

**Insights for Consumer Behaviour in Global Marketing:  
an Islamic and Christian comparison in Cyprus**

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## **Purpose Of the Research Project**

This research project is to investigate the ethical considerations that are important to consumer when advertising into countries where the market has mixed religious and secular moral traditions. In particular we are investigating what advice to client companies regarding marketing ethical sensitivities for Muslim customers within a predominately Judeo-Christian culture.

## **Expected Results and Conclusions**

To investigate the deeper, difference, if any, between the Islamic and Christian in respect to the offensiveness of the execution of the promotional material and to link this to religious affiliation, temporality orientation, and polychronicity.

## **Key Words**

Perceptual Differences, Advertising, Religion, Culture

## **Overview**

Europe's Muslims are, to a large extent, differentiated by their cultural and ethno-national background and not the assumed 'some idea of a homogenous unity of Islam based on its singularity (10% being Shiites for instance). The presence of Muslims in Europe 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). This leads to the Muslim communities of Europe to exhibit a variety of ethnic, linguistic and cultural characteristics, and to have multiple networks with major other regions of the Islamic world. In this respect the influence of Islam in Europe is growing.

Cyprus is a micro socio-political system in Europe where two religious and ethnically different communities are situated on one island in the Eastern Mediterranean with a rich heritage of faiths and ideologies, which is currently separated along these lines since the invasion by Turkey in 1974. The communities in the North are Turkish and Turkish Cypriot (mainly Muslim) and in the South are Greek Cypriots and Greek (mainly Orthodox Christian). Although there are various forms of censorship of the media, for the most part marketing communications transcend them. The context for this study is two English speaking universities one on either side of what has become known as the 'Green line' that divides the island. This paper takes advantage of this closeness of otherness to study how controversial products and forms of offensive advertising executions can be related to levels of religiousness, time usage and temporality. The resulting observations are then offered as insights into the notion of ethics of the two religious groups and how these might influence marketing to multicultural communities.

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## 1. Background

Europe's Muslims are, to a large extent, differentiated by their cultural and ethno-national background and not the assumed 'some idea of a homogenous unity of Islam based on its singularity (10% being Shiites for instance). The presence of Muslims in Europe 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). This leads to the Muslim communities of Europe to exhibit a variety of ethnic, linguistic and cultural characteristics, and to have multiple networks with major other regions of the Islamic world. In this respect the influence of Islam in Europe is growing. The number of Muslims in the European Union is difficult to estimate, since according to the European Commission no such figures are available so the figure of approximately 15 million Muslims in Europe quoted by Buijs and Rath and attributed to Maréchal, of is the closest current estimate.

Cyprus is a micro socio-political system in Europe where two religious and ethnically different communities are situated on one island in the Eastern Mediterranean with a rich heritage of faiths and ideologies, which is currently separated along these lines since the invasion by Turkey in 1974. The communities in the North are Turkish and Turkish Cypriot (mainly Muslim) and in the South are Greek Cypriots and Greek (mainly Orthodox Christian). Although there are various forms of censorship of the media, for the most part marketing communications transcend them. The context for this study is two English speaking universities one on either side of what has become known as the 'Green line' that divides the island. This paper takes advantage of this closeness of otherness to study how controversial products and forms of offensive advertising executions can be related to levels of religiousness, time usage and temporality. The resulting observations are then offered as insights into the notion of ethics of the two religious groups and how these might influence marketing to multicultural communities.

## 2. Introduction

This paper proposes linkages that have a sound theoretical basis and could reveal more essential differences in the two communities that surface changes in marketing executions may fail to accommodate. 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 established (Delener, 1994, Kennedy and Lawton, 1998, Longenecker *et al*, 2004 (business ethic), 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 has a scarcity of 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 religion affinity alone cannot achieve.

## 3. Theoretical position

For human beings, time is the primary meaning of being; time forms the horizon in which beings are understood by themselves and others (see Levinas<sup>1</sup>, 1997 and Heidegger, 1962). Conceptualised through the lens of sociology or consumer behaviour the notion of a personal temporality entrapped by (McGrath 1988), and defining culture through its rituals, 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

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<sup>1</sup> Levinas links religiousness and the eternal by stating, 'Everyday life is a preoccupation with salvation (1997:58).

Islamic tradition is not temporal in this way<sup>2</sup>. Human temporality—the human awareness of time and temporal orientation—is intimately connected with human ethical concern. 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 Islamic 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. Values, according to this point of view ought not to change over time.

The value of beings, the value of any being in time, is intimately connected with the human capacity to hold past, present, and future together in a coherent whole. In Heidegger's language, "temporality reveals itself as the meaning of authentic care" (1962:374). Ethics and the ground of ethics within Being itself merge through the actualised practice of ethical being in the world, directly linked to the transformation of the 'reflective' person whose being and actions reflect the distillation and refinement of in-dwelling *ēthos*. Thus arises the praxis of searching and researching the essence of the consumer for the advancement of humanity, privileging nobody and manipulating nothing. Therefore, in a Heideggerian context, the notion of ethical theory is problematic if it is divorced from the 'praxis' of caring for all things emerging and presupposing a transformation of being-itself. This is an ontological development that transcends the ontic to lead the person in his or her development as their being. In this transformation the personal relationship has changed from one using ethical methodology to hold apart the relative positions of subject and object through a traditional notion of ethics, to an understanding of *ēthos*, merging in the process of transformation within the unitary, pre-ontological ground of care, presencing, opening, dwelling as the fulfilled essential nature of the caring human being<sup>3</sup>.

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 (*Koran*: 7:172). The very notion of faith, *Islam* (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

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<sup>2</sup> Heidegger 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 (2002:4-7).

<sup>3</sup> For a fuller discussion see Gibbs and Michaelides (accepted European Journal of Business Ethics)

results in a linear or cyclical conception of temporality, but an eternal present that always carries with it the possibility of surrender to God (*Islam*).

Moreover, the notion of time usage is explored by Hall (1977) 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, explicit, verbally-communicated messages are emphasized, as is punctuality and adherence to schedules and monochronicity 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 where religion is less identified as being and more with acting. Indeed it is proposed that polychronicity ought to be higher in the ontologically more essential Islamic faith than in the Christianity.

#### **4. A Notion of a Secular Market and Islam**

Before embarking on a discussion of methodology I want to divert to conceptualize the notion of Islam. I take for granted an understanding of the other theistic tradition - Christianity - and its acceptance of a self-interest and notion of the market gaining its genius from Smith's *Wealth of Nations*. I argue here (as does Sauer, 1999), that the application of the moral prescriptions of religious texts to economic transactions are considered in Christian and secular societies as putting 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)

However, such an accommodation between secular self-interest and Christian benevolence is not possible in an Islamic metaphysics where the notion of being is interactive rather than substantive. Thus the understanding of the world focuses on the relations of things rather than their nature or essence. What a thing is, is framed by its relationships in processes not 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 also framed its functions and purpose. God's revelation as law and word govern the created order, and human activity must be ordered to the universe, i.e. to divine reality or order. At the core of the different world view of Islam 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). Ethicizing marketing is a concept where, in the



Islamic political economy the notion of ethics gets “induced on the consumption, production and distribution sides” (Choudhury, 2000a: 26) in the market model, thus increasing the social levels of market interaction.

Compared to secular notions of positivism, rationalism and Cartesian separation of transcendental and the immanent futures, these differences are most evident in a reality that seeks societal and collaboration goals (Saeed et al, 2001) rather than self-orientated and competitive ones. The most often quoted justification for this Islamic position 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 incommensurable with the notion of the market as commonly interpreted in capitalist states. By adopting a capitalistic market’s epistemology of deconstruction a specific ontology is revealed related to this epistemological stance and given the growing hegemony of the capitalistic neo-liberal model obscures any other truths claims that might be made. By applying an epistemological approach based on a secular market to Islamic consumers is but to cherry pick particular manifestations of an ideology to entrap another. Where the ideology is robust, complex and unified such an approach risks that those who devoutly identify with the target ideology will see the epistemological fraud and view it as bad faith towards Islam. The alternative approach to cherry picking requires an understanding of the phenomenological ontology of being a Muslim and how that constructs the nature of being. For instance in the notion *Isfar*, waste is deeply related to the whole economic system so that images of waste removed from advertising do 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 the supplier or the purchaser. In this sense the market mechanism in Islam is itself morality rather than by being excepted from or structured to appease ethical concerns.

Interpreted in term of an Islamic 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 advertising is then an act impeding the fair flow of resources for the common good. Such advertising seeks for all to be best informed and where an undue claim by some on the resources (whose ultimate owner is God) is inappropriate, as man is trustee for its good and fair use. Marketing thus seeks to satisfy customer need within his spiritual and physical well-being. The contrast is illustrated in the difference between the self-interested notion of buyer beware and the Islamic obligation to dealer all information in a sales transaction. These Islamic 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 and Harahap, 2003 ) and are similar to the view 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, and Marta *et al*, 2004) who have addressed the notion of Islam in the marketing ethics literature have had relatively little concern for the epistemological position of the ideology and have chosen and 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.

## **5. Research hypotheses and method**

The exploratory approach taken in this project is an attempt to overcome the superficial, and investigate the deeper, difference, if any, between the Islamic and Christian in respect to the offensiveness of the execution of the promotional material and to link this to religious affiliation, temporality orientation, and use of time – polychronicity. In doing this the following hypotheses are tested:

1. That there would be commonality in level of offence of product and service and their execution in a sample of students living in close proximity exposed to the same media outlets, local and international (MTV) and that this will be fairly low.
2. That in Cyprus religious intensity would be expressed to be higher in the Christian Greek Cypriots than in Islamic Turkish Cypriots because of the emphasis in Turkey on secularism and EU entry.
3. That Islamic students would be more offended by the execution of advertising as Islam has an ontological quality that the pluralistic personal representation of Christianity does not require.
4. That polychronicity would be high in both communities given their high context cultures but that for those with high levels of faith, polychronicity would be stronger.

5. That both communities would share a forward looking orientation but that religious intensity would lean more towards the past, for its orientation would more reflect the truths revealed through the historic Holy texts which would direct the temporal orientation.
6. That religious intensity, polychronicity and past temporality would be related to high level of offence regardless of religious affiliation.

## 6. Method

The findings are based on a small-scale survey of 530 students (211 Christians, 302 Muslims and 18 undeclared) who responded to a questionnaire<sup>4</sup> distributed at two privately owned, English speaking institutions, one in the North and one in the South part of Cyprus. Students were taking courses as part of their undergraduate degrees. The questionnaire consisted of a number of 5 point Likert scales, designed to reveal offensiveness of products/services, images used in marketing to promote products/service, level of polychronicity and levels of faith. In addition data was collected on declared religious affiliation age, sex and resident city. A non-probability sampling method was used. The students were surveyed in classrooms not part of the research team teaching schedule. The respondents voluntarily participated with no pressure, penalty or reward used for those who did or did not wish to do so. The data was analyzed using the SPSS package. Frequencies, cross-tabulations and Chi-squared tests were used for ordinal relationships relating to temporal orientation and ANOVA and t-tests were where used for nominal data.

To investigate the hypotheses various published instruments were used which were based on the subjects' reaction to controversial products<sup>5</sup> and their religious intensity (Fam, *et al* 2004, Williams *et al* 2005<sup>6</sup>), their temporal orientation (Trompenaars, 1993) and their use of time (Lindquist *et al*, 2001)<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix 1

<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> 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 Islamic countries.

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

## 7. Results

### 7.1. General characteristics of the two groups

For both groups the average levels on all attributes relating to products and services were at or below the mid-point of the scales used and the Islamic students tended to be more offended on the majority of the attributes. Table 1 shows the products/services and offensiveness of image use for both groups using an average of mid-point of the scale (3) or above for inclusion listed in descending order of average score.

**Table 1.** Average levels of offensiveness (5 = extremely offensive)

	Islamic Students	Christian Students
<b>Product/Service</b> (mean)	Racially Extreme Groups (3.21)	Racially Extreme Groups (3.17)
<b>Offensive images</b> (mean)	Racist images (3.44)	Racist images (3.56)
	Stereotypes (3.25)	Violence (3.37)
	Sexist images (3.24)	Sexist images (3.28)
	Immorality (3.18)	Immorality (3.20)
	Indecent languages (3.18)	Stereotypes (3.10)
	Violence (3.18)	Antisocial behaviour (3.06)
	Anti-social behaviour (3.15)	
	Hard sell (3.09)	
	To personal subject (3.08)	

As can be seen the main offending products/services and images are the same for both groups, However, when an Independent T test was performed on the whole group using religious affiliation as the independent variable, the results showed significant difference in a number of product groups and offensive images (significance is at the 5% level or below). Given the range of products and services that includes guns and armament it is interesting to consider the similarity in choices and those products which are commonly absent. (Perhaps most surprising is the inclusion of Gambling at the 0.05 level but in the North Casinos are legal whereas in the South they are not.) Indeed given the nature of the Islamic faith, hard selling with its potential to deceive was a predictable point of divergence for a capitalistic tradition, moreover most of the difference between the groups' views on the products and service discrimination would appear – see the guidance for advertising, Gulf Media International W.L.L. (Bahrain Code of acceptance) in Rice and Al-Mossawi, 2002.

**Table 2.** Significant difference is level of offensiveness between the two Groups

Products/Services	Religious affiliation (Significance level)	Reasons for offence (Significance level)	Religious affiliation
Alcoholic products	More offensive for Muslims (0.01)	Hard sell	More offensive for Muslims (0.01)
Charities/fund raising	More offensive for Muslims (0.01)	Indecent Language	More offensive for Muslims (0.01)
Cigarettes/tobacco	More offensive for Muslims (0.01)		
Gambling	More offensive for Muslims (0.05)		
Funerals	More offensive for Muslims (0.05)		
Male underwear	More offensive for Muslims (0.01)		
Pharmaceuticals	More offensive for Muslims (0.02)		

Furthermore, the two religious groups were significantly different (0.01 level) on levels of faith with the Christian indicating a higher level of faith.

## **7.2. Religion and level of faith**

Comparing the means the level of religious intensity it was the Islamic groups (3.01 compared to 2.67) that had the highest, and significantly so scores (at 0.02) than the Moslems. The relationship between religion, ethical inclination, temporality and declared intensity is problematic from these results. An ANOVA with dependent variable level of religious faith revealed significant difference at the 0.01 level for religion, polychronicity and level of religious faith but on further investigation of the two groups this was found only to apply to the Islamic group with no relationship found in the Christian students.

An ANOVA was used on the separate grouping of religious affinity and the result indicated that for Christians intensity had very little discrimination on product/service (condoms were the only significant difference) and similarly a small discrimination on images differently only on nudity and stereotyping. Whereas for the Moslem group level of religious faith significantly distinguished within the groups those who found cigarettes, gambling political parties and racial extremism. Furthermore, all the images variables were differentiated by level of faith. Clearly level of stated faith is a more significant for the Moslem group in this project than for the Christian in regard to stimuli presented.

To investigate further a new variable bipolar ‘intensity’ was constructed from the level of religious faith to act as a proxy for intensity<sup>8</sup> (higher declared level of religious intensity). This was then used as the independent variable in a series of Independent T test on the two religious groups. The religious intra-group relationships using intensity revealed significance difference of attitude towards the products, service and form of execution, with those with the higher expressed level of faith being more offended. For the Christians respondents specifically concerning condoms, female underwear, sexual diseases and in respect to images, nudity, sexual stereotypical images, whereas overall for the Islamic students there was little a significant differentiation between those students who were more offended by the images and those who were not and their level of religious intensity. It occurred in the product groupings of charities, personal topics. This seems to imply that the Islamic students were general more offended regardless of the intensity of their faith whereas great offence was associated with higher levels of faith. Indeed the 28.7% of muslims and 41.75 of Christian declaimed themselves of high level of faith.

### **7.3. *Ethical inclination***

In light of these results above a further variable was constructed from the 10 potentially offensive images above to create an index to discriminate those less inclined to be morally offended by the images used in promoting the product/service and those more inclined. This was called ‘ethical inclination’ and those with an aggregate score of 30 (the mid-point 3) or less on the above cluster of reasons for offensive imaginary were termed less ethically inclined in his context than those who scored above 30. This new index showed no significant difference between the two religions but did significantly, (0.01 level) all the product/service groups excepting women’s underwear and sexually transmitted diseases..

Furthermore, using the raw score of ethical inclination, and religion a significant correlation at the 0.01 level were revealed. Intra-group analysis shows that this correlation is due to a strong and highly significant Islamic correlation and no significant relation for Christian.

### **7.4. *Time usage and Temporality***

The levels of polychronicity were calculated using the PAI3 (Lindquist *et al*, 2001) instrument which required recoding and aggregating the scores of the three questions that made up the PAI3, each of

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<sup>8</sup> The Waller *et al* (2005) clustering of the raw intensity score were used where those scoring 3 or under are low intensity

which was calibrated on a five part Likert scale. A score of above 9 indicated a tendency towards polychronicity. The low levels of polychronicity in both communities is a surprising results given the high levels of context of these communities yet the similarities between the two group is interesting should they hold the same common or distinctively different values.

**Table 3.** Inclination towards Polychronicity

Percentage with tendency towards polychronicity, (scoring over the mid-point aggregate of 9		
Combined group	Islamic	Orthodox Christian
39.7	39.5	39

An independent T test was performed on the whole group using the tendency scores of polychronicity. This showed there were no significant difference between religious groups, on levels of religious faith. Only gambling revealed a significant difference between the groups.

Regarding temporal orientation the group overall held 34.7% future orientation, 13.2% present, 22% past, 13.9% showed no preference and 16% gave no response. The data for temporal orientation were collected differently from the other nominal data. The students were asked to draw circles of different sizes to represent primary temporal orientation. These were then coded independently by two assistants and allocated to one of four groups: future, present, past or balanced. The ordinal nature of this data was analysed on the basis of frequencies with the other variables, specifically; ethical inclination, religious application, polychronicity and religious intensity. A series of Chi-squared tests performed on these variables for the whole and for the two religious groups indicated significant associations between the variables.

The nature of this association is difficult to ascertain but by inspection of the cross-tabulation the relationships appears to be that those with higher ethical inclination are more past orientated than with who were less inclined, those who were polychromatic were more balanced in their temporal outlook and Moslems are slightly more past orientation. This is assumed as those who score higher on these variables were more inclined to a past orientation than those who score less highly. However, in all cases the dominant orientation was future. A Kruskal-Wallis Test on variables faith, ethical and religious intensity showed there to be no significant difference between the groups regarding their temporal orientation

## 8. Ethical inclination religious intensity and time use

A correlation matrix for each group showed there to be no significant relationship between raw score on ethical inclination, polychronicity and intensity for the Christian group. However, for Islamic students a positive and highly significant correlation was found between ethical inclination and the level of religious faith (0.01) and ethical inclination and polychronicity (0.02). This seems to support the notion that intensity, polychronicity and ethical inclination might be caused by the higher context nature of an Islamic ontology theorised earlier in the paper.

## 9. Discussion

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 Islamic students were more sensitive to moral offence although, overall the group was insensitive. This may well be a reflection on the cultural similarity of the two groups in Cyprus and be more indicative of issues related to a more integrated European context.

Furthermore the higher intensity scores were a good discriminator of a high level of potential offensiveness of images regardless of the faith of the respondent. This seems to indicate that intensity and faith are distinctive attributes. This finding is support by the early study of McNichols and Zimmerer (1985:180) who found, in American students, evidence to suggest that the “strength of religious belief affects individual opinion of what is [ethically] acceptable”, (parenthesis inserted). The study’s finding is indicative and offers partial support for Hypothesis 2 in that the Christian expressed, higher levels of faith (although they we less sensitive to offensive images and products/services) perhaps because of the secular nature of the Turkish state and commerce as supported through anecdotal evidence<sup>9</sup>.

The separate analysis of the two groups showed that both scored low levels of offence for product/service and images (see Table 1 & 2) the Islamic students where, on the whole, more sensitive to these issues and this offers support to Hypothesis 1 and 3. These results in the most part confirm work

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<sup>9</sup> Letter received from the CEO of Doğan Group in response to this question, “Turkey, whose population happens to be predominantly Muslim, is a secular, democratic state governed by the rule of law. Our national values do not differ from those of other secular, democratic and constitutional states around the world. Therefore I see no assistance to your research in answering your questionnaire. I wish you all the best”. 16.3.2005



previously undertaken and support the proposition that advertising and marketing issue can be tailored to the specific needs of the two faiths for the majority.

Overall the levels of polychronicity (compared to Lindquist *et al*, 2001 for instance) do not support the notion that the two communities are high context. There was evidence that intensity and polychronicity are correlated so the evidence fails to support the first part of Hypothesis 4 although the second part is supported. Indeed this might point to the greater ontological nature of context for those holding higher levels of faith. Hypothesis 4 is considered partially supported.

The theorised relationship between temporal orientation and ethical inclination and religious intensity articulated in Hypothesis 5 received partial support. This association may be a function of the instrument, the coding or the student ability to respond so the result should be treated with care. However, should it subsequently prove that the association is robust then the importance of temporality in consumer ethical inclination the images used to promote products and services might prove to be of benefit to marketers.

The indicative relation between polychronicity, religious intensity and ethical inclination found in the Islamic students but absent from the Christian student points towards support for Hypothesis 6. The finding offers only partial support, since the cause of the relationship is only theorised and no empirical evidence is yet offered.

Finally, the temporality issue is exciting in that it does tend to offer a link between intensity, ethical inclination and polychronicity. 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. If this is true then, at least, for the more ethically inclined and religiously intense, assumptions about their world view based on superficial engagement with a world of transferable images would be problematic to achieve positive reactions. 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 for little need for charge other than the superficial issue 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.

## **10. 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) that multi-cultural groups will tend to

more liberal in its rules so as “maintain social and cultural harmony between the various groups” (2005:10) Further support for this position comes from Mike Longhurst<sup>10</sup>, 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 Islamic and Christian student Cypriots living in adjoining regimes, even given their ideological and political differences. Yet, I feel there is a deeper issue that the data points towards but fails conclusively to reveal. That is the primordial notion of temporality and its association to the self-expression of religious intensity and ethical inclination. The survey did reveal that Islamic students and Christian students see many things the same, 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). However, taken as a whole the outcomes of this research points towards Islamic students being more sensitive to ethical issues and Christians declare themselves more religious 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.

The theorised concern with temporality proved to be significant in association with ethical inclination, polychronicity and religious intensity. The indication that an association might be linked to a past rather than the dominant future orientation does raise some issue 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. However, images that are based on traditional values which are then respectfully used as a trajectory into the future would seem to have an appeal to, and better accommodate, those with self declared high levels of faith. Indeed it might be possible to conjecture that ethically positive activity with a positive forward-looking orientation is the least likely to offend modern Islamic and Christian students.

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<sup>10</sup> I am grateful for this personal communication

The limitation of this study is that the participants were students of two private institutions with similar socioeconomic background. The sample size however is limited and that's why we consider it is considered exploratory and not conclusive research.

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**Table 1** Brief comparison between Christian and Islamic Related Business Ethics

TOPIC	CHRISTIAN <sup>11</sup>	ISLAMIC <sup>12</sup>
Moral criteria in economic decisions	‘For the Lord is righteous, he loves righteous deeds; the upright shall behold his face (Ps 11.7)	The truthful honest trader will be with prophets, pious/ men and martyrs (Tirmithi, p. 42)
Wealth	He who trusts in his riches will wither, but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf (Prv. 11.28)	Your worldly riches are transitory, but God’s reward is everlasting (K. 16.91)
Content	Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire an covetousness, which is idolatry’, (Col. 3.5)	If God prohibits something, He prohibits it price (Ahmad and Abu Dawud, p87)
Honesty	A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is his delight (Prv. 11.1)	If one sells something, he must clarify its defects. And if anyone knows these defects, he must mention them (Hakim and Baihaqi, p. 89)

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<sup>11</sup> Examples taken from Elegido (2003)

<sup>12</sup> Pages refer to Alkhull 1991 and ‘K’ to the Koran.



## APPENDIX

### Controversial Advertising Survey

1. Below is a list of products and services whose advertisements have been known to offend some people. To what extent do advertisements of the following products offend **you**? Where 1 means that you find it not at all offensive and 5 means that you find it extremely offensive. Please just tick  
( ✓ ) one box per product indicating your feelings towards the advertising of the products and service.

	Not at all Offensive				Extremely Offensive
Product	1	2	3	4	5
Alcoholic products					
Charities/Fund raising					
Cigarettes/tobacco					
Condoms					
Female Contraceptives					
Female Underwear					
Feminine Hygiene Products					
Funeral Services					
Gambling					
Guns & Armaments					
Male Underwear					
Pharmaceuticals					
Political Parties					
Racial Extremist Groups					
Religious Denominations					
Sexual Diseases(AIDS,STDs)					
Weight Loss Programs					
Other					



2. Below is a list of reasons why advertisements for various products/services/ideas have been known to offend people. To what extent are the following, reasons why the advertisements offend **you**. Where 1 means you find them inoffensive and 5 means you find them extremely offensive.

	Not at all Offensive				Extremely Offensive
Reasons of Offence	1	2	3	4	5
Immoral					
Anti social behavior					
Concern for Children					
Hard Sell					
Health and Safety Issues					
Indecent Language					
Nudity					
Racist Images					
Sexist Images					
Stereotyping of People					
Subject too personal					
Violence					
Western Images (US)					
Other					

3. Below are three questions about how we prefer to use our time. Where 1 means you find strongly disagree with the statement and 5 means strongly agree.

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>				<b>Strongly Agree</b>
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
I do <b>not</b> like to juggle several activities at the same time					
People should <b>not</b> try to do many things at once					
I <b>am</b> comfortable doing several things at the same time					

## DEMOGRAPHICS

4. Religion:.....

5. How would you characterize your level of religious faith/belief?

<b>Not a devout follower</b>				<b>A devout religious follower</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

6. Your Present Age: .....

7. Your Gender: Male  
Female

8. City you presently live: .....