

Impact of faith on food marketing and consumer behaviour: a review

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Abstract

Purpose – The aim of this manuscript is to study the current scientific literature on food marketing and religion, by giving an overview of current knowledge and the possible future research opportunities once found the gaps.

Design/methodology/approach – This a classic literature review carried on by considering marketing, consumer behaviour and management journals as well as religion-focused ones.

Findings – Current literature highlights how faith impacts on food marketing and religious consumers choices (and not only). Most of the papers focus on Islam. Considering the globalised economy, the authors' findings highlight also the relevance of religious certifications for less/not religious people, because of certified food is considered safe and healthy.

Originality/value – The paper joins and reviews two research fields whose connection is growing, so it is relevant to know the current status of scientific literature, which is updated compared to recent literature.

Keywords Religion, Food, Marketing, Consumer behaviour, Review

Paper type Literature review

Introduction

Culture plays a relevant role to affect consumer behaviour (Mennell *et al.*, 1992), in particular individuals with the same culture share language, pattern instruction, imitation and values (Nayeem, 2012), as evident in the differences between collectivist and individualist societies (Czarnecka and Schivinski, 2022; Serravalle *et al.*, 2022). Religion, in particular, is part of culture and may also shape it by influencing emotions, cognitions and actions (Saroglou, 2014; Saroglou and Cohen, 2011; Cohen, 2009). Research has highlighted the role of religion as a force to drive consumer behaviours (Delener, 1994; Essoo and Dibb, 2004; Arli and Pekerti, 2017; Minton *et al.*, 2015). By the way, Arli and Pekerti (2017) compared religious and non-religious consumers, finding that the first ones are more conditioned by idealism and have stronger ethical beliefs compared to non-religious consumers: similarly Vitell *et al.* (2005), Vitell (2009) and Agarwala *et al.* (2019) connect faith and the attitude towards ethics and materialism and Babakus *et al.* (2004) reveal that religion is a predictor of consumer ethical perception.

The role of religion is furthermore evident with regards to consumers' food preferences (Heiman *et al.*, 2019; Mohd Suki and Mohd Suki, 2015; Eric Amuquandoh and Asafo-Adjei,



2013; Pettinger *et al.*, 2004; Sack, 2001) as well as to food brands boycott (Muhamad *et al.*, 2019). Interestingly, Just *et al.* (2007) studied Israeli families and the influence of each members on food purchases, finding that husbands and young children are favourite by orthodox beliefs, while the secular ones are in favour of wives and older children.

The impact of faith is evident in everyday life of religious consumers, in particular, in terms of food, Muslims and Jews pay particular attention to their diet, by following the guidelines provided in the Holy Texts (Regenstein *et al.*, 2003). Specifically, food is consumable by Muslims if certified Halal (which assures, for example, there are no pork derivatives as ingredients), by Jews if certified Kosher (which, for example, guarantees that wine is produced consistently with Jews rules) (Eliasi and Dwyer, 2002). Definitely, this a relevant issue for food marketers, particularly in terms of segmentation and targeting: interestingly, Izberk-Bilgin and Nakata (2016) call it *faith-based marketing*.

Through a literature analysis, this research is aimed at reviewing the status of scientific knowledge about the role of religion on food consumption, in a marketing perspective. Notably, the main goal is to give evidence about the strict influence of faith on food consumers choices and how it is a driver of consumption, highlighting differences between main religions. This is particularly relevant for food marketing purposes as consumers behaviours are moved by beliefs and values (Minton *et al.*, 2019). More specifically, premised that food choice regards also moral and ethical sphere (Arbit *et al.*, 2017; Thomson, 2015) this manuscript wants to clarify, according to current knowledge, if the impact of faith is just driven by moral constraints or it is a question of cultural influence, and if this impacts on consumer behaviour.

Moreover, an analysis of literature may shed light on:

- (1) How religion impacts on consumer attitudes not only in terms of purchases and consumption but also, for example, in terms of boycott;
- (2) Whether the influence, if present, is continuous or limited to specific periods in the year, when there are religious celebrations/periods (i.e. Christmas, Easter, Ramadan, etc.).

From this point of view, this literature review tries to rest on the role of religious certifications and their relevance to drive religious consumers.

The relationship between consumer behaviour and religion, analysed through a traditional review, was faced on religion-based journals (see Agarwala *et al.*, 2019) or was developed systematically (Iranmanesh *et al.*, 2022; Orellano *et al.*, 2020), or needs an update (Vitell, 2009). Therefore, through this study, the researchers want to:

- (1) Update the analysis of the topic by adding more recent references;
- (2) Focus on food consumer behaviour, with no specific reference to just one religion (as in Iranmanesh *et al.*, 2022), filling a gap in literature through a specific focus on food and by contemplating faith in its different versions.

Current knowledge, in this sense, needs an updated study of food and consumer behaviour literature, which has not been sufficiently investigated so far. This research is aimed at cover this necessity, as well. In addition, the analysis intends to contribute to business sciences (Engelland, 2014, highlights a scarce literature on faith and marketing published on business journals, too) and to food firms by highlighting the practical implications deriving from religion impact, in light of the fact that food is one of the easiest way to explore a community and to understand its cultures and values, as it mirrors cultural identity of a group (Monin and Szczurek, 2014; Kittler *et al.*, 2012). Since this a literature review, then, research gaps and future research directions are also discussed at the end of the manuscript. Indeed, in

terms of potential contribution, this paper gather the main research papers on faith and consumers' attitudes giving an overview of its role in choices-at least by considering current knowledge: not only, new remarks come from research suggestions, which are essential to strengthen investigation in this field. Then, the focus on food and not on general consumption, as well as the updated references in comparison to recent reviews, represent an original aspect of this manuscript.

This paper, furthermore, can be included in the recent trend of research which is, according to [Lim et al. \(2022\)](#), one of the most major themes in terms of consumer behaviour.

Studies on marketing and religion

In order to have a clear overview of the status of literature, we focused on business and not only journals to have an idea of the most analysed topic with regards to marketing and religion. All the papers are empirically developed, so there are not any reviews. Most of them are carried out through surveys, questionnaires and interviews (so both quantitative and qualitative methods), one is a case study and one is more focused on regulation. Most of the journals deal with marketing, two are more focused on tourism management. From the analysis we found a variety of themes the researchers dealt with. To this end the following table (see [Table 1](#)) summarizes the topic of the papers:

Paper	Focus	Main findings
Sood and Nasu (1995)	Religiosity, nationality and Consumer behaviour	Samples were constituted by American Protestants and Japanese consumers. Consumer behaviour does not change between devout and casually religious Japanese, while differences were showed by devout and casually religious American Protestants
Henderson (2003)	International tourism and the Islamic religion	Critical aspects of the relationship between Islam and tourism in Malaysia are analysed. There are different ways to approach this issue: the federal government gives priority on meeting the needs of tourists while certain states give precedence to religion (in a country in which influence of religion in everyday-life is deep)
Nwankwo et al. (2014)	Religion and consumption of luxury goods	Survey in Morocco among 400 Muslim consumers. The influence of religion diminishes as consumer affordability of luxury goods increases. Women tend more easily to impulse purchases of luxury goods
Kirillova et al. (2014)	Religion and hospitality management	Interviews to 30 participants representing Buddhist, Christian and Muslim faith. Interpretation of hospitality varies according to religious values while commercial hospitality is influenced by religion, understood as a money-making venture

Table 1.
Religion, marketing
and management

(continued)

Paper	Focus	Main findings
Jamal and Sharifuddin (2015)	Focus on Halal labelling	Questionnaires to 303 British Muslims. Intentions have a positive relationship with perceived usefulness, vertical collectivism and religiosity Halal labelling would enhance the shopping experiences of British Muslims
Cruz <i>et al.</i> (2018)	Religion and multicultural marketplaces	Through 24 interviews (participants were Christian, Muslim, Buddhist or non-religious), this research shows how religion facilitates entry into and mutual entanglement within multicultural Marketplaces
Felix <i>et al.</i> (2018)	Religion and environmental concern	Findings show that religious people are more concerned about the environment than non-religious people in societies presenting low on indulgence compared to societies presenting high on indulgence. The relationship between religiousness and environmental concern is highest for Buddhists and Orthodox
Ghaderi <i>et al.</i> (2020)	Islam consumers and hospitality management	Islamic beliefs can be supportive of tourism. Religiosity, moreover, influenced the nature of resident interaction with tourists
Yousaf and Xiucheng (2018)	Websites and Halal culinary and tourism marketing strategies	Promotion of Halal culinary and tourism in some Asian countries. Japan and South Korea apply unique Halal culinary and tourism marketing strategies to attract Muslim tourists. China does not use its tourism resources to attract Muslims and counts only on its ethnic culinary Heritage
Kurt <i>et al.</i> (2020)	Spirituality and Islamic business network in Turkey	Spirituality affects members' commitment to the network and has a deep effect on members' contributions to and demands on the network. As a matter of fact, members who treat their network membership as an extension of their spirituality tend to benefit from intangible resources, while members who conceive their religion as an entry point into the network benefit from tangible and intangible network resources
Fam <i>et al.</i> (2004)	Religion and attitudes towards controversial products	Questionnaires to 1,393 were administered to people of different religion (Christians, Muslims, Buddhists) and Non-believers, about some controversial products (gender/sex related products, social/political groups, health and care products, and addictive products). Muslims found advertising of these products as more offensive compared to other participants

*(continued)***Table 1.**

Paper	Focus	Main findings
Butt <i>et al.</i> (2017)	Consumer-based Halal brand equity and religion	A sample of 551 Muslim consumers in Malaysia and Pakistan was involved. A strong religious identity is a predictor of consumer halal choice behaviour and perceived self-expressive religious benefits. Moreover, Halal choice behaviour and predictive self-expressive benefits predict consumer-based halal brand equity
Cosgrave and O'Dwyer (2020)	Religious and ethical beliefs and perception of Cause-related Marketing between millennials	This a qualitative study developed on semi-structured interviews in Ireland and United Arab Emirates Consumers who identify as legal/professional practice standard on the ethical continuum may develop barriers to purchasing, despite the positive feelings towards the CRM cause. Religious beliefs represent a moderator of CRM for millennials. Muslims were the most influenced by religion values
Mansori <i>et al.</i> (2015)	Religion and novel products	A questionnaire was administered in Malaysia. Findings show that religiosity and ethnicity have a negative relationship with openness to change and positive with conservation value. Consumer innovativeness and individual values mediate between religiosity and ethnicity and acceptance of new products
Karaosmanoglu <i>et al.</i> (2018)	Corporate brand transgression and religion	A 2 × 2 experimental design has been applied in Turkey. Religious consumers punish corporate brand transgressors more than intrinsically religious consumers aside of the transgression severity levels
Suki and Suki (2015)	Green food consumption and religion	Survey involving 700 participants (Muslim and non-Muslim) in Malaysia. Non-Muslims: discrimination towards green food consumption is predicted by specific needs, environmental values related to green food and governmental efforts
Luqmani <i>et al.</i> (1989)	Advertising and religion	Muslims: diet based on religious laws Advertising in Saudi Arabia is compatible with religious indications
Almossawi (2014)	Impact of religion on promotional aspects of packages	Interviews and a questionnaire characterized the empirical analysis, among 300 Muslim students in Bahrain Contentious packaging runs a high risk of tarnishing a company's reputation and appeal. Muslims could consider these companies as promoters of fornication with risk of boycott
Fam <i>et al.</i> (2013)	Advertising and religion	Methodology: interviews to 931 people in five Asian cities (Hong Kong, Shanghai, Jakarta, Bangkok and Mumbai). Dislikeability of advertising is influenced by culture and religion

Table 1.

(continued)

Paper	Focus	Main findings
Kassim <i>et al.</i> (2016)	Values (religion, family and community), luxury goods and materialism	Questionnaire survey to 1,388 in Malaysia and Saudi Arabia. Saudi consumers: materialism is influenced by religious and family values (with an inverse relationship). Malaysia: materialistic tendency influenced only by family values (findings showed they were more materialistic than Saudis)
Gayatri and Chew (2013)	Service quality and Islam	Interviews to 36 participants from Indonesia. Perception of quality strongly influenced by these religious values: general Islamic values, Halal/Haram, attention to Islamic religious activities, honesty, modesty, and humaneness and trustworthiness

Table 1.

- (1) Religion and consumer behaviour (Sood and Nasu, 1995; Felix *et al.*, 2018; Cosgrave and O'Dwyer, 2020; Mansori *et al.*, 2015; Karaosmanoglu *et al.*, 2018; Mohd Suki and Mohd Suki, 2015; Almossawi, 2014; Kassim *et al.*, 2016; Gayatri and Chew, 2013),
- (2) Religion, consumers and luxury goods (Nwankwo *et al.*, 2014),
- (3) International tourism and Islamic religion (Henederson, 2003),
- (4) Hospitality management and religion (Kirillova *et al.*, 2014; Ghaderi *et al.*, 2020)
- (5) Religion and certifications (Jamal and Sharifuddin, 2015; Yousaf and Xiucheng, 2018)
- (6) Religion and internationalization (Cruz *et al.*, 2018; Kurt *et al.*, 2020; Butt *et al.*, 2017)
- (7) Religion and advertising (Shyan Fam *et al.*, 2004; Luqmani *et al.*, 1989; Fam *et al.*, 2013)

It is evident that consumer studies are prevalent, analysed essentially through interviews and surveys. They deal with different topics: environment, differences between nationalities, product packages, luxury goods. References to Islam are frequent, both the consumer studies and those one on advertising and Halal certification. It is clear that the business to business perspective is scarcely considered. This is probably because the religious topic is more connected to a system of values and principles related to the more intimate sphere, the spiritual side of the individuals: for this reason, research is more oriented to the consumer perspective.

This first analysis highlights that religion has an impact on different consumer experiences (tourism, food, luxury goods). The objective of this manuscript, however, is to deepen the food marketing implications derived from faith and religious subjects. To this end, we have implemented a literature review, in order to explore the current status of literature and try to highlight gaps and future research directions. After a first revision of paper connected to food marketing, we have analysed specifically those papers based on consumer behaviour and faith. Secondly, this paper is aimed at revealing if current literature includes a balanced number of studies for all the major religions or, on the contrary, there some faiths whose impact is less studied.

Methodology

This paper is a literature review. This research methodology allows to synthesize past and current research (Baumeister and Leary, 1997) and, as specified by Snyder (2019) it is relevant

than ever, considering the way research is accelerating. The relevance of this methodology, according to [Parè and Kitsiou \(2017\)](#), is given by the fact that it allows:

- (1) To identify the current knowledge of a particular topic;
- (2) To comprehend the extent of interpretable trends or patterns;
- (3) To aggregate findings;
- (4) To reveal current frameworks and theories;
- (5) To identify gaps and research directions.

Religion and food marketing

Ethical and religious beliefs can affect consumers' choices ([Cabano and Minton, 2023](#); [Honkanen et al., 2006](#); [Musaiger, 1993](#); [Dindyal, 2003](#)) and, in particular, [Yun et al. \(2008\)](#) showed how consumers pay attention not to contradict their consecrated ideas during the purchasing process. By the way, religion provides social identity ([Pinelli and Einstein, 2019](#)) and psychological research has highlighted that religion may influence cognitive functions and specifically consumers' cognition ([Muhamad and Mizerski, 2013](#)), in particular the effect of religious symbols on the perception of products ([Dotson and Hyatt, 2000](#)). Furthermore, [Muhamad and Mizerski \(2010\)](#) identified five factors which demonstrate the impact of religion on buyers and consumers, they are: motivation, affiliation, knowledge about religion and, in addition, awareness of the social consequences of following a religion; in addition, [Arifin et al. \(2023\)](#), by involving young Muslims from Indonesia, found a positive relationship between religious consciousness and purchasing behaviour, which results to be influenced.

Some scholars, furthermore, highlight how eating habits as well as food purchases may be affected by religion ([Delener, 1994](#); [Mullen et al., 2000](#); [Blackwell et al., 2001](#); [Navarro-Prado et al., 2017](#)). Excluding Christianity ([Sack, 2001](#)), major religions (Islam, Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism) have food impose restrictions. To this end, there are some religious certifications which drive religious consumers' choices to the most consistent ones with religion precepts ([Bux et al., 2022](#); [White and Samuel, 2016](#)). Muslims' choices, in fact, are moved between halal (permitted) and haram (prohibited) ([Ismoyowati, 2015](#)) and, moreover, the same Halal market is growing more and more ([Chi Ng et al., 2021](#)) and international food companies-such as Nestlé-consider it seriously ([Rarick et al., 2011](#)): certifications are, indeed, fundamental for Muslims to recognize the food they may consume ([Van der Spiegel et al., 2012](#)) but the demand has also involved non-Muslim consumers ([Mumuni et al., 2018](#); [Fathi et al., 2016](#)), who consider it safe and healthy ([Aziz and Chok, 2013](#); [Ayyub, 2015](#)). By the way, [Wilkins et al. \(2019\)](#) studied the judgements of Halal products in non-Muslim countries (specifically: Canada, Spain and the United Kingdom) and non-Muslim consumers, revealing that non-Muslims with a strong religious identity tend to judge positively Halal food, even though it is studied for a different faith. Furthermore, [Sukhabot and Jumani \(2023\)](#) found the appeal of Halal food also for non-Muslim Thai consumers.

As known, the first component of the marketing mix is the product: in the perspective of Islamic marketing the concept of product has to be necessarily connected to the concept of halal, so every inputs, processes and outputs have to be "Shariah-compliant" which means that products and everything has been involved for its distribution and consumption should be environmental-friendly and harmless, because Islam forbids what is harmful for God's creation ([Mabkhot, 2023](#)). Islamic marketing has its own characteristics ([Arham, 2010](#)), summarized by [Sula and Kartajaya \(2006\)](#) by using the adjectives spiritualistic, ethical, realistic and humanistic, while an interesting study by [Hashim and Hamzah \(2014\)](#) suggests that the classic model of the Marketing mix with its Ps (Product, Place, Price and Promotion) can be adapted to Islamic context and modified to:

- (1) Pragmatism and product,
- (2) Pertinence and promotion,
- (3) Palliation and price,
- (4) Peer-support and people,
- (5) Pedagogy and physical environment,
- (6) Persistence and process,
- (7) Patience and place.

A field of research is dedicated to brand and Islamic faith, as well (Hosain, 2021; Wilson and Liu, 2010, 2011; Alserhan, 2010; Ogilvy Noor, 2010). Notably, Alserhan (2010) underlines that for Muslims brands cannot be separated from faith, in particular manufacturers do not produce goods but righteousness and sellers provide tools for a righteous lifestyle.

Similarly, for Jew consumers, Kosher certification assures them the compatibility of food with their religious rules (Della Corte *et al.*, 2018; Regenstein and Regestein, 1991) and, as remarked by Cohen *et al.* (2003) Jews tend to associate religiosity to religious practice. With regards to Kosher diet, there are four cornerstones: (1) some animals cannot be part of the diet; (2) some parts of animals cannot be consumed (e.g. sciatic nerve of mammals); (3) consumption of blood is prohibited; (4) consumption of a mix of milk and meat is forbidden (Regenstein *et al.*, 2003; Tieman and Hassan, 2015). Cohen *et al.* (2010) studied an Israeli sample of 440 participants, showing that Kosher food is perceived as healthy, safe, prepared in hygienic conditions and with high nutritional value. Similarly to Halal food with no-Muslims, also Kosher market is expandable to no-Jew consumers and, in particular, Hamerman *et al.* (2019) pointed out that consumers with contamination disgust sensitivity tend to prefer Kosher food, and they are necessarily Jewish. Jeong and Jang (2019), however, found that healthfulness inspired by Kosher labelling – in a restaurant context – works when combined with the presence of nutritional information, especially in those restaurants with a poor healthful brand image.

New knowledge is also relative to Artificial Intelligence (AI): Minton *et al.* (2022) have recently shown that religious consumers have higher tendency to trust and accept what is unseen, in this case with regards to AI, with evident consequences on new marketing tools.

Scarce attention has been given to American and European contexts, which mean that there is room for further research. There is not abundant presence of comparative studies. With regards to the geographical collocation of authors, it is various even if the predominance of studies on Islam is partly justified by the Asian provenience of various researchers. The necessity of new cross-cultural and cross-national studies is an additional reason for encouraging precious collaborations among researchers from different parts of the world.

Religion and food consumer behaviour

Since religion involves the intimate part of human beings and affects their behaviours (Mathras *et al.*, 2015; Argyle and Beit-Hallahmi, 2013) through the connected value system (Roccas, 2005) and creating a group identification (Greenfield and Marks, 2007; Lindridge, 2005) a part of marketing research is dedicated to the analysis of the impact of faith on consumer behaviour and there is a body of articles which demonstrate the deep impact of faith (Arli *et al.*, 2016; Casidy *et al.*, 2016; Kamarulzaman *et al.*, 2016; Siala, 2013), also with specific regards to food and food habits (Mumuni *et al.*, 2018; White *et al.*, 2017; Dindyal, 2003; Mullen *et al.*, 2000; Mennell *et al.*, 1992). Interestingly, some scholars have deepened the relationship between religious beliefs and attitude towards sustainability (Raggiotto *et al.*, 2018; Minton *et al.*, 2015; Engelland, 2014; Djupe and Gwiasda, 2010), in particular, recently, Teng *et al.* (2023) emphasized the relationship between the expectation of divine rewards and

environmental awareness. Specifically, [Minton et al. \(2015\)](#) found that religion is an important driver of sustainable behaviour and, in particular, Buddhists seem to pay more attention to this issue if compared to Christians and Atheists, moreover they are more sustainable when represent a minority (for example in the United States) and not a majority (for example in South Korea). However, sustainability issues are contemplated in Christianity 8 [Pepper et al. \(2011\)](#) and Islam ([Ghazali et al., 2018](#)).

[Orellano et al. \(2020\)](#), on the other hand, suggest that religion, through its effect on personal attitudes, can impact on sustainable consumption, as confirmed by [Minton et al. \(2018\)](#), who showed the positive association between being religious and sustainable consumption practices. Notably, [Raggiotto et al. \(2018\)](#), in a study carried on in Italy, found that religion affects environmental predisposition and, in particular, the Ecologically Conscious Consumption Behavior (ECCB) is an important determinant of purchasing intentions about vegan food, both for Christians and Buddhists. Similarly, [Chen \(2007\)](#), analysing the Taiwanese context, found that religion positively affects the attitude towards organic food. Conflicting results emerge from [Leary et al. \(2016\)](#) and [Wolkomir et al. \(1997\)](#), as a matter of fact the first scholars highlight that the faithful are more sustainable than non-religious while from the second ones findings show the contrary.

In terms of consumer behaviour, literature shows how Islam affects significantly Muslims as well as their consumer loyalty ([Arifin et al., 2023](#); [Floren et al., 2020](#); [Suhartanto et al., 2020](#); [Ali et al., 2018](#); [Awan et al., 2015](#)) and, notably, [Muhamad and Mizerski \(2013\)](#) distinguished between intrinsic and extrinsic religious motivation. New knowledge about these attributes of religion comes, more recently, from [Singh et al. \(2021\)](#), in particular they underline that intrinsic religiosity discourages indulgence in unrestrained buying, while the extrinsic one improves it, albeit mediated by consumer susceptibility.

Interestingly, [Akbari et al. \(2018\)](#) studied symbols on food packaging and their influence on Islamic consumers, finding that religious symbols positively impacted on Muslims' attitude to purchase, by increasing their the religious symbolic-value of food. [Ashraf \(2019\)](#), moreover, explored consumer behaviour towards Halal food in Bangladesh, discovering that there are four factors which affect purchasing, that are trustworthiness, attitude, normative structure and self-efficacy. A different perspective is the one by [De Boni and Forleo \(2019\)](#), who studied the impact of Halal certification in a country where the Islamic community is a minority, that is Italy, revealing scarce awareness about Halal principles. An interesting comparison between religions was carried out by [Essoo and Dibb \(2004\)](#): with a focus on shopping behaviour, they found that Catholic shoppers tend to be more thoughtful, more attentive to people's opinion, traditional and demanding than Muslims and Hindu consumers. The most relevant characteristic of Muslim consumers is their more practical (in particular by paying specific attention to prices, promotions and store credit facilities) and innovative (tendency to try new products and brands) attitude compared to Catholics and Hindus. The role of package is relevant: according to [Parvin Hosseini et al. \(2020\)](#) halal logo (along with food quality and religious commitment) is positively associated with the willingness to pay for halal food, as religious labels increase purchases of very religious consumers ([Bakar et al., 2013](#)). In a global perspective, furthermore, the country of origin of the Halal logo can impact on trust and confidence of consumers, since the religious certification reassure them about the quality of food or, at least, reduces the risk of poor quality ([Anam et al., 2018](#); [Dimara and Skuras, 2003](#); [Rios et al., 2014](#)). By the way, [Muhamad et al. \(2017\)](#) highlight that Muslim consumers trust the country of origin of Halal logo, which has particular effect on their food purchases: moreover, the more religious respondents strongly believe that the Country of origin impacts a lot on the Halal logo credibility. On the other hand, [Rauschnabel et al. \(2015\)](#) found that the perception of religious labels are strictly connected to the attitude towards religion and brand and, in addition, [Khan et al. \(2010\)](#) and [Schlegelmilch and Khan \(2010\)](#) show that religious symbols (e.g. logos) can affect negatively those consumers who have prejudices against religion (reduction of

purchases in particular). Interestingly, [Weisbuch-Remington et al. \(2005\)](#) shed light on the fact that religious cues are immediate and non-conscious.

Discussion and implications for food marketers

Research on religion and food marketing is particularly current because of the relevance of faith in a large part of consumers, albeit heterogeneous. Research in this field, also considering the interest of food companies, is necessary ([Garay-Quintero et al., 2018](#)).

The results of this analysis provides evidence that, in an international perspectives, food and religion are strictly connected. The closer and closer relationships between different countries requires an attentive knowledge about their cultures, of which religion is one of the most relevant expression.

This literature review highlights that Islam is the most analysed religion, as a matter of fact it is the most named faith. This can be justified by these possible reasons:

- (1) researchers of these articles are from countries with an Islamic majority: definitely most of the papers regards Asian countries with high number of Muslims;
- (2) the particular influence of religious values in Muslims' everyday life makes research on marketing and faith particularly interesting to explore;
- (3) high number of Muslims in the world.

The references we have analysed exhibit that, in order to food marketing to Muslims needs the detailed observance of religious rules, because it is important not only to provide food that is respectful of Islam precepts, but also to develop the whole product to be suitable for this religion (from packaging to marketing communication).

Other religions are less investigated, as a matter of fact there is not a research specifically focused on other faiths (Christian and Buddhist are the only ones which are considered but in studies that consider more religions, not only one as in the case of Islam). [Mick \(2017\)](#), moreover, indicates the potential research on Buddhism in terms of consumer psychology.

The evident coincidence between religion and culture for these consumers requires a deep knowledge of their values in order to start productive marketing relationships with them (obviously differences could be found among countries, for example Malaysia and Saudi Arabia, as described by [Kassim et al. \(2016\)](#) with regards to materialism: Saudis' consumer behaviour, in particular, emerge as very affected by faith values). One of the most important gaps emerged in our study is the little attention to some religions, first of all Christianity which is the largest in the world ([Ellens, 2020](#)), and then Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism. In an international perspective studies on Christianity influence would play an important role, considering that it is widespread in Europe, Northern and Latin America, Oceania and Philippines, so a large part of the world; a deeper research should regard also eastern religions, in light of the emerging role of the eastern economies and the role of China, Japan and India in the world economy. For example, [Lu and Wu \(2020\)](#) have studied the impact of religion (Buddhism in particular) in private firms in China, and findings revealed that religious entrepreneurs have higher accounting performances and spend more in safety for employees: further research should consider a similar analysis, from the point of view of Chinese consumers. The role of spirituality and religion, in addition, is deeply felt in India ([Suchday et al., 2018](#); [Kattimani, 2012](#)), spirituality is an essential part of Indian culture and this is visible also in tourism marketing, as a matter of fact the state of Kerala markets itself as "God's own country" ([Bandyopadhyay and Nair, 2019](#)) and India is considered the favourite spiritual destination for Western tourists ([Norman, 2012](#)). Definitely the Indian case has to be deepened by international marketing scholars: from this review we noted a scarce attention given to this aspect of India, at least on top management and marketing journals. The strong

connection between Israeli people and Judaism, moreover, should be a reason for future research on religion impact on Israeli consumers (to this end [Heiman et al., 2019](#), showed how religion affects food production and consumption in this Mediterranean country). Another aspect to investigate regards Kosher certifications, which are fundamental for international marketing strategies, because of they are strictly associated with religious norms (and it is also used outside Israel, as in the United States, where every year about 200 billion dollars of Kosher-certified foods are purchased ([Hamerman et al., 2019](#)). Unfortunately, this analysis shows that current literature is not copious but, on the contrary, is quite limited. First of all in terms of focus, there is little dissertation of western religions. By the way, in order to understand the role of religion on the West, it is sufficient to think about the philosopher Max Weber's masterpiece "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism", which highlights the impact of Protestantism on the development of Capitalism. Then, also the Catholicism in Latin America deserves a deep study (see, for example, how [Chesnut, 2003](#), reveals how intense is the role of religion especially on women), as well as in Europe (where Catholicism, Protestantism and Orthodoxy coexist). On the other hand, also Orient faiths deserve more investigation: it is known how Hinduism affects Indian society and managerial behaviour too ([Kumar and Sethi, 2005](#)), as well as the spirituality for Eastern populations. The growing interconnections between people from different cultures generates the necessity to explore one people's beliefs, as a consumer culture which has no geographical limits and is global is developing ([Cleveland et al., 2013](#); [Cleveland and Laroche, 2007](#)).

Conclusions

Some contributions to theory can emerge from our review. First, this study provides the current status of research and, moreover, the gaps and the possible guidelines for future research. From this point of view, theoretically, this review indicates the necessity of investigating the differences among religions and of deepening the impact of Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism and other faiths, currently little explored. Moreover, the numerous gaps represent a stimulus for more research, and there is definitely room for further research.

Research is required, for example, with regards to the impact of religion certifications on consumers who do not follow the religion whose certification is directed to. From this point of view, it would be interesting to compare the impact of Halal and Kosher certification in different European context (for example Albania and Bosnia, whose population is, in part, Muslim) and, respectively, Muslim countries and Israeli. In addition, further research should be implemented with regards to the influence of faith in the relationships between firms, therefore in the B2B collaborations. Consumer culture theory ([Arnould and Thomson, 2005](#)) can be also useful to understand the cultural dynamics of consumption connected to religion or not. In addition, broader analysis could be implemented with regards to the possible influence of religious certifications (as regards the healthiness characteristics) on atheist consumers.

This overview, besides, could stimulate collaborations among researchers, also in light of the fact that cross-national and cross-cultural studies are needed (as well as differences among countries with a similar religious culture).

Opportunities for international marketers emerge from this review. First of all, the role of religion is relevant for marketing strategies. In particular most of the selected studies highlights the particular sensitivity to religious norms in Muslim countries even though differences could be among countries (as evident in [Kassim et al., 2016](#)). Respecting religious values is fundamental to have marketing relationships with Muslim countries ([Cosgrave and O'Dwyer, 2020](#), in particular, underline that, by comparing different religious subjects, Muslims were the most influenced by faith-deriving beliefs). This is particularly important also considering that it is one of the most widespread faith in the world, covering different geographical areas, from some parts of the Balkans to North Africa, from the Middle -East to

South-East of Asia. This is one of the reasons to comprehend the importance of the Halal certification. Anyway, even if little explored in the selected articles, also other religions should be considered when relating with other cultures (as in [Sood and Nasu \(1995\)](#) whose research highlight the relevance for American Protestants and in [Felix et al. \(2018\)](#), who highlight the high environmental concern by Orthodox). It is clear that marketers should not ignore religion effects when concretizing international marketing strategies and, practically, faith is a key factor to relate with different cultures. So, in terms of implications, this is particularly relevant for international and multinational companies and their communication strategies. The religious factor, then, should be considered along with other cultural elements, such as the communication style in high and low context cultures, the predominant verbal style (exacting, elaborate or succinct) and non-verbal style. Religion represents a fundamental constituent of an individual and of a population and, as confirmed by [Croucher et al. \(2017\)](#), it is culture itself, therefore cannot be a secondary factor in international marketing strategies.

Limits

Definitely this study has some limitations. Unlike a systematic review ([Kraus et al., 2022](#); [Bresciani et al., 2021](#); [Paul and Rialp Criado, 2020](#)), a traditional literature review is more narrative mind has less inclusion or exclusion criteria ([Campo et al., 2022](#); [Battisti et al., 2019](#)), so this means the selection of papers is not driven by systematic criteria, so the analysis is not reproducible like the latter one which has stricter rules. Even though classic literature review can give a clearer background of current knowledge, this methodology are not as rigorous as the systematic ones. This means that some studies could have been ignored and this is one of the most relevant limit.

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