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Beyond Decolonising – Some Thoughts on the Future of Marketing/ Marketing Research In the Gulf/ME/NA Region

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Beyond Decolonising – Some Thoughts on the Future of Marketing/Marketing Research in the Gulf/ME/NA Region

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Abstract

There is much the MENA/Gulf region can teach regarding the ever-narrowing hegemonic perspectives in the literature – from selfhood, agency, empowerment, women, collectivism, intersectionality to consumption and business practice. This paper focuses, briefly, on several very large areas of scholarship to consider the issues raised and the opportunities uncovered, as they pertain to the region. The article introduces some important particularities of the region, an overview of some relevant areas of potential future study and outlines how we, as academics, can contribute to a positive future for the Arabian Gulf/ME/NA overall.

Keywords: Marketing, Decolonization, Youth, Islam, Empowerment

1. Introduction

There is much the MENA/Gulf region can teach regarding the ever-narrowing hegemonic perspectives in the literature – from selfhood, agency, empowerment, women, collectivism, intersectionality to consumption and business practice.

Recent interest in 'decolonising the business school' (Kelly & Hrenyk, 2020; Limmki et al., 2020; The Centre for Responsible Enterprise (ETHOS), 2021; Woods et al., 2021b) has only highlighted the depth and breadth of knowledge those active in, living in, enculturated by, and engaged in, these regions (as well as many others outside the ever expanding (Burton, 2009a; Burton, 2009b) white/western parameters), can contribute to knowledge in general, let alone business schools. Examples of this are ubiquitous in scholarship by, and on, indigenous populations worldwide (Bargh, 2007; Cusicanqui, 2012; Escobar, 2011; Freire, 1996).

However, little consideration of indigenous, or any kind of non-hegemonic (western, neo-liberal, capitalist), research design is enacted – even when the context clearly has its own frameworks, designs, values and worldviews. One simple example is the conception of time. For the Japanese, long-term business plans can be made for 100 years, while for Native Americans, decisions can be based on a time horizon of 7 generations. Māori consider their mokopuna (grandchildren) and tīpuna (ancestors), but also the whenua (land), in decision-making. In Aotearoa New Zealand, as well as in Canada, legal person status has been given to natural features, such as the Whanganui river (Mika & Scheyvens, 2021) to reflect the importance of these places. The incorporation of considerations of the natural environment and the community are important in many contexts, and outside the western world/business model, production and consumption can have heavy weightings on variables outside of monetary gain (Saeed et al., 2001).

There are arguments that business schools are at the heart of the colonising framework, perpetuating capitalism to the exclusion of all other (even economic) systems of life, and also that marketing, as a 'borrower' field, has a good chance to redress wrongs/redirect student minds, and take on racist/sexist/—ist institutions (Baykut et al., 2021; Eckhardt et al., 2021).

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However, I would argue that the starting point for this unpacking or critique is already mis-centred, as I have written previously, with regard to the universalised use of western feminist perspectives using (white) men(s) lives/realities as a comparative starting point of analysis, and its (ir)relevance to Muslim women's realities (especially from an Islamic teachings perspective) (Boulanouar, 2006). Therefore, I think the issue should not start from the point of decolonising the business schools – steps which include: adding diversity, increasing representation/inclusion, decreasing literal numbers of some types/profiles etc. Indeed, I argue that this unnecessarily encourages an institutional check-box exercise (often referred to as 'woke washing') and highlighted in the media of several nations over the last couple of years (Anonymous, 2021; Rolleston, 2021), as well as in academic research (Mirzaei et al., 2022; Vredenburg et al., 2020). The necessity to offer a contribution to knowledge – our own and that of our students and society – means that we must critically and meaningfully examine our biases and hegemonies, and act to reconstruct our offering of knowledge through our different channels (research, teaching, media, consulting). We have more than enough experience, research and knowledge – albeit scattered in (usually) lower ranked journals, lesser fêted people/speakers, lesser 'known' contexts – to actually offer Gen Z both true AND positive disruption in education and consumption.

In this article, I will touch upon several very large areas of scholarship and consider the issues they raise and the opportunities they provide for this region, and beyond. First, I will outline the particular attributes of the region, then give an overview of some very large and important areas interlinking the business and social sciences literatures, aimed at simply illustrating some of these linkages and offering some areas of future research for interested marketing scholars. After that, the focus will turn to the numbers of youth, and the centrality of the dominance of that fact, to this region – the many opportunities it evokes, and also some considerations and cautions around digital nativity. In the conclusion I try to provide some points on how we can contribute in light of all these many research potentialities, and the possibilities evident in this region.

2. The MENA/Gulf region

The term "Middle East North Africa Gulf Region" covers a huge geographical area across three continents and, despite varying definitions, represents around 24 countries and around 550 million people (of which around 17% are in Egypt alone), with an average age of 23–27 years old. The region is very diverse ethnically and religiously, but is dominated by the Arabic language and Islamic faith, although substantial minorities also exist within this very large group of people.

It is also a region with a wide range of financial resources. On one end we have the GCC countries, who are very wealthy and have developed cities and infrastructures very rapidly, allowing the use of imported technical expertise and other resources and technologies not available from the landscape. At the other end we have the countries with much more volatile and diversified economies, usually with much less wealth. As a result, the Gulf is a favoured destination of Arabs, and Muslims in particular, as well as being attractive to expats from all around the world.

Of particular interest to marketers, a discipline primarily opportunity- and future-focused, is the number of young people in the region. Birth rates remain relatively high across the MENA Gulf with 2.8 children born on average to each woman, and the population is currently skewed young, representing a very different future map for this region than its western counterparts (World bank, 2019).

If we consider youth and the shape this region must take due to their dominance, what can we/marketing offer them? Obviously, from a market perspective, youth means labour force. In wider terms, youth means new ideas, energy, creativity, idealism and, in many cases, migration. It means resources are required in the region for education, for employment/job creation, for play spaces and opportunities to learn and grow.

3. Context/colonialism/indigeneity

This region shares a basic ethnicity and large tracts share religions, however the three main monotheistic religions are all well represented – it is not a region of only Muslims, or only Arabs. As well as this, Islam itself is misunderstood – within the Islamic teaching there is a huge scope for variation of practice and performance which a quick consideration of the various dressing styles of Muslims clearly reveals. Regardless, from outside the region this vast expanse of people and land is often seen in this short-sighted way, as monolithic. De Mooij (2011); applying Hofestede's cultural dimensions to European contexts does a great job showing how different European countries such as Belgium and France-who share a border, a language, and many other aspects of culture (and have

done for thousands of years) exhibit quite different country level value priorities. Most researchers, especially those writing in English, are more familiar (accepting?) of the illustration of difference between two such geographically close countries, but there are layers of colonial, hegemonic writing and thought clouding the viewpoint of the MENA Gulf region (Bryce et al., 2013; Kahf, 1999; Mellman, 2014). Islam is regularly portrayed as a monolith (Boulanouar, 2015; Elmessiri, 1997), the Gulf countries as identical (with what may be described as caricatures of Saudi Arabia at the centre), and the wider Arab region as interchangeable (Said, 1978; Said, 1981; Said, 1994; Shaheen, 1984). However, these 24 countries have a long, vast and varied history – not least linked with the development of much shared human knowledge, but also of different forms and experiences of colonisation by western nations – England, France, Spain, Italy, Portugal – or of no formal colonisation at all.

As a result, this region has citizenry and residents who speak multiple languages and benefit from the cultural learning that comes with bi/multi-lingalism. The experiences of colonisation for these nations have varied from a full dismantling of the legal code (Tunisia) to 'tampering' with it (Morocco), according to legal scholar Mounira Charrad (2001). Nevertheless, the time spent under colonial rule of 'dependency' and the standard steps of colonial imperative such as restructuring education systems, enforcing foreign language acquisition, repurposing land and personnel for their home country priorities, and the like, have long-term and sustained impacts on colonised societies view of self, priorities and weightings of value. This is besides the most obvious impacts of such suppression and repression, an example of which is when France left Morocco in 1956, the literacy rate had declined to just 11% (Boulanouar, 2011; Pennell, 2000; Pennell, 2003).

There are innumerable, long term and domino-type effects of colonialism that echo far into the futures of the colonised territories and their peoples. Land, natural resources and other bounty are repurposed, removed, restructured, seized, and sold; while patterns of life and cultures, characterised as they are by language, food, clothing and family structure are dismantled, threatened, severed, and re-framed (Bargh, M. 2007; (Mikaere, 2011).

4. Identity, self, empowerment, agency

Contributions across these areas of scholarship are ones marketers can make a significant impact on. In marketing, where we use a lot of theories from other humanities and social science disciplines, an active reflexive approach to research design and assumptions around these truly pivotal ideas is essential. Critical examinations can, and should, begin with not just a consideration of original sources – which we see neglected over and over again, leading to a muddying and misrepresenting of works (and acts) of some of the most important writers of our times (eg, Maslow – see Bouzenita & Boulanouar, 2016; Darwin; Sha'arawi; Simmel; Veblen and many more) – but with considerations of definitions and teleology, rather than just repeating. For Arabs/Arabic, an example of the hijacking of a definition or a re-formatting of a concept, can be easily illustrated in the English use of the word 'jihad' as 'holy war'. This word is understood more accurately as 'struggle' – any struggle, including that to stop smoking or eating too much cake. A translation of 'holy war' back into Arabic does not give you 'jihad', but 'harb muqadasa' (literal). Products can be hijacked as well, as Varman (2017) so beautifully articulates in his paper 'Curry'. These issues are foundational, and imperative in supplying a relevant and accurate grounding for any research design Zakaria (2021) tackles this issue around the word 'empowerment'. She considers the word to hold a status of 'relative meaninglessness' (p48) at this stage of its use, having been transformed from an idea of political mobilisation (supported by education aimed at freeing people from 'oppression based on sex, class, race and nationality' as promoted by the leaders of the DAWN group in India) to an idea of parity with men (meeting the goals of white feminists) and economic success measures (meeting the goals of development organisations) (see, Sen & Grown, 1985). This original idea of bottom-up empowerment for women/anyone, has now become a top-down exercise, where the frameworks for measuring success relate less to the realities of the context and the patterns of life within it, but to an entirely foreign agenda, with different weighting on the variables than an informed contextualisation would distribute (Wood et al., 2021).

In this region, there are a multitude of issues to consider around identity. There are the locals/nationals, there are the migrants, there are the expats – all of these communities make and take from the various local/national societies. The Gulf, in particular, is known as a destination for skilled technical workers from all around the world, and also for the service sector workers who usually come from nearby countries. The percentage of these workers, and the length of their average term of residence

varies with their country of origin and their skill level, but they are all transient as there is no opportunity for citizenship in the Gulf countries. Across the Gulf, expats account for between 30% (Saudi Arabia) and 88% (UAE) of the population (2015 figures). Additionally, and impactfully, these expats are overwhelmingly male, meaning that the gender balance in these states is significantly skewed towards men, from 188 men per 100 women in Kuwait, and up to 397 men per 100 women in Qatar (2016 figures). In the workplace, there are about 5 males per female (GCC-STAT, 2020).

Related issues are that many members of the huge transient populations reside in the Gulf without their families (living singly), or in partial families (such as husbands and wives) with their children in the home country being cared for by their parents/relatives often due to income restrictions on supporting families in the region. In cases where whole families live in the Gulf, children are regularly referred to as "3rd culture kids" (Moore & Barker, 2012; Selmer et al., 2021) who have parents from one country, often a passport from another, and live/grow up in the Gulf themselves. These children are an increasingly rich area of study as they are frequently fluent in no one language, they are not firmly rooted in any particular community/place, and are often compelled to leave the family/country at 18 when their ability to be sponsored by their parents may cease.

This difficulty with identity can also be seen in expat workers, and is reflected in a growing body of work on 'self-initiated expats' in management and related fields. Obviously, the experience of expat life is different for different kinds of workers and those who have arrived by necessity as opposed to choice. Also, many necessity expats spend extended periods of time in the second country, causing connection issues with family back home and having long term effects on relationships with children and spouses exercised long-distance. While the literature in business (especially management/HR) is quite active around self-initiated expats who are often skilled, western (trained) workers coming to the Gulf under the best worker conditions (full medical, housing, return tickets to their home country every summer, end of service payments etc), less is written (especially within business) on the bottom of the pyramid/subaltern workers (Jagadale et al., 2018) who typically live for much longer periods on far less comfortable contracts. Nevertheless, there is much room for writing on the consumption practices – including remittances – of all parts of this market, looking at demand, luxury, conspicuous consumption etc.

For young people growing up in the region, nationals or expats, there are issues of the development of a self that are influenced by external forces, as they are worldwide. In this region, there is a strong emphasis on family and extended family, often also on tribe/community and nationhood. Given the central role of the family and the extensive and intensive socialisation that takes place inside it, there is not enough research or emphasis placed on this priority in much of our research and that in associated social sciences and humanities Kâgitçibaşi (2007) calls this the 'majority world' model of socialisation, taking place in societies often referred to as 'collective' with the focus on development of a relational self. If the self is considered and developed outside, or further along a continuum away from an individualised conception of the self (Kâgitçibaşi, 1997), it will obviously have ramifications for the related concepts of empowerment and agency. The current literature is dominated by the framing and understanding of empowerment and agency within an individualised worldview, where the primary locus of consideration is 'me' – how anything affects me, what I think, my priorities. Within the majority world, the consideration of 'me' as primary is commonly, and to varying extents, superseded by a consideration of 'we' – what is important for us, for our future generations, for our children, for our planet, for our community, for our future. This emphasis on family and relationships is reflected in the in-group and out-group statuses of family versus stranger, and has impacts across all aspects of living – particularly as it relates to trust circles (Tajfel, 1982). The overlay of this lived norm and the powerful influence of western culture, particularly that of the United States, through media and other pop culture, creates a nexus in the region, where all manner of forces vie for influence over the youth with almost endless potential effects for consumption. In this way, marketing research on children/young people and their consumption is centrally relevant as, unlike western contexts, there are large numbers of young people, young consumers, youthful markets and demand pressures. 3rd culture kids are another subset within this, and children in the Gulf have an overlay as they live within a context where the focus is on consumption rather than production and the standard of living all around them is exceptionally high. Consequently, this has innumerable impacts on their life long consumption, brand loyalty, and lifetime customer value, as well as impacting issues of self-esteem and identity.

Similarly, residents of all types across the 24 countries of the MENA Gulf region experience

issues of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989). At its core, this issue involves the intersection of gender and race, most commonly reflecting a hierarchy consisting of white men, white women, brown & black men and then 'others' (Zakaria, 2021). However, to a greater/lesser degree, issues of (blatant) whiteness are less relevant here – whiteness, in itself, being a controversial and expanding term. As Burton (2009a; 2009b) discusses, in 1751 Benjamin Franklin considered the English white, while Spaniards, Italians, French, Russian, Swedes and Germans were considered non-white; by the late 19th century these groups came to be considered white, and the non-whiteness was left for peoples of the Mediterranean and Slavic regions. "Whiteness" also extends beyond borders into areas of representation, with Franks (2000) and Ware (1993) for example, raising issues of racism faced by white women converts to Islam. Instead, issues of 'how white', as well as strong tribal, regional, ethnic and linguistic intersections predominate, as well as issues relating to presentation of the self through clothing – particularly for women. This is not a new issue for marketing, with Burton (2009a; 2009b) writing on whiteness explicitly, and many studies considering (particularly women's) clothing – including religious clothing.

When contexts outside of the typical western ones are examined in the literature, the work can reflect what was described, over 20 years ago, as "commodification of culture" – where contexts are 'decoupled' from their frameworks, usually for presentation to tourists. An interesting example of this examined by Belk and Groves (1999) looking at Aboriginal art was near the start of marketing's interest in this kind of research, followed up in this region and in other majority world contexts, but without much impact on the theory, framing, understanding, explaining, or learning from non-western contexts, despite the introduction and development of the field of Consumer Culture Theory (CCT). There have been calls in the literature for the development of informed research designs (Boulanouar et al., 2017; Coates, 1996; Henry et al., 2016), which have led to research outputs, noticeably in the women's entrepreneurship fieldwork in this region (Haya al-Dajani, Colette Henry, Hayfaa Tlaiss, Bettina Bastian), that are making some important impacts, and are supported by key organisations (e.g., the MENA-GEN group) and journals (International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research, International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship). Entrepreneurship journals are making definitive steps to court research on contexts that are underrepresented, misrepresented or marginalised, but calls for the voices of the inhabitants of contexts (Venkatesh, 1995), especially women, are not new (Read & Bartkowski, 2000), nor are they prevalent – white people still speak for many (Crenshaw, 1989; Perez, 2019; Zakaria, 2021). Within marketing, certainly Marketing Theory and Consumption, Markets and Culture, the Journal of Macromarketing make some inroads, as does Markets, Globalization and Development Review (which is also open access) – in the most recent issue, Dholakia and Atik (2021); introduce an issue giving some very important and relevant points for discussion through recent film releases. Islamic Marketing as a field is making many contributions (Alserhan, 2017; Kadirov, 2020). Individual scholars, too, make great contributions – Djavlon Kadirov, Rana Sobh, Russell Belk, Rohit Varman. However, even within these pieces, and journals, credit for the 'insights' or 'origin' of ideas/movements/social changes is often credited to western countries – particularly the US (Dholakia & Atik, 2021; Economist, 2021).

5. Youth

People under 25 make up half the population in the MENA region (Oxford Business Group,). Just this one demographic fact has implications for the future of the region and the changes needed to respond. The same article cited above notes how more than a ¼ of these youth are unemployed, even in the wealthier parts of the region, like the Gulf States. The impact of unemployment for the youth and their senses of self, varies, particularly as it relates to the ability to support themselves and/or be able to progress through the normal life cycle. Work by Lambert et al., (2020) on the UAE shows unemployment does not negatively impact young people – they are not sad or destitute, as their families and state support them. However, in the less well off economies no job/prospects means no marriage, no family, no future with families/states that cannot support citizenry.

Young people are often considered 'digital natives' as they have grown up with technology and think of it as 'normal', which it wasn't – at least in its present form(s) – until around 1996, when the iPhone was released. While youth have a familiarity with the digital world, and are comfortable with devices, even think of solutions from a 'why isn't there an app for this?' viewpoint, they are not

necessarily good at building the technology. Students are still surprised when it is pointed out to them that it is Generation X who provided Windows, You Tube, Google – even Khan Academy! Their 'digital nativity' is more connected with being 'on' social media, a process democratised across this region and others with the mobile phone/data network and no necessity for large scale, expensive infrastructure as a barrier to access.

However, the activity and participation of (especially) young people in online life, has had an important impact on marketing from two major perspectives. Belk (2020) points out that the increase in bloggers, online reviewers, unboxers and other amateurs has meant that marketers have lost control of brands. Instead of the traditional marketer to consumer communications, where marketers decide on which features of a product to highlight to different target markets, consumers now decide and, through word of mouth (often electronic), they co-create the brand personality, meaning, best feature(s) and, through this, its success or failure. Earlier experiences with this kind of loss of control are more easily identified through the activities of rogue channel members or counterfeiters – Burberry had to completely re-group following the devaluing of their brand equity, name and personality as a result of a loss of control (Keegan & Green, 2020). So, the transfer of power to amateur marketers, and the loss of control by companies and their professional marketers is likely to continue to be prevalent. In this region, where the cultural history of many parts of the area are predominantly based on oral communication (easily evidenced in the structures of phone plan offerings), the uptake of digital media has been extensive. Similarly, with a shared history of collectivism, relying on ingroup recommendations and valuing relationships, there are a number of directions this co-creation of consumer meaning could go. One is that the cultures could extend their in-group to include online community members who are not part of a traditional in-group – such as accepting the view of a blogger because she is an Arab, even if living and blogging from London. Recent research has shown that EWOM (electronic word of mouth) has varying credibility value, but is probably increasing as consumers form 'brand relationships' with their favourite influencers and so come to see them as trustworthy 'friends' (Tafesse & Wood, 2021). Another impact is the rise of alternative use of products, with the so-called 'sharing' economy, where there is less ownership and distribution goes straight to consumers – common examples are Uber, Air BnB, Campervan Republic.

6. Data/AI/digital/surveillance

The second point Belk (2020) raises is the rise of big data. This is the data generated either primarily or secondarily from all this online activity. Primary data is collected by following your movements across and through the digital world – what you click on, how long you pause on a video, which tabs you choose, how you move through a shopping site, etc; secondarily is the extra data you leave on the way – the address you have your deliveries sent to, your credit card details you save for use later, the mobile number you include, the email address you supply for newsletters and offers to be sent to, the IP address of your computer, your location.

This further increases the role of the amateur in the performance of marketing tasks – if traditional functions are being performed, who or what is doing the marketing and how are they doing it? Huge companies such as Facebook (but also small companies offering apps) give you their services for free – with the cost being permission to track you and gather data on you, not just on the sites, but across your internet activity. Facebook make their money from selling this data and, data, when combined with all the other data each person leaves all over the internet, becomes very valuable to companies looking for insights into their target markets. We all fall foul of this, as we choose convenience over everything else, and also don't stop to read the terms and conditions before we accept them. We also, through this data, train the algorithms and AI functionality of the big companies. This is how Facebook curates our newsfeeds, and how Instagram recommends accounts, and how You Tube sends you ads – and how they all do all of this.

The combination of a young, tech-using, population, many of whom are inexperienced (live at home, no part-time work/no full-time work, economically dependent, supported by family/state, products of an un-interactive/uncritical formal learning system) and the culture of in-group trust circles (preferring advice to official information, large family/relational groups) in addition to most of this tech being 'free' (in financial terms), and instantly and always accessible, points to innumerable research opportunities in the future as this bricolage expands and identifies itself amongst the large youthful population of the region.

Despite quite prominent criticism (eg, Shoshana Zuboff) of the "Facebook Model" (also attributable to Google and all other giant tech platforms) of corporate surveillance, evidence of discontent with data collection is not widely seen. 'Allowing' cookies and 'sharing' information rebalances the art of

marketing and changes the hands in which it is moulded – companies are skipped, amateurs prevail at one end of the continuum, and correlations at the other. Besides mapping patterns of behaviour of users, big tech companies intervene to (co)create patterns, behaviour, preferences of users at the source (Zuboff, 2019).

Criticisms of the big data reliance model are those at the core of marketing, and marketing teaching. They cannot answer 'why' questions, they cannot give you the meaning, the background or nuances of context. Big data represents correlations, groupings, 'how many' pattern-building. It does not address the human side of human behaviour, and that is where the increasingly undervalued social sciences make an enormous and ongoing contribution to understanding the human condition, in all its kaleidoscopic glory.

For all of us, the energy, commitment, awareness of youth is pivotal to the future of our natural world and our development of harmonious and respectful societies. As there are so many of them in numerical terms, their impact on the future of the region and the wider world must be significant. In response, we must offer them strong, distinctive, provocative educations through both our teaching and our research, so they are equipped to navigate the world and do good in it.

7. Conclusion

The MENA/Gulf Region is exceptionally rich. It has multiple resources and marked potential to not just disrupt, but lead (particularly through youth and context) the future of marketing in terms of research, teaching, and overall influence on consumption. CCT, now a call to theory for marketing academics over 20 years old, is often criticised or lamented as a false flag or lost opportunity. However, at its core, CCT is a call echoing calls in other disciplines to revamp theory, to take bold steps in conceptualising, and to learn from different voices already present in our environments, but to whom we are deaf. Our ethnocentrism in research design, in assigning weightings to variables of value, of the fact that we are al(most) all educated in the same narrow, dominant framework cannot offer either particularly creative theory, or especially insightful research (Ozbilgin & Yalkin, 2021; Elmessiri, 2006; Mukherji & Sengupta, 2004; Ozbilgin & Yalkin, 2022; Smith, 2012). There are plenty of voices and sources we could listen to, to make a real difference to problems (not just of the market) and to the lived experiences of consumers both in the MENA/Gulf region, and all over the world.

CCT and other frameworks, such as those discussed here, are among the few frameworks within marketing that still have the potential to deliver something disruptive to marketing as a discipline, the business school as an organisation, the university as an institution of learning, and the society as a dynamic, life-long learning system. Despite criticism that these frameworks may be primarily populated with studies of 'cute contexts', I hope this paper has shown that there is much more on offer in this region (and others), and that CCT, as one example, has the capacity to make meaningful and disruptive contributions to marketing theory and thought, as seen in the examples highlighted in this paper alone, from the diverse and expansive MENA/Gulf region.

How can we contribute ?

1) Belk (2020) suggests we 'reanimate theory' through the reanimation of ourselves (be brave, be different) – in what and how we research, and what and how we teach.
2) We can resist the domination of correlation – a phenomenon we all suffer from in the form of citation metrics and cookies. This unceasing sovereignty of correlation obscures and obfuscates meaning (and, therefore, progress) – repeating back to us what we do, with no creativity, and is openly vulnerable to easy corruption (eg: curated newsfeeds/ads).
3) We can embrace the rise of scholarship on indigeneity. There is an increasing interest from those outside the research generating community for the information scholarship on indigenous ways of doing and being can highlight 'new' ways to others with a focus on people, the environment, community well-being, synergy and harmony.
4) We can research the experiences of women, and let them speak for themselves.
5) We can take up chances to rebuild ontology and methodology – we can expand our methods, increase our reflexivity, read more widely than just in business, or just in English, for the many-lingual amongst us. We can introduce literature in other languages, get translations into circulation, share.
6) We can employ 'entrepreneurial thinking'. We can look at things in inverse, reverse, and transverse, and incorporate these perspectives into our research designs, frameworks and sampling methods. We can really hunt for the benefits, the implications, and the meanings in our data. We can really think about them.

Ideas around agency, empowerment, gendered experience – particularly for women – are hard to publish, hard to respond to reviews of, hard to communicate, to people without experience of the reality.

In research terms this is a clear loss. The contributions that studying marketing and business through the different lenses that collectivism, women's gendered experience with a collective, Islamic norms and teachings, for example can offer is a way forward – in terms of theory development in marketing, in terms of contribution to systems thinking, in terms of alternatives to neo-liberal capitalist domination. Islam has teachings of practical and ethical interest concerning the environment, for example. Different ways of doing things, and most importantly, of understanding them, can provide much richness to systems – allowing better lives and living for people around the world.

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