in ranking of offences. The overwhelming conclusion is that given direct prohibitions the responses of the two groups of student are close on almost all matters.

The levels of religiousness were measured on a self-rating scale of devoutness ranging from 1 to 5. Table II illustrates the distribution of devoutness and religious affiliation.

An ANOVA test on the whole group, with devoutness as the independent variable, showed that devoutness had a significant correlation with products related to sexuality (condoms, female contraceptives, sexual diseases) and was negative correlated to charities. Only sexist images had a positive correlation with devoutness as reason for giving offense.

	Muslim students $N = 277$	Christian students $N = 192$
Alcoholic products*	2.4296	1.7552
Charities/Fund raising*		1.6354
Cigarettes/Tobacco*	2.9097	2.0417
Condoms	2.0650	1.8802
Female contraceptives	2.0866	1.9583
Female underwear	2.0866	1.8698
Feminine hygiene products	1.9314	1.7760
Funeral services	2.7473	2.5156
Gambling	2.8267	2.6302
Guns and armaments	2.8123	2.9844
Male underwear*	2.1083	1.7604
Pharmaceuticals*	1.9747	1.5781
Political parties	2.6029	2.5052
Racially extremist groups	3.2383	3.1979
Religious denominations	3.0830	2.9010
Sexual diseases	2.3069	2.1615
Weight loss programmes	2.2274	2.0469
Other	0.9242	0.8594
Reason for offence		
Immoral	3.1913	3.2083
Anti-social	3.1480	3.0729
Concern for Children*	2.3646	2.6615
Hard sell*	3.0975	2.4479
Health and Safety Issues	2.2852	1.9427
Indecent language*	3.2310	2.8281
Nudity*	2.4332	2.7344
Racist images	3.4332	3.4332
Sexist images	3.2238	3.2865
Stereotyping	3.2383	3.1354
Personal subject	3.0830	2.9323
Violence	3.2029	3.4375
Western images	2.7040	2.5938
Other	0.7545	0.8854

Note: *Indicates significant differences

Table I.
Group statistics

Hypothesis tested

The data were then used to test the hypotheses constructed from the literature review, which stated:

H1. That consumers who claim high levels religious devoutness will be less influenced by the temporality of the present and future and will look to tradition for their temporal location.

This hypothesis was tested by of location of the self in the sketches offered in question three of the questionnaire. This sequence illustrates the visual weighting of the described personal temporality. These profiles were cross-tabulated with levels of religious devoutness and chi-squared tested for difference in expected frequency (see Table III).

This result suggests we should accept part of this hypothesis in that level of devoutness does influence temporal orientation but not as suggested in the hypothesis. The main finding being those lower on devoutness are significantly more forward orientated.

H1a. stated that "There should be little differences within the religions". To investigate this, a summary of the frequency charts based on leading temporal zone (see Table IV) shows the Muslim students tended to be more forward looking and the Christian Students were more past oriented.

A chi-squared test revealed these differences to be highly significant thus leading to us to reject this hypothesis.

	Level of devoutness per cent (%)					
Affiliation	None	1	2	3	4	5
Muslim	9.1	14.2	17.1	30.5	16.7	12.4
Christian	2.7	9.3	10.9	32.8	27.9	16.4
Other	28.2	15.5	5.1	35.9	7.7	7.7

Table II.
Level of devoutness

Dominant temporality	Low devoutness (%)	High devoutness (%)
Past	35	48.7
Present	3.2	5.7
Future	61.8	45.6

Table III.
Level of devoutness and temporal orientation

Dominant temporality	Muslim (%)	Christian (%)
Past	35	53.3
Present	4	5.7
Future	61	40

Table IV.
Summary of frequency charts

    H2.   Higher levels of devoutness should be correlated with higher levels of
         polychroncity.

Low levels of polychronicity in both communities were reported and an ANOVA test
with polychroncity as the dependent variable showed no significant difference
in polychroncity by devoutness p-value$> + 0.985$). Furthermore, t-tests showed no
significant difference between Muslims and Christian and no significant difference in
gender ($p = 0.7820$). There is no evidence to support this hypothesis.

    The second set of hypotheses related directly to the offensive products and their
images.

    H3.   That in a set of controversial products and services and their forms of
         promotion there would be differences in acceptance dependent on devoutness.

An ANOVA with dependent variable levels of religious devoutness revealed significant
difference for the group as a whole on products broadly linked to sexuality; condoms,
female contraceptives and female underwear and sexually transmitted diseases (at the
5 per cent level). These issues were consistent within the two groups, although for the
Orthodox Christians, nudity, sexist images and stereotyping showed significant
positive correlations with devoutness. The results show some cluster differences
related to devoutness but no general difference, thus partially supporting the
hypothesis.

    H4.   There would be difference between Christians and Muslim based on the
         different habitus that contributes to their identity within secular markets.

A t-test performed on the products and services did show a difference between
religious groups mainly in the product and services. The following products; alcoholic
products, charities, cigarettes, male underwear and pharmaceuticals (at the 1 per cent
significance level) and female underwear and hygiene products and funeral services (at
the 5 per cent level) were more offensive to Muslims. Both groups were closer regarding
reasons for offense with the Muslim students significantly different regarding hard
selling and indecent language. There were significant differences between the faiths in
regard to products and although little difference in reasons for offence, partial support
for the hypothesis is concluded.

Discussion
Overall the levels of polychronicity are low (compared to Lindquist *et al.*, 2001) and do
not indicate that the two communities are of "high context". Furthermore, the theorised
relationship between temporal orientation religion and religious devoutness are not
supported.

    However, the temporality issue is interesting given the earlier theorising of the
temporal nature of being based on the philosophical position of Heidegger. These
results offer some support to the deeper nature of religiousness as a temporal and thus
ontological essence of being.

    Regarding the type and offensiveness of image, the results of the study tend to
support Fam *et al.* (2004) and Waller *et al.* (2005) that Muslim students were more
sensitive to moral offence although, overall both group were insensitive. This may well
be a reflection on the cultural similarity of the two communities in Cyprus and
although there is a residual religious impact and reaction, especially to products, a

commonality is more evident than difference. This could be more indicative of issues related to a more integrated European context.

The higher devoutness scores were a good discriminator of a potential offensiveness of images regardless of the faith of the respondent. This finding is supported by the early study of McNichols and Zinerer (1985, p. 180) who found, in American students, evidence to suggest that the "strength of religious belief affects individual opinion of what is [ethically] acceptable".

This is not to say that the majority of students did not have a commonality of response to products/services and the images used to promote them. Indeed, at this level the study offers indicative support that little change is needed other than the superficial issues identified by Rice and Al-Mossawi (2002) to avoid obvious and careless offence for ethically neutral products/services for those with low levels of faith.

Conclusions

The results of this study are broadly consistent with the findings of Fam *et al.* (2004) and Waller *et al.* (2005). As indicated by Waller (when discussing Malaysia) multi-cultural groups will tend to be more liberal in their rules so as to "maintain social and cultural harmony between the various groups" (2005, p. 10). Further support for this position comes from Mike Longhurst[8], Senior VP, McCann-Erickson Europe and Board member of the European Association of Communications Agencies (EACA) that:

> Issues to do with particular ethics of buying and selling would normally only be considered when communications are clearly targeted at Muslims. In that case they would be expected to be very closely matched to consumer expectations. It is often found that Muslims are happy to apply double standards and recognise when non- Muslims are principally being addressed. They will take offence when Muslims are shown acting "improperly", but not when others are.

However, this study indicates a high degree of commonality between Muslim and Christian students living in adjoining communities, in spite of their ideological and political differences. Yet, we feel that the data points towards a deeper issue that is not conclusively revealed. That issue is the primordial notion of temporality and its association to the self-expression of religious intensity and ethical inclination. The survey did reveal that Muslim students and Christian students see many things the same way, negatively rejecting a number of the ethically objectionable promotional images, and showing a liberal attitude (lack of offensiveness) to services and products previously found to cause offence. Indeed both groups only rejected racist extreme groups at a level above the average. This finding differs from the previous work of Fam *et al.* (2004). Taken as a whole, the outcomes of this research show Muslim students to be more sensitive to ethical issues and Christians declare themselves to be more religiously intense but less sensitive to offence. The common feature of these two monotheistic religions is that religious intensity is a strong indicator of how offensive the images and the type of product and service will prove to be.

The findings indicate that religious devoutness has an influence on the notion of identity within a consumer, secular state but that for the most part young consumers of different religious affiliations have commonly held views regarding the type of products advertised and the way they are unless they directly contravene a principle of their faith. In this sense we believe Bourdeiu's analysis has relevance to our study.

Notes

1. This number of course is understated as it does not include Muslims from the candidate EU states.

2. Through access to common radio, films and television in English and increased direct contact through opening bounders.

3. Levinas (1997, p. 58) links religiousness and the eternal by stating, "Everyday life is a preoccupation with salvation".

4. Heidegger (2002, pp. 4-7) makes a point that if we were indeed atemporal in the sense of godlike eternal then we would not need to be anything for we would be everything.

5. The reason for this is derived from what Heidegger calls the present-at-hand (a reflective, technical understanding) over the more fundamental ready-to-hand (the non-thematic, working, living flow of being). That is, we need to highlight the impact of marketing in order for it to be considered, thus the use of controversial products where the act of advertising is more easily reflected upon than in standard product where the promotion becomes, itself, part of non-reflective relationship to the product.

6. I am aware of the Robin *et al.* (1996) scenario methodology and its use by Singhapakdi *et al.* (2000) but as this is developed for the creator of marketing, the approach chosen was similar to the purpose of this study and in so doing I have results to compare from other Muslim countries.

7. The author is grateful to David Waller (controversial questions and religiousness) and Carol Kaufman-Scarborough (PAI3) for permission to use their developed instruments.

8. I am grateful for this personal communication.

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