



CHAPTER (1)

Introduction To The Thesis

1.1 Introduction:

This chapter aims to present a synopsis of the whole thesis by introducing the following areas of the research: research overview, pilot study, research problems and questions, research objectives and hypotheses, the importance of the current study, and finally the outline and structure of the thesis.

1.2 Overview:

Advertising is viewed as an inescapable part of everyday life, consumers feel that they are exposed to more and more advertising, often to the point of feeling overwhelmed and as a result they prefer to ignore advertising as much as they can (Mori, 2012). People remember the advertising which they like ‘because they were entertaining or informative’, as well as those they dislike ‘because they were annoying or misleading’ (Mori, 2012). Studies showed that most of the respondents had negative feelings toward the social consequences of television advertising and request changes by the side of the regulatory authorities (MacKenzie, Lutz and Belch 1981; La Tour 1990). Since, some agencies use offensive advertising, either offensive advertising product or offensive advertising execution, trying to “cut through the clutter” to gain consumers’ attention, but the



issue of offensive advertising is very controversial and has lots of debates.

Besides, offensive advertising issue is an extremely grey and risky area (Dahl, Franken Berger and Manchanda, 2003), because offensive ads have negative effect which is called “negative-offensive”, where the audience is offended to the extent that the outcome is anything that is far away from being positive. On the other hand, offensive advertising have positive effect as well, which is called “positive-offensive” as in some cases advertising that offends, sexual appeals and body ideals in advertising has been found to increase attention, benefit memory, and positively influence behavior (Dahlet al., 2003). Thus, offensive advertising can be seen as a matter of good taste without taking in consideration its effect when using it as a marketing tool to deliver certain advertising message, and neglecting its consequences on several cultures, consumers’ attitude and business organizations’ image.

One of those cultures is the Islamic culture. Whereas, Muslims involve one of the major consumer markets in the whole world with an estimated world population of 1.6 billion people around the world and exporting *Halal* goods and services globally worth US\$2.1 trillion (Central Intelligence Agency, 2008). Moreover, Muslim countries represent a majority in more than 50 countries in Asia, Africa and Europe (Saeed et al., 2001). Consequently, in the past few years, the Islamic Marketing practices have been booming worldwide, and



several Islamic products, as (Islamic banks, Halal food, Fulla® toy, Zamzam® Cola, Qibla® Cola, Mecca® cola, Islamic fashion, Islamic tourism, Islamic hotels, ... etc), have been introduced to the market all over the world, specifically in Eastern countries (Abou Youssef, 2011).

Nevertheless, advertisers should pay more attention to cultural values, which are directly related to the social and religious values, because going against those values will be very offensive, which may lead to a negative perception toward the brand as well (Wazir and Ezaz, 2012). Besides, when branding to Muslims, spiritual needs of the target Muslim consumers should be taken in consideration. Hence, Marketers should not underestimate the importance of religion as it is the key element of culture that affects every aspect of the society and regulates people's life (Fam et al., 2004). As for Muslims, all actions are integrated together, either pleasing or displeasing Allah, and therefore they are very careful about what, when, how, where, how much and from whom to consume (Alserhan, 2010). Moreover, McDaniel and Burnett (1990) defined religiosity (degree of being religious) as a belief in God, the commitment to follow principles set by God, and having an influence on both human behavior and attitudes in a positive way (Weaver and Agle, 2002). Whereas, researchers showed that the degree of religiosity is a better indicator than religion when it comes to individual's consumption behavior (Fam et al., 2010).



It is important to understand that products that are considered to be Haram will be controversial when promoted in a Muslim society. Since that many countries in Islamic world, including Egypt, have established their legal framework based on sharia laws, and the implementation of sharia law influences the consumption behavior of Muslim societies (Fam et al., 2010). These laws can impede the promotion, sales and consumption of certain products. As a result, the traditional banking, alcohol-based products and gambling businesses face deep repercussion in countries follow sharia laws. While, Islamic banking, Halal food, Halal logo certification are some examples that boom under Sharia law (Zakaria and Abdul-Talib, 2010). They added that Muslims are not allowed to drink alcoholic drinks or eat pork, gamble and nudity are prohibited. Moreover, conformation to sexual codes and adultery is strictly prohibited.

Thus understanding the attitudes of Muslims towards offensive advertising can be used to help advertising agencies develop a better understanding of which products and advertising manners are perceived to be offensive. Despite the evidence that the religion has an effect on social behavior (Erdogan et al., 2004), there is a little literature on the effects of religious beliefs on the advertising of offensive products. Therefore, this study intends to examine to what extent the offensiveness of the advertising used in this study was caused by religious commitments and the intensity of religion (Religiosity). In addition, determining what most often makes an



advertising being offensive in the eyes of the Egyptian Muslim consumer, by comparing the impact of the two types of offensive advertising (offensive advertising product/ offensive advertising execution) on Muslims' responses.

1.3 Pilot Study:

A pilot study¹ was implemented to investigate the main problem of this study and to ensure its importance. In addition, to investigate whether there is any problem related to the questionnaire that will be distributed later on (to ensure the structure of the questionnaire, language as well as length and time needed to fill out the questionnaire). The pilot study was applied on post graduate students using non-probability sampling technique (Convenience and Judgmental)². The questionnaire took approximately ten minutes to be filled after respondents had watched several types of offensive advertising. The pilot study was applied on certain advertisements which researcher recognized that it had negative reviews on YouTube and negative posts on Facebook. The offensive advertising (product) used in the pilot study were: AlwaysTM, CottonilTM and Easy sweetTM. While, offensive advertising (execution) used in the pilot study were: BirellTM, TigerTM and Ali café TM. The questionnaire was administrated in a classroom environment. Respondents had to indicate their attitude on a five-point scale, where 1 means strongly

(1) Further information in Appendix 1 titled "Pilot Quantitative Instrument"

(2) Further information in Chapter Six (Research Methodology and Design)



disagree and 5 means strongly agree. The questionnaire included questions related to measuring religiosity degree, attitude toward the advertising and purchase intention.

After conducting the pilot study on twenty five post graduate students, the researcher found that: *First*, some advertisements were seen more offensive than the other advertisements, as it was obvious from the answers of question 5 and question 6 that Birell™ and Always™ were perceived to be the most offensive advertisements compared to the other advertisements, as 84% of respondents answered question 5 with (women pads), while 76% of respondents answered question 6 with (Birell™). *Second*, not all advertisements used offensive execution styles were perceived as offensive ads. Since, the advertising of Ali café ™ was perceived as funny and interesting advertising. *Third*, respondents with high religiosity level were extremely offended from the advertisements and may not have intention to buy the product in the offensive advertisements. *Fourth*, respondents with moderate and low level of religiosity were either neutral or slightly offended by both types of offensive advertisements but may have an intention to buy the product in the offensive advertisements. *Finally*, the researcher found that the respondents had some linguistic concerns for the purchase intention scale; consequently, the researcher replaced the purchase intention scale



used in the pilot study with another one used later on³. Besides, some demographic questions were added.

1.4 Research Problem:

Some advertising agencies use offensive advertising trying to gain consumers' attention, knowing very little about consumers' response toward this type of advertising (Dahlet al., 2003. Offensive advertising issue has been raised in western countries (Wilson and West, 1981; Rehman and Brooks, 1987; shao, 1993; Fahy et al., 1995; Barnes and Doston, 1990; Crosier and Erdogan, 2001). On the other hand, Eastern countries did not receive much attention from researchers regarding this topic. Thus, there is an academic gap in the literature of understanding the effects of religious commitment on consumer response toward offensive advertising in Eastern Muslim countries. Since that, some practitioners do not differentiate between the term religion in general and religiosity level, however, studies showed that religiosity is a better indicator than religion (Fam et al., 2010). Hence an application of this topic can be adopted to study an Eastern country such as Egypt.

Accordingly, the research problems could be summarized as follows:

1. Practitioners use offensive advertisements knowing very little about consumers' response toward offensive advertisements.

(3) Further information in Appendix 2 titled "Final Quantitative Instrument".



2. Marketers underestimate the importance of cultural values which affect every aspect of the society, specifically from Muslim perspective who involves one of the major consumer markets worldwide.
3. Religion in general is not an accurate indicator for the consumers' responses; instead, marketers should take religiosity level in consideration.
4. There is an academic gap in the literature of understanding the impact of religious commitment on consumer response toward offensive advertising in Eastern countries.

1.5 Research Questions:

After conducting the pilot study and stating the research problems, some questions could be raised as follows:

1. Does religiosity has an impact on Egyptian Muslim attitude toward offensive advertising?
2. Does religiosity has an impact on Egyptian Muslim purchase intention toward product using offensive advertising?
3. What most often makes an advertising being offensive from Egyptian Muslim point of view?
4. Do Egyptian Muslim consumers with high religiosity level have the same response toward offensive advertising compared with those with low religiosity level?



5. Is gender considered as a significant covariate in Muslims' response to offensive advertising?

1.6 Research Objective:

Based on the problem discussed above, the main purpose of this study is to bring light and to gain a better understanding of how Muslim consumer perceive using offensive advertising in TV commercials, and whether they will have intention to buy the product in the offensive advertising or not. Thus, this research tries to investigate the relationship between religiosity and Muslim response toward offensive advertising in Egypt. Focusing on how this type of advertising will shape their attitude toward the ads and affecting their purchase intention toward the product used in the offensive advertising. In addition to, determining what most often makes an advertising being offensive Egyptian Muslim consumer's point of view; by comparing the impact of the two types of offensive advertising on Muslims' response. Finally, determine the relationship between religiosity level (High/low) and the different responses toward offensive advertising used in this study.

Hence, this study attempts to achieve the following objectives:

1. Investigate the role of religiosity on Egyptian Muslim attitude toward T.V. commercial using offensive advertising.
2. Inspect the impact of religiosity on Egyptian Muslim purchase intention toward product using offensive advertising.



3. Explore the major reason that makes an advertising being offensive from the Egyptian Muslim audience point of view.
4. Find out the difference in response between Muslim consumers with high religiosity level and those with low religiosity level toward offensive advertising.
5. Determine the different responses of Egyptian Muslims toward offensive advertising based on their gender (male, female)

1.7 Research Hypotheses:

From the above discussion, several hypotheses were developed as follows:

H1: Religiosity has a significant effect on Muslim attitude toward the TV commercial using offensive advertising.

H1a: Religiosity has a significant effect on Muslim attitude toward the TV commercial using offensive advertising (product)

H1b: Religiosity has a significant effect on Muslim attitude toward the TV commercial using offensive advertising (execution)



H2: Religiosity has a significant effect on Muslim purchase intention toward the product using offensive advertising (product/execution).

H2a: Religiosity has a significant effect on Muslim purchase intention toward the product using offensive advertising (product)

H2b: Religiosity has a significant effect on Muslim purchase intention toward the product using offensive advertising (execution)

H3: Offensive advertising (execution) is perceived by Muslims as being more controversial than offensive advertising (product)

H4: Muslim consumer with High religiosity level may have a different **response** toward offensive advertising compared with Muslims with low religiosity level.

H4a: Muslim consumer with high level of religiosity will be **more offended** toward offensive advertising than Muslim consumer with low level of religiosity.

H4a1: Muslim consumer with high level of religiosity will be more offended toward offensive advertising **Product** than Muslim consumer with low level of religiosity



H4a2: Muslim consumer with high level of religiosity will be more offended toward offensive advertising **Execution** than Muslim consumer with low level of religiosity

H4b: Muslim consumer with high level of religiosity will have **less intention to buy** the product used offensive advertising than Muslim consumer with low level of religiosity.

H4b1: Muslim consumer with high level of religiosity will have less intention to buy the product used offensive advertising **Product** than Muslim consumer with low level of religiosity.

H4b2: Muslim consumer with high level of religiosity will have less intention to buy the product used offensive advertising **Execution** than Muslim consumer with low level of religiosity.

H5: Gender will be a significant covariate in Muslim consumer response toward offensive advertising

H5a: Muslim female consumers will be more offended toward offensive advertising than Muslim male consumers



H5a1: Muslim female consumers will be more offended toward offensive advertising product than Muslim male consumers

H5a2: Muslim female consumers will be more offended toward offensive advertising execution than Muslim male consumers

H5b: Muslim female consumers will have less intention to buy the product used offensive advertising than Muslim male consumers

H5b1: Muslim female consumers will have less intention to buy the product used offensive advertising product than Muslim male consumers

H5b2: Muslim female consumers will have less intention to buy the product used offensive advertising execution than Muslim male consumers.

1.8 Conceptual Model of the Thesis:

A mapping of the selected hypotheses is demonstrated below in the following conceptual model (Figure 1.1)

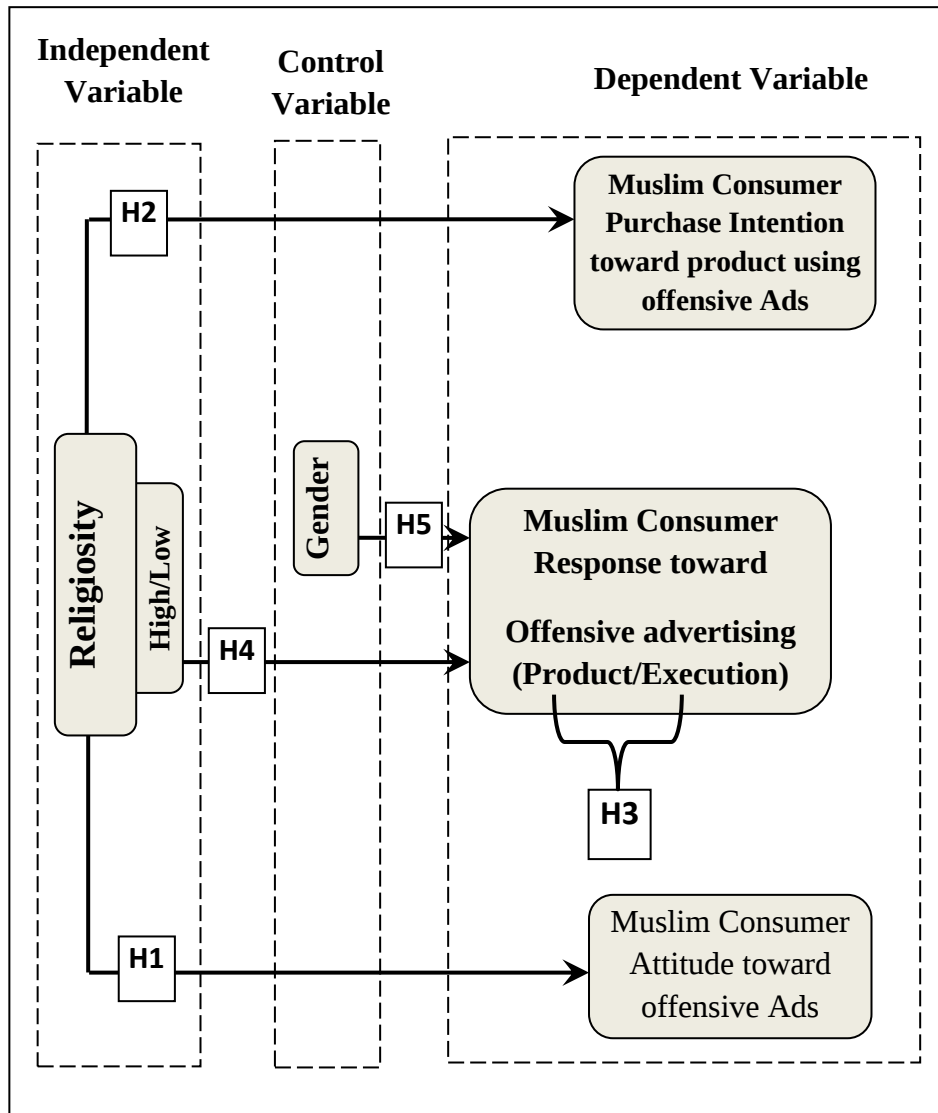


Figure 1.1 Conceptual Model of the Thesis.

*Source: Developed by Researcher.



1.9 Research Methodology and Samples:

The current research followed the positivist paradigm that is associated with the quantitative method; which seeks the facts and causes of social phenomena, using causal research method. Moreover, the current research was applied on the Egyptian Muslim consumers in great Cairo, targeting both males and females. The study was applied on postgraduate students in both public and private universities. Whereas, the sample size, 465 samples were selected to be tested. The researcher used *non-probability sampling* technique, i.e. convenience, judgmental and quota techniques to select the needed samples.⁴

1.10 Research Importance:

This study is of utmost value for both customers and business organizations, as it will help marketers in reevaluating their techniques used in advertising and adapt to trends ethically and culturally accepted and preferred by customers, taking religiosity in consideration. Since that religion is an integral part of culture, influencing marketers to investigate its role in consumption world, specifically in marketing activities (Cornwell et al., 2005).

In addition, this study will help marketers to understand the response of Muslim consumers, who involves one of the major

(4) Further information about population and sampling is provided in chapter six (Research methodology and Design)