Arab Consumer Attitudes towards International Marketing as a Result of the Ongoing Arab Spring: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract: *The Middle East has been recently and continues to be affected by a phenomenon referred to popularly as the 'Arab Spring'. The phenomenon appears to have sparked a wave of candidness amongst Arab consumers in a way that hitherto was not apparent. A question as to whether the uprisings are about the pursuit of democracy, political reform or freedom of speech remains to be settled. The purpose of this discussion paper is to ask what effects the Arab Spring may have on marketing theory and practice. To that end, the paper presents the results of a systematic literature review pertaining to marketing in the Middle East. A quantitative bibliometric method of citation analysis is deployed to identify the range of themes that have been previously researched. From this review, the paper identifies the particular relevance of the Arab Spring phenomenon to international marketing theory and practice. Thus, this study makes the first attempt to conceptualize what the Arab Spring means for future international marketing theory and practice and marks the start of a first investigation, and potential beginning of a longitudinal study into the phenomenon as it continues to unfold, grounded firmly in the marketing discipline.*
Keywords: *Arab spring, Bibliometrics, Citation analysis, Consumer attitudes, Systematic literature review.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Middle East (ME) is going through a transitional phase that has seldom been experienced by those countries taking part. Due to the speed at which the phenomenon is unfolding, academics of all disciplines have two choices: first to wait until the phenomenon has stabilised before attempting to understand its impact on vicarious disciplines. Second, to start now and gain a provisional, albeit transitional understanding of the phenomenon, perhaps using leading countries like Egypt and Tunisia to predict the development of epiphenomena in countries whose transition began later, or is yet to happen. It is this second stance that is advocated in the paper. The aim of the paper is to gain a systematic understanding of what is known about marketing and the most relevant themes in the ME by identifying the number of citations a particular article has gained in other published research, resulting in the identification of the most influential publications and scholars.

The purpose of this paper is to present the first phase of an inductive investigation into the impact of the Arab Spring on marketing theory and practice. Results presented here are evidence that the research problem should be grounded in the international marketing sub-discipline. A series of themes for discussion are then proposed, which must be re-examined for their continuing reliability due to the grounding of their findings in a less candid era. The paper is therefore structured as follows: first an overview of the Arab Spring and the impact of social media are documented; second a description of the methodology used is presented, in particular, the bibliometric analysis techniques; third the findings from the paper are highlighted; fourth the implications drawn are briefly summarised.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The backdrop to the Arab Spring

The Arab revolts are considered to have blossomed as a pulsating race for democracy, change and dignity (Carroll, 2011). About 60% of the ME population is under 30. Young Arab protestors are adjudged to be the catalysts behind the uprisings (Daou, 2011). The fall of authoritarian regimes such as those headed by Tunisia's Ben Ali, Egypt's Hosni Mubarak (Bilal, 2011) and Libya's Gaddafi regime has ignited an optimism of hope for the rest of the Arab countries citizens demanding changes (Niblock, 2011; Petrou, 2011). Protests in Yemen are still ongoing (El-Shimy, 2011) and tensions in Bahrain remain high amid Shia citizens in dispute with the Sunni lead government (Piven, 2011). Furthermore, in Syria and at the time of writing, significant armed resistance against Bashar Al-Assad continues (Sorensen, 2011). Other countries in the Middle East have seen less dramatic uprisings such as Jordan (AlJazeera, 2011), Lebanon (Ottaway, 2011), Iraq, Morocco (Owais, 2011) and Iran (AlJazeera, 2011). Arab Gulf States such as Kuwait, Qatar, Oman and the United Arab Emirates only saw minor demonstrations (Kamrava, 2012). In Saudi Arabia, an increase in state workers salaries by 15% was instated and the Saudi government has recently allocated the right for female citizens to vote for the first time, which may be seen as

attempts to placate latent dissatisfaction (Khalife, 2011). A recent report by Kinninmont et al. (2011) suggested that discrimination on the basis of gender, race or nationality significantly holds back the economic development of Middle East region. Religion in politics is a debatable feature of the Arab Spring phenomenon. Many Arab countries follow Sharia law (religious law of Islam) such as Saudi Arabia, while others follow a mix of both Sharia law and Civil law such as Egypt, Sudan and Morocco (Al-Olayan et al., 2000). Hashemi (2011) suggested that the vast majority of Arabs are against the idea of a democracy that follows a Western-style form of secularism but they support the idea that Shaira law should be 'a' source although not 'the' source of legislation.

2.2 Social Media and the Arab Spring
Media communications such as the internet and social networking sites such as facebook, twitter and mobile phones have driven the Arab Spring forward (Ray, 2011). Protesters pressing for democracy used ICT to build extensive networks and organise mass demonstrations (Ghannam, 2011). Perhaps the ability to speak out has existed a long time before the internet, yet many individuals in ME societies have not been given an opportunity to cast their own candid views. Social media has significantly assisted in transforming the discontented voices of Arab citizens into a structured movement that has epitomised shared attitudes and values for 'change' (Howard & Hussain, 2011). Statistical findings demonstrated that the highest age demographic using social networking online was the 15-24 age groups with 61% (Insights MENA, 2010). Limitations are that the data was conducted between September-November 2010 before the Arab Spring started. Looking at the Arab Spring from a multinational lens, born global virtual sphere MNE's such as Facebook, Twitter and Google have created the technology and infrastructure that enabled Arab citizens to vocalise their opinions throughout the uprisings. Advantages such firms have are that they can advocate their technologies without having a physical presence in a particular country, thus establishing a borderless virtual sphere (Benmamoun et al., 2012). Although it is still unclear if social media will contribute to key reforms in Arab countries, it will continue to be readily available and therefore virtual sphere MNE's have a strong foothold in the ME.

3. METHODOLOGY
3.1 Application of a systematic literature review
Because it has the ability to cross reference a wide range of sources, journals and biblically incorporates an extensive series of disciplines, the Web of Science database was used to carry out initial searches. Administering the search inquiry entailed the careful consideration of keywords used in order not to have pre-determined biases and maintain a grounded approach. Two generalised search terms were typed into the database: 'marketing' and 'Middle East' and the second string 'marketing' and 'Arab'. Further parameters were used to limit the search from '1970-2011' and exclusively to the Web of Science database. An initial yield of 555 results (for 'Marketing and 'ME') and 235 hits (for 'Marketing' and 'Arab') were returned. Return query's captured an array of disciplines, so the results were subsequently filtered for both search inquiry's to 'business', 'management' and 'economics' Web of Science categories, thus deploying a unique exclusion criteria. Results were also limited by 'article' to exclude book reviews and editorial material. Consequently, the return hits circumscribed to 114 ('marketing' and 'ME') and 22 ('marketing' and 'Arab'). Duplicate results were omitted from the total count. Contrary to conventional systematic literature reviews (Denyer & Tranfield, 2006; Greenhalgh & Peacock, 2005; Pittaway et al., 2004), the domain of emphasis concerned with this systematic literature review was to provide theoretical lucidity and the clarification of themes that entailed the most pertinent marketing literature in the ME. A citation analysis was performed to determine the citation frequency of the bibliographic references administered in all the articles and analysed to pinpoint the research that had impacted most significantly on the 'marketing' and 'ME' and 'marketing' and 'Arab' fields. The results of this analysis are outlined in section 3.2.

3.2 Citation analysis: demarcating the systematic bibliometric approach
Citation analysis is concerned with the number of citations that an article has gathered over time in other published research (King, 1987). Prime importance is given to the most insightful publications and significant scholars in user defined search string fields. A number of scholars in the field of management and marketing have documented their own citation analysis in recent years (Alves, 2010; Backhaus et al., 2011; Ma & Yu, 2010; Ramos-Rodriguez & Ruiz-Navarro, 2004). As a division of bibliometrics, citation analysis attempts to bond cohesive ties between the relationship of a fragment or whole body of an article that is cited in or cited out. Collated relationships can be utilised to highlight the progression of a distinctive body of research (Tseng et al., 2010). The citation analysis for this study penetrates into quantitative territory, which represents greater objectivity, in contrast with a subjective qualitative analysis. Data obtained was characterised further and broken down into categories. These categories were termed management, marketing and other. A unique criterion was used based on the journal rankings provided by the Association of Business schools (2010), whose journal quality guide categorises what signifies a 'marketing' and 'management' journal.
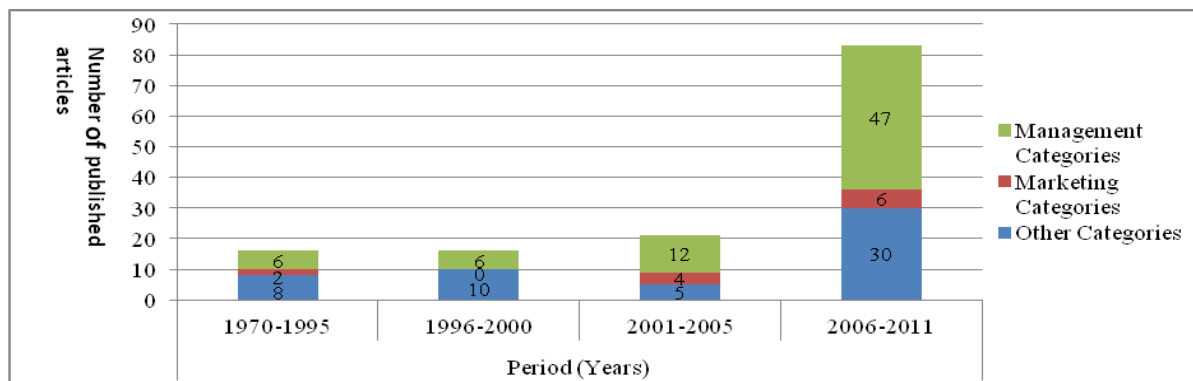
Figure 1: Number of articles published in 'marketing', 'management' and 'other' journals between 1970-2011 using the search terms 'marketing' and 'ME' and 'marketing' and 'Arab'.

The next stage analysed the citation frequency of the bibliographic references apparent in all the articles. The analysis illustrated the total inward (cited) citation counts for each management and marketing category article by the individual or co-authors as well as the total outward (citing) citation counts for each management and marketing category article by authors of other articles for the periods 1970-2011. A citing behaviour database was then developed (see table 1). Data compiled for the analysis amounted to 136 articles specifically related to the ME that were published between 1970 and 2011. Only 12 of these articles had been published in marketing journals (see table 2).

4. FINDINGS

Table 1: Mumber of articles published between 1970 and 2011, the 'marketing', 'management', 'other' categories and the cited in and cited out reference counts.

		1970-1995	1996-2000	2001-2005	2006-2011	Total	%
Number of Marketing AND ME AND Marketing AND Arab articles published		16	16	21	83	136	100
Articles of database	Marketing Categories	2	0	4	6	12	8.82
	Management Categories	6	6	12	47	71	52.21
	Other Categories	10	10	9	36	65	47.79
Number of analysed articles		3	5	6	15	29	
Number of analysed references cited in journals		98	243	330	708	1379	100
References in database	Marketing Categories	22	26	81	94	223	16.17
	Management Categories	7	52	81	23	163	11.82
	Other Categories	69	165	168	591	993	72.01
Number of analysed references cited out of journals		37	62	39	23	161	100
References in database	Marketing Categories	5	2	14	13	34	21.12
	Management Categories	5	28	19	8	60	37.27
	Other Categories	27	32	6	2	67	41.61

Table 2: illustrates a summary of the marketing articles in the ME from 1970-2011. The marketing journals are classified according to the Association of Business Schools (2010).

Journal	Author (s)	Title of Article
European Journal of Marketing	Elbashier & Nicholls (1983)	Export Marketing in the ME-The importance of cultural differences
International Journal of Advertising	Karande et al. (2006)	Advertising standardisation in culturally similar markets. Can we standardise all components?
International Journal of Consumer Studies	Seubsman et al. (2009)	Cultural resistance to fast-food consumption? A study of youth in North Eastern Thailand
International Marketing Review	Al-Khatib et al. (2005)	Ethical segmentation of consumers in developing countries: a comparative analysis
International Marketing Review	Lee-Kelley et al. (2004)	Virtual exhibitions: an exploratory study of ME exhibitors' disposition
International Marketing Review	Marta et al. (2004)	Some important factors underlying ethical decisions of Middle-Eastern marketers
International Marketing Review	Souiden (2002)	Segmenting the Arab markets on the basis of marketing stimuli
Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing	Al-Husan, & Brennan (2009)	Strategic account management in an emerging economy
Journal of Business Research	Farah & Newman (2010)	Exploring consumer boycott intelligence using a socio-cognitive approach
Journal of Business Research	Manrai & Manrai (1995)	Effects of cultural-context, gender, and acculturation on perceptions of work versus social leisure-time usage
Journal of International Marketing	Shoham et al. (2006)	Animosity on the home front: The Intifada in Israel and its impact on consumer behavior
Journal of Marketing	Grinstein & Nisan (2009)	Demarketing, Minorities, and National Attachment

The database also disclosed the most prolific scholars and key journal articles in relation to marketing in the ME across the periods 1970-2011. A dynamic citation value (CV) was formulated (see table 3), which is defined as a ratio of individual citations to the total citations (Backhaus et al., 2011).

Table 3: shows the most influential authors in the field of Marketing in the ME and underscore's the citation value (CV).

	1970-1995			1996 -2000	
Rank	Author(s)	CV	Rank	Author(s)	CV
1	Manrai & Manrai (1995)	91.89%	1	Badri & Davis (2000)	50.00%
2	Elbashier & Nicholls (1983)	5.41%	2	Dant & Nasr (1998)	38.71%
3	Seznec (1995)	2.70%	3	Ngo (2000)	8.06%
4			4	Merron (1999)	3.23%
5			5	SyCip (1996)	0.00%
6			6		
7			7		
8			8		
9			9		
10			10		
	2001-2005			2006-2011	
Rank	Author(s)	CV	Rank	Author(s)	CV
1	Al-Khatib et al. (2005)	32.56%	1	Shoham et al. (2006)	58.33%
2	Marta et al. (2004)	30.23%	2	Karande et al. (2006)	25.00%
3	Al-Khatib, J. A., S. J. Vitell, et al. (2005)	23.26%	3	Grinstein & Nisan (2009)	8.33%
4	Souiden (2002)	9.30%	4	Farah & Newman (2010)	4.17%
5	Al-Khatib et al. (2004)	2.33%	5	Sidani & Thornberry (2010)	4.17%
6	Lee-Kelley et al. (2004)	2.33%	6	Abdelal et al. (2008)	0.00%
7	Scandizzo (2005)	0.00%	7	Abdelsalam & Gad (2009)	0.00%
8			8	Al-Husan & Brennan (2009)	0.00%
9			9	Barrett et al. (2011)	0.00%
10			10	Cuervo-Cazurra (2011)	0.00%

Table 4: displays the themes identified from the twelve marketing journals.

Theme Number	Themes Identified in the ME
1	Cross-cultural differences in the ME
2	Export Marketing in the ME
3	ME Standardisation versus Adaptation debate
4	ME Homogenous versus Heterogeneous debate
5	ME Demarketing and national attachment
6	Consumer boycotts in the ME
7	Arab consumers' ethical perceptions
8	Affect of virtual exhibitions on marketing mix elements in the ME
9	ME strategic account management
10	ME consumer ethnocentrism and animosity

4. IMPLICATIONS

Marketing studies in the ME have seen an incremental rise particularly since 1970. However there remains a significant gap in this literature, particularly in relation to the phenomenon of the Arab Spring. The highest ranked international marketing journal cited in articles is International Marketing Review (third), whilst the leading marketing journal cited out in other journals' articles is the Journal of Business Research (first). As the phenomenon of the Arab Spring continues, there is the potential for a subsequent rise in the number of Arab Spring related publications. Empirically, this study makes the first contribution to conceptualise what the Arab Spring phenomenon means for marketing and marks the beginning of a longitudinal study, whereby the systematic literature review points to a marketing agenda that suggests that the Arab Spring phenomenon should become of greater concern to marketing scholarship to allow for empirical development in order to

enhance the understanding of Arab consumer attitudes towards international marketing. In terms of practice, the bibliometric approach used in this study may be deployed by both marketing scholars and also those outside the discipline for their own respective literature reviews.

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