

# Positionality, inter-subjectivity and reflexivity in Muslim minority research

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## Abstract

Drawing substantially on epistemologies developed in the context of vulnerable populations and responding to calls for greater epistemic justice in marketing research, an intersectional framework involving positionality, partiality, reflexivity, and situated knowledges is proposed to reflect on undertaking market research with Muslim minority populations in non-Muslim majority countries. This population is often highly vulnerable due to stigmatisation, Islamophobia and processes of othering that affect Muslim consumer behaviour, practices and identity. The framework is derived from reflexive experiences of market research undertaken by the authors on and with Islamic consumers both on an individual and collective basis and from relevant literature. The framework highlights the relational nature of the research experience and the situatedness and positionality of both the researcher and researched. In the case of research with Muslim populations we also draw out the significance of religious identity, ideology and religiosity; intersectionalities, including gender; and religious and cultural power as framed by cultural and institutional practices and which affect notions of class and attitudes to the other. We propose an approach that helps overcome Muslim/non-Muslim binaries that flatten the lived notions of the Muslim experience and consumption practices and instead provide for a richer and more representative account of Muslim identity. However, this approach also heightens researcher sensitivity to the situatedness of Muslims within social norms and the implications that this has for anonymity.

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## Keywords

situated knowledge, feminist theory, positionality, epistemic in/justice, reflexivity, relationality, binary thinking, religious identity, religiosity

## Introduction

Marketing research has been traditionally conducted on consumers that can be described as WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, and Democratic) (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995; Mollenkopf et al., 2021; Motoki & Pathak, 2022; Silchenko et al., 2020). As such, traditional models of consumer behaviour are Western centric (Cohen et al., 2014) but cross-cultural marketing research has highlighted both similarities and differences in behaviour among Western consumers and those from other regions (Burton, 2008, 2009; Malhotra et al., 1996). There are increasing calls to transcend the historic North American–European foundations of consumer behaviour and market research (Dutton & Lyons, 2021; Rosa-Salas, 2019; Saad, 2017, 2021) by looking at ways in which market research can be conducted with consumers that have different religious backgrounds (Arli & Pekerti, 2017; Burton, 2008, 2009). This implies examining consumers with values, beliefs, norms and practices that sit outside the Western Judeo-Christian tradition (Gopaldas & Siebert, 2018; Ungerer, 2014). Also, while existing cultural theories such as Hofstede's (2001) and Trompenaars (1993) acknowledge the centrality of national culture and the corresponding cultural values as influential in understanding behaviours, these are largely Western theories. Several studies (Ahmad Alserhan & Ahmad Alserhan, 2012; Salam et al., 2019; Wilkins et al., 2019) have examined different facets of Islam and consumption, including the influence of Islam on consumer behaviour in Muslim and non-Muslim majority countries but these studies do not integrate different market research practices such as situatedness, positionality, and reflexivity in explaining the behaviours they have uncovered. As such, the aim of the present paper is to use reflexivity on the marketing research process with Muslims in Muslim minority countries to propose a conceptual model that highlights the influence of religion on consumption practices for such consumers. This is important given that a minority status often entails that a population is different from the majority of consumers and can be often quite vulnerable and disadvantaged because of their perceived differences (Garrett & Toumanoff, 2010).

Acknowledgement of the importance of the cultural context of market research has both practical and theoretical implications (Hall, 2011). From a commercial standpoint, Rousseau (2015, p. 50) suggests: “that a consumer’s cultural identity is an important if not necessary variable when it comes both to his present and future preferences as a consumer. ... a product or service needs to resonate, in one way or another, with cultural backgrounds, values, experiences or ambiances”. Thus, traditional marketing strategies such as segmentation, targeting and positioning are heavily dependent on a better understanding of the religion-consumption nexus to develop appropriate marketing tactics (e.g., communication, products, pricing, and service processes) and for ultimate firm success in an increasingly diverse market place. From a theoretical perspective, reflexivity on the market research process with Muslim consumers gives voice to the growing interest in the micro- and macro-cultural context within which consumption occurs and the appropriateness of the methodologies used to understand different cultures (Steinfeld & Holt, 2020; Sullivan & Tuana, 2007). Several factors have driven the need for greater consideration of the methodological appropriateness of marketing research in non-Western cultural or population settings. These include:

1. Increased international population mobility and migration at a global scale (Crockett et al., 2011; Makrides et al., 2021); which implies that traditional forms of market research may

- limit access to minority groups, impeding the ability of marketers to develop products and services that serve such groups.
2. The internationalisation of market research (Donthu et al., 2021; Mazzarella, 2003); which gives voice to cross-cultural research issues such as positionality and situatedness when conducting qualitative and/or quantitative research.
  3. Recognition of the consumer purchasing power of minority populations (Halter, 2000; Rousseau, 2015) and concerns over equity, diversity and marketplace exclusion (Saren et al., 2019), but also the vulnerability of such populations to exploitation by marketers (Baker et al., 2005); and
  4. Paradigmatic challenges to, and changes in, the way that market research is undertaken with diverse populations (Burgos & Mobolade, 2011; Burton, 2000), including minority and vulnerable groups. This implies that intersectionalities may be relevant as they influence consumption practices (Fischer, 2015) and religion may have stronger influences on such practices.

### *Market research on minorities*

Understanding the cultural context of market research has meant better recognition of the socially constructed and situated nature of knowledge obtained “on”, “from” and “with” research participants (Cairns & Johnston, 2018; Steinfield & Holt, 2020). This, combined with greater acknowledgement of cultural diversity in marketing, means that market research is being extended to include minority and vulnerable groups (Arli & Pekerti, 2017; Burton, 2008; Hill et al., 2020; Rousseau, 2015). There is also increasing recognition that research participants have agency in the research process through co-creating outcomes (Wengel et al., 2019), typically when qualitative and/or mixed methods research are employed. As such, both participants and researchers can potentially provide for a more inclusive and diverse range of voices in market research (Hutton & Heath, 2020; Ripoll Gonzalez & Gale, 2020), affecting the way in which market research practices are conceptualised and implemented. However, such positive change, also carries with it substantial methodological issues as a whole (Hutton & Cappellini, 2022), especially when minority consumption practices have become politicised in the wider society (Rousseau, 2015). Indeed, in order to effectively and positively interact and research about and *with* such vulnerable groups, it would seem essential that the research process does not become a means to create a market ‘enclave’. This can potentially exacerbate their minority and vulnerable status, affecting consumption patterns and other traditional marketing metrics such as consumer satisfaction and loyalty.

Given any potential socio-cultural, power and economic distance between the researcher and the researched (Adebayo & Njoku, 2022), a fundamental question that should be the start of any research with vulnerable and minority populations, is do the researched want to be researched anyway? (Femenia-Serra et al., 2021; Pos & Brown, 2005; Surmiak, 2018). This is an issue raised several times in the disaster literature, where those affected may not always want to be the “object” of the study (Wordsworth et al., 2021). Thus, gaining access and researching vulnerable populations require stringent ethical considerations that must take into account the wellbeing of participants and their intersectionalities. Furthermore, in the desire to be more inclusive and better understand and support equity and diversity, to what extent do researchers become guilty of appropriating the voices of “others”, even if undertaken for what may seem to be altruistic reasons? (Love & Hall, 2021; Ourahmoune & El Jurdi, 2022; Wright, 2018). Again, raising an ethical issue that should be explicitly accounted for in both research design and interpretation of results generated from market research.

## Muslims as a vulnerable and minority population in non-Muslim majority countries

Although constituting one of the world's largest religious populations and an extremely significant market in its own right (Mastercard-CrescentRating, 2020; Pew Research Centre, 2015, 2017), there is a relative lack of market research on resident, migrant, and temporary (tourist/student) Muslim minority populations in non-Muslim majority countries. Nevertheless, there is increasing interest in such research as Muslim minorities are growing in many non-majority countries and have their own specific market characteristics as a result of what is *halal* (permissible) and *haram* (forbidden) in Islamic teaching (Bergeaud-Blackler et al., 2015; Hall et al., 2023; Hall & Prayag, 2020; Sandıkcı, 2018). The international market for halal products, for example, is growing irrespective of whether it is consumed by Muslims or not (Fischer, 2011). However, in many Western non-majority countries, Muslims have often been demonised by right-wing political groups and have become subject to a process of political othering of Islam and halal products (Johnson et al., 2017; Waikar, 2018). As such, issues of inclusivity in marketing approaches in general, and more specifically in the market research process have come to the forefront.

In Western countries the expansion of international migration and the attraction and circulation of temporary populations, such as international students, short-term workers, and tourists, has led to a growth in Muslim populations. While such populations, as with any migrant community, are vulnerable for often no other reason than difference, whether religious or ethnic, the vulnerability of Muslim minorities has undoubtedly been exacerbated by the portrayal of Muslims and terrorism in a post-9/11 world (Bunzl, 2005; Najib & Teeple Hopkins, 2020; Rana, 2007). Whereby Muslim minorities have often been stigmatised and the subject of deliberate othering, particularly by populist politicians who seek to use migrants as scapegoats for contemporary economic problems, such as unemployment, or as a focus for cultural politics (Allen, 2010; Debney, 2020; Kunst et al., 2012; Liebert et al., 2020). For example, in an American context, Abo-Zena (2022, p. 359) notes that, "In the post 9/11 climate and given variation related to racial, ethnic, socio-economic, and immigrant status, there is converging evidence that Muslim-American youth endure different levels of minority stress." Such issues, while unsavoury to more cosmopolitan researchers, are actually often central to issue of Muslim vulnerability because of the extent to which both cultural and religious identity and practices have become politicised and a focus for members of the non-Muslim majority. This implies that marketing practices which are inherently western-centric are imposed onto such populations without much thought. Likewise, there needs to be a transition from doing research on to research with Muslim populations.

The role of political, economic and cultural power in affecting the consumption and identity of Muslim communities is arguably only one layer of power relationships with respect to vulnerability. This is because Muslim communities, as with any population, also have internal sets of economic, social, cultural and patriarchal relations that may make, for example, women more vulnerable (Gorji et al., 2023; Sayira et al., 2023) or those that do not have the language or other skills to successfully engage with non-Muslim members of society, or even members from outside of their particular migrant or religious group (Harris & Roose, 2014; Peucker et al., 2014). In some communities, conformity to gender and sexuality norms may create situations that are not discussed in public and require particular research sensitivity (Zerubavel, 2007).

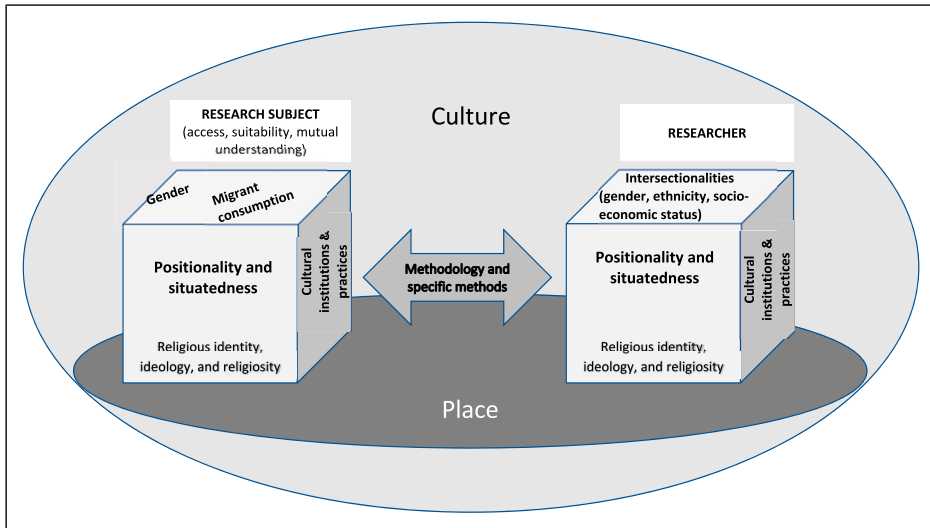
### *The framing of Muslims in non-Islamic majority countries*

The way in which Islam is often framed in non-Islamic majority countries also provides an unfortunate double bind, as misperceptions of Muslim minorities, for example as oppressed victims of their culture and religion, may further marginalize Muslim communities (Nagra, 2018; Wagner et al., 2012). Therefore, Muslims are potentially vulnerable both as the research subject and as researchers in Muslim minority countries (Hassan, 2011). From a marketing research perspective, this situation highlights issues of how identification as Muslim may affect capacity and willingness to engage in research (Chaudary et al., 2020; Maliepaard et al., 2010; Zimmermann et al., 2007). In addition, because of expectations of 'correct' Islamic behaviour, the different cultural and sharia traditions associated with Islam can create research risks even when both research subjects and researcher identify as Muslim. For example, this is especially important when the parties are different genders, given expectations that surround the role of women, e.g., being accompanied by a male family member or not, and whether or not a veil should be worn (Hall et al., 2023; Hassan, 2011). For Western researchers entering field work in non-Muslim majority countries, female-male participant dynamics and practices may be at odds with conventional market research practices and may, thus, limit access to female participants. There may also be assigned roles for males and females within society that may influence accessibility to Muslim participants. However, it must be noted that the do's and don'ts that are described above cannot be generalised to all Muslim populations.

The subject of Islam in consumer and market research is also complicated by how it is often presented as a monolithic religion (Sandikci, 2018). However, in the same way that Christianity has different expressions of faith, albeit with a common core, so too does Islam. Different Islamic traditions (sharia) can have different interpretations of what is halal and haram, as well as different religious practices and interpretations (Razak et al., 2020). Different sharia traditions are also mediated by their cultural context, with some Islamic cultures substantially more conservative than others (Gorji et al., 2023; Hersi, 2018; Sayira et al., 2023). In addition, generational differences may also be significant and are often particularly important for the second and third generation of migrant families as they often assimilate with and adopt elements of the majority culture in a society over time (Aljunied & Khan, 2022), as well as different degrees of religiosity (Randeree, 2016). Therefore, having an appreciation of the context in which Muslim individuals are situated is arguably central in seeking to overcome issues of vulnerability and providing a basis for working with members of such a population. These issues affect situated knowledges and market research practices that are enacted to uncover such knowledges on and with Muslim minority populations.

### *The situated knowledges of research on minority populations*

Drawing substantially on methodologies developed in the context of vulnerable populations and responding to Hutton and Cappellini's (2022) call for greater epistemic justice in marketing research, we use a set of interrelated approaches involving positionality and situated knowledges (Rose, 1997; Salem, 2018; Simandan, 2019; Stoetzler & Yuval-Davis, 2002; Walmsley, 2008) to reflect on market research with permanent and temporary Muslim populations in non-Muslim majority countries. This is situated primarily in the context of Australia, New Zealand, Korea, and the UK. We draw substantially on the reflexive experiences of the qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods market research that has been undertaken by the authors on and with Islamic consumers at an individual and collective basis, including male and female Muslim and non-Muslim graduate students working on Islamic market related topics with respect to hospitality, food, tourism and retailing. Such experiences have highlighted to the authors the importance of sensitivity to the



**Figure 1.** The intersectional relationships between the researcher and subject.

religious and cultural values that are part of the research process but, most importantly, the need to highlight the relationship building that is often integral to Muslim consumer research. As such consideration of methodology is regarded as more significant than the adoption of specific methods per se, as it can be argued that any method needs to be considered in the cultural context in which they will be undertaken.

From a methodological perspective, the reflective practices undertaken by the authors of this study followed suggestions from previous studies (Dodds et al., 2023; Jafari et al., 2013). First, each author reflected independently on the research process that guided their various projects on Muslim consumers in non-Muslim majority countries. Specifically, issues of positionality and situatedness were prompted in those reflections. Following this, the authors discussed the main tenets of their reflections in relation to who they are as researchers and what they found when conducting research on this population. Given the background of authors involved in this paper, several observations were made: (i) differing religious identities, religiosity and interpretations of Islamic ideologies, and sharia traditions and practices can shape what is uncovered from research on Muslim consumers; (ii) how cultural institutions and practices reaffirm identity, religiosity and Islamic teachings and sharia traditions shape the perceived value of market research and behaviours adopted by consumers; and (iii) gendered perspectives as part of the broader issue of intersectionalities are omnipresent and are influenced by cultural institutions and personal beliefs on Islamic teachings and sharia traditions. Utilizing an iterative process incorporating an inductive approach to researchers' reflections and a deductive approach from the Islamic marketing and cross-cultural research literature, these reflections were further crystalized as key issues in conducting market research on Muslims in non-Muslim majority countries. The last step involved an iterative process of reflecting on the joint framework and zooming in on each author's individual reflections and zooming out to achieve generalisability (Dodds et al., 2023), which resulted in the unifying framework presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1 provides a framework drawn from the situatedness of our knowledge claims with respect to researching with and on Muslim populations and the methodological issues that arise. The framework, thus, highlights the relational nature of the research experience and the situatedness and positionality of both the researcher and researched. In the case of research with Muslim populations we also draw out the significance of religious identity, ideology and religiosity; gender; and power as framed by cultural and institutional practices and which affect attitudes to the other. While these have been discussed in cultural theories from a Western perspective, given that cultural models define patterns of basic individual and societal problems that have consequences on actions and behaviour (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2010), the framework we develop is specific to undertaking research with Muslim populations. Its imperatives may be applied to many minority and vulnerable populations, including refugees and could also extend existing cultural models. Specifically, ideas related to individualism and collectivism (Hofstede, 2001) and neutral versus emotional culture (Trompennars, 1993) may still have some relevance in understanding and shaping market research practices. However, these need to be considered at country, location, and ethnic-group levels rather than assuming that all Muslim populations are, for example, collectivistic. Next, the main methodological issues emerging from the unified framework are presented.

### *Methodological issues of engaging in research with Muslims*

In research, vulnerable research subjects should be approached from a position that seeks reciprocal relationships based on empathy and mutual respect and which recognises the researcher's dependence on the researched for knowledge (Pacheco-Vega & Parizeau, 2018). Such an approach, drawn substantially from feminist research (Leurs, 2017), can help convey more power to those being researched and allow for people to be studied 'in their own terms'. An approach that has already been recommended for studying other vulnerable populations such as those with disabilities, refugees and victims of disasters (Dodds et al., 2023; Wordsworth et al., 2021).

### *Positionality*

Marketing research is based on a relationship in which the positionality of the researcher and the researched needs to be acknowledged. Knowledge claims are situated and positional (Haraway, 1988; Stoetzler & Yuval-Davis, 2002). By noting the situatedness of knowledge we recognise that research is constructed and shaped (although not determined) by economic, social and political positioning and power (Stoddart, 2007; Stoetzler & Yuval-Davis, 2002). Positionality is important to the relationship between researcher and researched no matter what method is utilised. Indeed, the methods serve to both mediate the relationship between the parties as well as reflect the researcher's desire to gather information, of a particular kind for a particular purpose. Nevertheless, "the positionality of the researcher poses challenges in data access, as it can influence the disposition of the research participants toward the researcher. For instance, if the positionality of a researcher is at variance with the research participant, it could determine the quantity and quality of data that would be made available" (Adebayo & Njoku, 2022). This relationship is expressed in Figure 1 which provides a framework to explore aspects of the intersectionalities in researching Muslim populations. In relation to positionality, a Muslim versus a non-Muslim Western interviewer in qualitative research might have different understandings of the importance and influence of religion and religiosity on consumption behaviours, affecting how the research process is designed and

administered with Muslim participants. Different Muslim interviewers may have varying views on Islamic teachings and sharia traditions affecting how they conduct qualitative and post-positivism research to understand the religion-consumption nexus.

### *Relationships and identities*

In research encounters the relationship between the researcher and the researched occurs in a particular positional and identity context for both parties. This is particularly important with Islam because of the prescriptions as to how Muslims should behave. Identities are extremely significant as they form the basis for positionality, termed here with respect to an individual's various orientations and group affiliations (Takhar & Chitakunye, 2012). Shared identities can serve as a basis for trust building in research (Adebayo & Njoku, 2022) and may contribute to a reduction in socially desirable answers. However, positionality, whether with respect to such factors as power (Amore & Hall, 2021), gender (Al-Mahadin, 2011; Ferguson et al., 2020; Tarik, 2017; Villares-Varela & Essers, 2019), ethnicity (Sanderson & Thomas, 2014), social class (Stahl & Habib, 2017), sexuality (El-Bassiouny, 2018; Howe, 2021) also need to be considered in relation to religious beliefs. For example, in some Islamic and Western countries, gender diverse identities are by default silenced in consumer culture and by implication the market research process does not consider this minority group as worthy of research.

For researchers the positionality of the researcher and the researched provides a basis to reflect on identity and cultural bias as well as gaining a better understanding of the culture of the research subject (Kipnis et al., 2021). For many Muslim's who are migrants this will include the culture of the 'home' country as well as that of the country they have migrated to. In some cases there may also be distinct Muslim migrant sub-cultures with different lifestyle and consumption practices from those Muslim communities who have resided in a country for multiple generations (Rane et al., 2015). A critical issue here however is where the boundary between culture and religion lies and how these expressions of identity affect marketing research practice. This is a significant issue because of the extent to which conservative cultural practices may become associated with Islam, particularly from non-Muslim or secular perspectives, rather than with the culture of the research subject (Gorji et al., 2023; Sayira et al., 2023). Also, religious doctrines, beliefs and practices from the home country might translate to everyday experiences in the migrant country that reinforce patriarchal ideologies, which then legitimize and reinforce existing gender hierarchy (Abraham, 2019). Thus, power roles may have a strong influence on both the researched and the research subject.

### *Situatedness and place*

Recognition of the situatedness of knowledge, means that research relationships are also mediated by the place in which they are undertaken, and therefore the particular local and institutional context with respect to ethical and research practices. While many Western countries have some obligations to conduct research following well established ethical practices but these may be understood differently by Muslim researchers and participants. Research locations can yield information about the construction of individual and social identities by participants and can influence the dynamics between the researcher and the researched (Sin, 2003). The mosque is the focal point of Muslim religious and community life (Peucker & Ceylan, 2017) and is an important point of entry and engagement for Muslim market research, regardless of method. Place is also important because of the manner in which researchers have previously engaged with a vulnerable community may create

a research memory that will affect the willingness of communities and individuals to engage in the future (Said, 2000). However, it is important to note that place influences here refer not just to the locale in which research is undertaken in the present, but also previous experiences, e.g., in the home country for migrants.

### *The mediating role of methods*

Different methods mediate the relationship between researcher and researched in different ways. This becomes significant, for example, with respect to understandings of the extent to which personal contact is required if undertaking face-to-face interviews or focus groups rather than online or panel surveys. In some instances, it may be judged inappropriate by specific Muslim communities for females to interact with members of the opposite sex who are not family members. Hassan (2011) in reflecting on her research on halal restaurants in New Zealand, noted that it was necessary to be accompanied by her father (acting as a mahram, a male family member to chaperone) in order to interview some respondents, who would otherwise refuse to be interviewed by a woman. The capacity for research interaction between different genders may be severely constrained in some Muslim communities or households. Thus, research methods have to take cognisance of place, identities and positionality concurrently in design and administration of research to enhance inclusivity and wellbeing of Muslim participants.

The gender dimensions of Muslim research, for example, are also affected by the capability of Muslim women to travel which may be substantially constrained in many circumstances. For example, women may be discouraged to travel alone or be censured by their families if they do (Hall et al., 2023). Another constraint is that in some instances cultural mores require that questions of consumer behaviour and practices need to go through the male head of the household even though female members of the household may be the key participant. However, these aspects of research are very much dependent on the community and individuals with which one is engaged and reflect the orientation of particular sharia traditions as well as individual religiosity. Thus, marketing research practices in non-Muslim majority countries around Muslim female participation may require a different fieldwork approach that acknowledges some of the issues discussed previously.

### *Are there things that cannot be said or are hard to say?*

Power is not just expressed between the researcher and the researched with respect to economic and political power, but in a religiously informed consumption context is also framed by issues of gender relationships, cultural norms, and religiosity (Stoddart, 2007). These issues require substantial reflexivity to not only manage, in terms of research relationships, but also express, with respect to the conveyance of findings, because there are things that should not or cannot be said by the researcher and the researched as they are perceived as haram (Zerubavel, 2007). Such issues become fundamental to working in an 'Islamic market research space' where Muslim participants and researchers invariably do not wish to be perceived as a 'bad Muslim' or in harming Islam in any possible way, even if their own adherence to Islam may be weak (Hall & Prayag, 2020b). Indeed, there is a fundamental tension between not wanting to be seen as a 'bad Muslim' and not following social and institutional norms and the degrees of religiosity that exist among practicing and secular or cultural Muslims, for whom Islam is a cultural or ethnic connection (Milani, 2017).

A potential implication of such a situation is that much of the Islamic research context can become beset by a binary framing of what is done/not done, Muslim/non-Muslim which is quite at

odds with the everyday realities of socio-economic life but about which is difficult to speak, at least on the record, or without being anonymous. With anonymity referring to both the capacity of certain positions and perspectives to be expressed, and to be reported on, as well as the questions that can be asked (Zerubavel, 2007). For example, in research undertaken by two of the authors on food consumption, respondents made it clear that they consumed alcohol occasionally but that they did not want to report that in any official transcript because of fear of them being seen as a ‘bad Muslim’ even though anonymity was provided (Hall & Prayag, 2020a; Oh, 2023).

But Islam, like any faith, is marked by different ways of adhering to tradition (Milani, 2017). Sporadically or non-practicing Muslims, who are often younger or from multi-generational resident communities, may consume alcohol or haram foods, or engage in practices that may be regarded as immodest (Syahrivar, 2021). However, they still identify as Muslim and such consumption practices may be contextual as to who they are with and where they are (Milani, 2017). Unfortunately, the consumer behaviour of the cultural Muslim in countries where Islam is a minority religion is arguably underreported because of how Muslims are identified and framed within contemporary research practices which rely on binary positioning of religion and assumptions that if from a

**Table I.** Practices to improve credibility of market research among Muslims in non-Muslim majority countries.

Researching Muslims in non-Muslim majority countries (the research process)	Practices to improve credibility of market research among Muslims in non-Muslim majority countries
Research problem definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Action based research to solve customer problems</li> <li>• Research empowers participants through research outcomes and the research process</li> <li>• Intersectionalities are considered and integrated in the research problem definition and design</li> <li>• Co-design the research problem and research process with them</li> </ul>
Research design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement with and inclusion of participants in the research design phase rather than during the data collection phase only.</li> <li>• Preconceived notions of cultural practices will create barriers to identifying suitable methods.</li> <li>• Consider power, gender, cultural and economic distance between the participant and the researcher/research institution.</li> <li>• Positionality of the researcher is acknowledged</li> </ul>
Sampling and data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to sampling population for qualitative research through credible and well trusted individuals in the community</li> <li>• Snowballing methods</li> <li>• Give explicit consideration to gender of researcher and participant</li> <li>• Accessing communities and participants through their community association and/or local mosque</li> </ul>
Data analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iterative process for qualitative and quantitative research.</li> </ul>
Post-research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share findings in workshops and community events to raise collective awareness of common consumption related issues</li> <li>• Provide actionable solutions that can improve access to, for example, halal food.</li> </ul>

particular country or ethnic group then you *must* be Muslim. Indeed, the question of what constitutes a Muslim respondent in terms of identity needs to increasingly be treated in a much more nuanced fashion. Therefore, better attention should be given to the range of identities that the researched (and the researchers) hold and the context in which they are expressed so as to better represent the realities of consumption practices and consumer behaviours. With researchers needing to better recognise that the act of asking someone of their identity and religious affiliation covers a much more complex representation than the demographic categories used in most marketing research.

## Conclusion

This study has sought to provide a framework underpinned by a better understanding of the methodological grounding of research with Muslim minority populations. Drawing strongly on feminist theory, intersectionalities and method as well as the concept of epistemic in/justice (Hutton & Cappellini, 2022), it has emphasized the importance of understanding the relationality that exists between the researcher and the researched and the context within which this occurs. Positionality and situatedness are central to this approach as they potentially provide a much richer account of the lived experiences of the range of expressions of Muslim identity (Milani, 2017; Sandıkçı, 2011; 2018) and seek to escape the artificial binaries of Muslim/non-Muslim that occur in many studies of Islamic consumers (Salam et al., 2019). It can be rightly argued that the appropriateness of this approach is not necessarily unique to Muslim market research but should be relevant to any minority population that is the “other” to the majority society. Some of the issues identified in Figure 1 have also been discussed in studies on refugees, disaster victims and people with disabilities (Dodds et al., 2023; Wordsworth et al., 2021). Nevertheless, what is central here is the importance of emphasising methodology before specific methods, and the need to understand the cultural appropriateness of particular methods or at least their implications. For example, in a Muslim context the use of interviews can have significant implications for the gender of the participating researcher and subject. In short, consideration of the methodological context for researching minority populations is paramount as both methodology and specific methods can increase vulnerability and reduce inclusivity for participants.

## Practical implications

By drawing on a range of empirical research experiences as well as relevant literature through a reflexive approach as suggested in other studies (see Dodds et al., 2023), we have highlighted the role of the researcher and their positionality with respect to the participants (including between participants). In Muslim market research this is not just an issue of religion but also, in some cases, of gender and who is permitted to speak to who by themselves or in the company of others. This therefore can require the development of specific methodologies, training, and selection of researchers that are acceptable to communities, especially for qualitative research. In addition, it also has significant implications for negotiating consent, as well as research practice, including for the conduct and development of surveys and the nature of the response.

In working with Muslim populations we argue that methodology, and attention to relationality and the situatedness of a vulnerable population must come before methods, with the research problem ideally being negotiated with those researched so as to best identify access, suitability, and (mutual) understanding (see Figure 1). While gender has been prioritised in our framework as a research subject, the broader consumption context of Muslim migrant and minority populations remain also an important research priority. Figure 1 also highlights that intersectionalities related to

the researcher may affect how the research problem is perceived and the subsequent methodological choices. In many ways the research practices suggested in this paper should be adopted for all populations, whether vulnerable or otherwise. However, the recent history of the stigmatisation of some aspects of Muslim consumption practices in countries in which the Muslim population is a minority, and the sheer ignorance of other practices, would seem to make such intersectional methodologies essential.

For practitioners, Table 1 summarises a set of market research practices that should be applied in the case of researching Muslim populations in non-Muslim majority countries. For example, from research problem definition to post-research, a set of practices is offered that will make participants feel more inclusive in the research process but also for the researcher to gain access to such participants.

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