

Buying Muslim is Big Business – Brands No Longer Able to Turn a Blind Eye to Muslim Consumers

Insights from the American Muslim Consumer Conference

- Lisa Mabe

In just its second year, the recent American Muslim Consumer Conference made exceptional strides in highlighting not only how substantially underserved the Muslim market in the United States is, but also the tremendous and tangible value that it represents to a variety of brands. The Conference hosted diverse participants and attendees; from mainstream consumer brands (such as Western Union, Pepsi and Best Buy), Muslim-operated brands (Saffron Road, Zaiken Jewelry and Guidance Residential), to marketing communications professionals and leading Muslim lifestyle journalists and bloggers.

While addressing the audience of around 400 during one of the anticipated panels, *Halal: Challenges and Opportunities in North America*, I specifically addressed the opportunity that the online space represents for brands that are actively vying for the attention of Halal consumers. While it is true that Muslim lifestyle media in the U.S. is still in its developmental stage, it is maturing, expanding, and growing very quickly – both in the quality of content and its specific and credible applications for Muslim consumers and also in the quantity of media outlets (especially online). In addition to highlighting *where* Muslim consumers are online, I also believe it is critical to address *how* brands can effectively engage with them online – providing content that is relevant and sharable.

Overall, some of the key tenets from my presentation, which were echoed throughout the day at the conference, relevant to brands and marketers include:

- Brands who simply acknowledge its Muslim consumers stand to gain a tremendous amount of brand loyalty and buzz among the American Muslim community.
- Muslims want to purchase products and services that won't make them compromise their faith. From Halal options in food to tailor-suited financial products and more.
- Targeting Muslims in your marketing efforts DOESN'T mean you have to alienate others. In fact, doing so in many ways will simply be complimentary to brands' current efforts.
- The expanding Muslim lifestyle media is providing more opportunities to reach this niche efficiently.
- It's not necessary for brands to be religious in their outreach, but rather appeal to Muslims as a lifestyle demonstrating understanding of their traditions and values. Our research indicates that overt religious appeals actually alienate a lot of American Muslim consumers.
- Once targeted and converted to loyal brand advocates, Muslims have a remarkably high propensity to spread buzz about the brand –through word of mouth both online and off.

The reality is American Muslims are a consumer group hungry for brands to acknowledge them and provide products and services that fit into their lifestyles. From food, to fashion, to finance, buying Muslim is a big opportunity and consumer brands in the U.S. who are smart enough to embrace them will experience first-hand their spending power, brand loyalty and brand advocacy.

The increased support and buzz around this emerging consumer segment is good for the Muslim community, brands seeking to court them and the U.S. economy. And as the outlook for significant top-line growth and overall economic recovery still looks gloomy in many sectors, look for more brands, mainstream and Muslim-owned, to begin to make efforts to gain the attention and loyalty of a significantly important and underserved demographic in the marketplace – the American Muslim consumer.

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