Islamophobia and the Brand of Osama: What's in a Name? What's in an Image?

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ABSTRACT

The terrorist attacks in the United States and certain European countries on and after 9/11 have had profound implications for the ordinary Muslims living in these countries. Islamophobia emerged and was often adopted as mere custom. In this article, I bring Middle Eastern studies' approaches to Islamophobia into dialogue with the marketing and branding literature through a critical assessment of the brand name Osama (bin Laden). In the process, I survey the major effects of Islamophobia on Muslims living in the West, observing restrictions in public and formal life. By engaging empirical research and theoretical frameworks, I argue that Osama bin Laden as a strategy conceptualiser and a practitioner (i.e., a militant jihadist) served as a brand that was functional for al-Qaida. The brand image of ordinary Muslims became related to a continuing identification with Osama bin Laden, whose negative public image established an umbrella image for Muslims in general and for the given name Osama in particular, regardless of the personhood of ordinary citizens, with subsequent harmful repercussions.

INTRODUCTION

Islamophobia, like other forms of phobia, is primordial (Quellien, 1910). As an anti-Muslim and anti-Islam disposition, Islamophobia rests upon historical interactions, political standpoints and settled images, and it is unwavering in its effects on contemporary proceedings, attitudes and reputations (Allen, 2010).

During the Middle Ages, the crusades were an early universal interaction that contributed to Islamophobia. Competition for strategic lands, natural sources of power, and religious purity dominated Muslim–Christian relationships (Green, 2015: 35-46). This rivalry seems to have produced within the Western world sustained attitudes towards Islam and Muslim communities, including bewilderment, ignorance, insensitivity, primitiveness, worsening perceptions, and obscurity (Daniel, 1989; Lyons, 2010, 2012). During the following centuries, those initial images of and prejudices against Muslims and Islam persisted. A negative brand image, introduced during and after the Middle Ages, has resulted in an aversion towards or hatred of Muslims (e.g., Arabs, Turks, Asians, and other ethnicities), who would be perceived within the Western world, as time passed, as a homogeneous *other* (Allen, 2010; Mastnak, 2010). During the age of European colonialism, such a discourse of the *othering* of Muslims at the macro- and microlevels delivered religious and political validation for imperial/colonial ventures by Western actors aiming to consolidate and preserve Western supremacy vis-à-vis Muslim communities. Colonial undertakings were motivated by a discourse of power over the Muslim world based on the self-recognition of a superior, humanised and enlightened West, in contrast to the assessment of Muslims as unenlightened and barbaric (*other*).[1]

Many of the factors underlying these preliminary images and stereotypes did not diminish in the twentieth century. Bloody interactions since the establishment of the current interstate system in the Middle East contributed to the sustainability of the Islamophobic discourse in the Western imagination. The major Arab-Israeli wars, the Iraq-Iran war (First Gulf War, 1980–1988), and the second Gulf War (US-led collation against Iraq following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait), in addition to civil wars in Lebanon, Sudan, and Somalia assisted in the creation of new perceptions of Muslims and Islam as insecure, unstable, radical and incompetent in terms of self-governance (Fawcett, 2017: 1; regarding wars and conflicts in the Middle East and related Western perceptions, see, for instance, Milton-Edwards, 2001).

In contemporary times, many social scientists marked 11 September 2001 as a significant climax of Islamophobia because the 9/11 terrorist attacks led to the present negative perceptions of Muslims and Islam in the USA specifically and in the West generally, with the major implications described below. The growth of Muslim minorities in Western communities increased scepticism and the gradually perceived threat of invasion from within (Carr, 2015: 3). The contemporary Arab awakening, the so-called Arab Spring, could have been a viable dynamic to enhance positive awareness of Muslims and Islam because of its potential for modernisation and democratisation (Amour, 2017; Amour, 2018). However, the aggressiveness of authoritarian regimes against their own polities in thwarting the Arab awakening(s) (Amour, 2013), the failure of regional uprisings (e.g., in Egypt) and the breakout of civil wars (e.g., in Yemen and Libya) evoked old sentiments towards the region and its peoples with regard to the incompatibility of Muslims/Islam with political participation and good governance and the resistance of Muslim nations to modernisation and secularisation. This negative brand image of the states/peoples of the Middle East raises the question of the public diplomacy needed to counteract these negative brands.

1. The Aim and Method of the Article

This article explores one aspect of the Middle Eastern brand/image, namely, the case of Osama (bin Laden). In it, I attempt to demonstrate how a negative branding of Osama occurred, with subsequent harmful repercussions for others who hold the same name. To arrive at this conclusion, I apply a number of empirical and theoretical strands. First, I draw on accounts

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[1] There are detailed analyses of these issues, such as the following: (Daniel, 1966, 2009; Hourani, 1996; Said, 1979, 1994).

from a particular film entitled Being Osama (2004) to explore in depth both the lived experiences of the name branding and different perspectives of the implications for change. Where appropriate, I draw on contemporary examples of Islamophobia using data from empirical research and the life experiences of Muslims. The research is also informed by authors of previous studies and by ongoing observations and conversational interviews with persons named Osama regarding their insights into and interpretations of the brand change process. I recognise that the available cases of people named Osama do not permit a valid generalisation to most Osamas. Bearing in mind the number of empirical sources used and the constraints of empirical research for the case under reflection (how many Osamas exist, and what number would validate a generalisation of the findings?), this article does not claim to make generalisable assumptions.

In attempting to strengthen my analysis, I situate my inquiry within the analytical literature about Islamophobia. Moreover, I provide theoretical evidence from the marketing and branding literature in addition to research that focuses on the role of names in racism and Islamophobia since 2001. Such a theoretical framework is integrated into my analysis below. This interdisciplinary approach strengthens the analysis and distinguishes it from thematically similar research concentrated on either Islamophobia or brands. One contribution of this article is the analysis of anti-Osama branding/racism quo Islamophobia.

The article is organised as follows: the next section attempts to postulate the theoretical background for Islamophobia and personal/name branding. The two following sections operate within the theoretical framework, with the first elaborating on the Osama brand pre-9/11 and the next demonstrating how the negative brand image of Osama bin Laden affected Muslims in general and Osamas in particular, regardless of personhood and ownership. The final section offers some concluding remarks.

2. Theoretical Framework: Islamophobia and Personal and Name Branding

The concepts of Islamophobia and branding underpin the theoretical background of the framework deployed in this article. Premodern images and apprehension of Muslims and Islam hold sway in the present Islamophobia (Green, 2015: 98). One implication of Islamophobia is the harm it causes to the personal brands of Muslims, as this article shall demonstrate below. It is therefore important to explain the theoretical background of these concepts and to verify possible interconnections because theories of Islamophobia and brand(ing) are not based on identical models.

Like other forms of racism, Islamophobia is a dogma that stands for and propagates negative attitudes and behaviours towards Muslims and Islam in the public and formal space. Islamophobia-loaded attitudes or behaviours have been prolonged by discourses rooted as far back as the medieval period or have replicated other recent negative representations. They are affected by contemporary accounts, outlooks and images. An Islamophobia-loaded image arises from effective or imaginary realities, from precise and imprecise information and disinformation. The sources of such reflective or imaginary discourses are historical dealings and ideological stances in addition to face-to-face daily experiences with Muslims. Images, according to scholars, play a key role in constituting the Islamophobia discourse. Such images historically are centred on the faith and socio-political milieu of Muslims in addition to their appearance and descent (Allen, 2010; Carr, 2015: 38).

The major tenets of the Islamophobia discourse are a claimed cultural incompatibility of Muslims and Western culture, a nonconformity of Islam with (Western) democracy and liberal norms, and securitisation practices towards Muslims. Islamophobia is a dogmatic discourse among Western peoples that harmfully profiles Islam and Muslims as the *other* in distinction to *us*. This *othering* casts Muslims as a static entity (Carr, 2015: 2) that is different from *us* and thus incompatible with the Western way of life and political system (Carr, 2015: 3; Said, 2003). Such suggested nonconformity is attributed to old images and perceptions, such as notions of Muslims as backward, irrational, unpredictable, dishonest and unreliable, that had been considered inappropriate and politically incorrect in the public and formal space; however, they have been publicly reloaded, and articulating their connotations has become less taboo

among members of the public, political practitioners, and academics (Hafez, 2000; Obeidallah, 2011: 4).

The relational profiling (*othering*) of Muslims is based on different attitudes and behaviours, with different implications for Muslims and the wider community. The implications of Islamophobia for Muslims range from social segregation and discrimination in the economic and political domains to subjection to physical hostility (Allen, 2010: 190). One implication is securitisation mechanisms for Muslims, who are increasingly seen in the public discourse as citizens who present a home-grown risk (Brown & Saeed, 2014). Empirical evidence of increased suspicion towards Muslims is evident in Western states (Fekete, 2009; Kundnani, 2014). Another implication of Islamophobia, as illustrated below, is a decrease in the brand value of Muslims (e.g., equal opportunity, competitiveness) in the public and formal space. Islamophobia can therefore be perceived as corresponding to negative branding.

To reflect upon the implications of Islamophobia on Muslims, this article considers theoretical foundations from the marketing and branding literature. The American Marketing Association (AMA) defines a brand as a 'name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of the competition'(Kotler & Gertner, 2008: 41). Just as products have associated characteristics, humans also have distinguishable packaging that comprises the personal and professional values associated with them, skills and charisma, all of which mark their unique personhood. A brand persona is a person plus values and a name (persona identity). Personal branding is the process of establishing and maintaining this persona identity in relation to others (Hakanen, 2010: 1-4; Sampson, 2002: 1, 7). Whereas a persona identity is the totality of a prescribed image and one's own values, the persona image is the synthesis of the self-reflection of the sender (i.e., brand persona) and the reception, self-knowledge, beliefs, and social norms of the receiver (Álvarez del Blanco, 2010: 7-10; Rampersad, 2009). Personal appearance is a prime integument of a brand identity; hence, packaging (e.g., types of clothing or other signs worn) impacts the external perception and the impression left by the brand persona on the public (i.e., brand image) (Sampson, 2002: 11-12). Examples are Mother Teresa's headgear (a positive brand component) and Hitler's swastika sign (a negative brand component).

Global personal branding, as is evident in the present day, is in some aspects a side effect of the media revolution (Van Ham, 2010). A personal branding process can be initiated by the prospective brand persona him-/herself, as certain celebrities do. Such personal branding can be generated through the transmission of the personal and professional values of the brand persona to the wider public. As for products, personal self-positioning can be enhanced in many different manners, such as through conscious marketing activities, including, among others, interactions such as appearances on television, speaking, writing, or nonverbal communication (Álvarez del Blanco, 2010: 188-205). Personal branding can also be strongly influenced by external factors, as in the case of Osama bin Laden. In any case, personal branding is related to the visibility and exposure of the prospective brand persona (Dinnie, 2009: 15, 45). Personal branding aims to promote an individual's (or the person the brand persona stands for) products (e.g., books and music) or to enforce his/her values and mission. Therefore, politicians and celebrities make use of this practice.

When the prospective brand persona establishes his/her unique brand identity, it is recognised as a brand associated with a reference (i.e., a name). A fruitful personal brand becomes associated with a positive set of ideals and values, attitudes and behaviours. The ingredients of a positive personal brand include credibility and confidence, consistency, competence, charisma, and satisfaction. A negative personal brand becomes identified with negative characteristics, faults, biases and fallacies (Hakanen, 2010: 1-4; Sampson, 2002: 1, 7). The components of a negative personal brand are dislike, untrustworthiness, fear and aversion (Sampson, 2002: 14, 45). Social approval accompanies a positive brand and social denial a negative brand. Thus, a positive standout personal brand can deliver functional, personal, and financial benefits. For example, the United Nations mobilises successful names, i.e., celebrity brands (e.g., Angelina Jolie or George Clooney), to strengthen its visions and foster change.

Personal (academic) brands, such as (Jürgen) Habermas, (Max) Weber, or (Noam) Chomsky, are cited not just for what they stand for but also because the brand name gives credibility and strength to the content of the scholar citing it. When a person achieves a brand, his or her name comes to stand for the entire brand identity/image (Hakanen, 2010: 10).

3. What's in a Brand Name?

Each of us has a name that was chosen for us, usually by our parents, before or shortly after our birth—for parents enjoy extraordinary autonomy in naming and raising their children. We, ourselves, for obvious reasons, do not have a choice in or a deterministic influence on the selection of our forename. We are named to differentiate us from other categorised proceedings, friends, belongings, or destinations. In this sense, it can be argued that our naming (sometimes with two or more forenames) is the first act of our branding. Given names, however, are more than references to their holders' individuality. Names are connected to meaning, accentuate connotations, and reflect a history and underlying legacy—a brand name (Bernstein, 2003).

Brand names refer to the specific intentions that they evoke, such as power (e.g., Obama), ideals (e.g., Gandhi), and terrorism (e.g., Osama). Brand names are associated with ideas, theories, or disciplines, as in the examples of Einstein (e.g., relativity theory, physics), Edward Said (e.g., Orientalism, literary and cultural criticism), and Samuel Huntington (e.g., clash of civilisations, political science). In a heterogeneous region such as the Middle East, names reveal ethnicity, such as Turkish or Kurdish (in Turkey), or religious affiliation, such as Sunni, Shia, or Druze (in Lebanon). In addition, names are usually perceived as a reflection of their holders' background and political orientation. For example, Turkish birth names such as Fatma Ayşe underline the Islamic character of the republic and accentuate the historical legacy of the Ottoman Empire, whereas (Zehra) Selcan emphasises the secular character of the republic. The choice of name reveals in some cases the associations and belongingness of the name's holder and giver. Thus, brand names may interfere with relations or create tensions and conflicts. As a result, an individual's decision to use his/her first or second forename (e.g., Zehra or Selcan) in daily life may foster or limit social inclusion/segregation.

Bearing in mind the above arguments, neutral names are rare; thus, there are two categories of name type: good and bad (these concepts are explained below). Such classifications, as this article demonstrates, are not stagnant but rather are subject to future change based on societal and socio-political developments. The Turkish name Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is currently more popular in Turkey than it was during the 1990s. Erdoğan's efforts in support of the Palestinian cause have also increased the popularity and admiration of his name in Palestine, where infants and businesses are named after him in appreciation and recognition of his political stance in the Middle East (Abu Amer, 2013). Indeed, name brands (good type/bad type) are subject to geographic conditionality. Whereas Mohamed Morsi, for example, is currently a less fortunate name in Egypt, it may be more fortunate in Qatar and Turkey due to public opposition in those countries to the military coup in Egypt. Those examples demonstrate that once a name has a (negative/positive) brand image, a shift in the name holder is not a guarantee for avoiding these (negative/positive) reputational dynamics.

In daily life, our brand name might influence the manner in which we are perceived by others. A shift in the holder is not a guarantee for avoiding this reputational dynamic. As this article demonstrates below, a negatively/positively branded name affects its holder regardless of the reasons for the negative/positive branding. Imagine yourself as a fan of Jennifer Lopez and living in a country such as Switzerland where Lopez is not a common name. If you were to run across a person there with the name (Jennifer) Lopez, you would probably have positive feelings towards the (brand) name and ultimately towards the person herself. Indeed, one of the effects of personal/brand name is the emotional bond—like or dislike—that it forms with the person and his/her name. What about the name Osama?

4. The pre-9/11 Osama Brand

The selection of a group of letters makes a remarkable difference. For example, Obama and Osama sound similar and differ by only one letter (Little, 2016: 213)—so similar that if a reader were to skim a text, he/she could misread the name and eventually substitute one for the other, as did Fabio, a famous newscaster in the movie 'The Ages of Love', who replaces Osama with Obama bin Laden. Such confusion leaves a negative aftereffect.

Osama in Arabic means lion (Scheuer, 2011: 21), and its physical branding is promising because it has a convenient size (I am using the term physical branding from Bernstein, Bernstein, 2003: 1135-1136). In Arabic, the name (أسامة) is written from right to left (the direction for reading and writing Arabic). Different transliterations of the name exist, such as Usama, Ousama, Ossama, or Osama (Kaabour and Schwab, 2004), but in the English-speaking parts of the world, the variant Osama has become established.[2] The name is masculine in Arabic, although the end letter (i.e., /ɛa) typically appears as the last letter of feminine names (in Western languages). This end letter of the transliterated versions leads, in some cases, to confusion about the gender of its holder. For example, German readers used to interpret Osama as a woman's name because of the last letter, and Osama used to receive letters with the salutation 'Dear Madam Osama' due to this ambiguity.[3] In terms of psychological branding, the name also used to be advantageous (I am using the term psychological branding from Bernstein, Bernstein, 2003: 1136). In the Arab world, it once communicated a good selection style and a musical tone. It added values because it was associated with an elite background, i.e., families with above-average income and above-average education. Interestingly, it was given to children of different backgrounds, such that the name holder can be from a secular or religious, Muslim or Christian family (Kaabour & Schwab, 2004).

Before the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, the name Osama was not recognised in the West a priori as Middle Eastern, Islamic, or Arabic. Instead, it was associated in the West with a person's radiance, attitude and behaviours (Kaabour & Schwab, 2004). In some cases, it might have been considered ambiguous or caused confusion because Westerners had a vague concept of its background. Overall, the brand name image was neutral and was affected by the cultural experience of the receiver, who was left wondering about its origin. One method to solve this riddle was to become acquainted with the person named Osama, or the name holder would remain anonymous. Based on these perspectives, the brand image of the name Osama has had interesting, neutral, and refreshing correlations. Therefore, it could be concluded that the brand name had less influence on perceptions of persons called Osama than it did in the post-9/11 era, when people began to find the name repugnant.

Just as the brands of products and nations can be constructed and reconstructed due to relevant factors, a personal brand name can also be deconstructed and reconstructed. Good-type names (positive brand names) are more likely to maintain good value expectations than bad-type names (negative brand names). The name Osama has been negatively (re)branded as a result of the negative branding of Osama bin Laden.

5. Islamophobia and branding Osama since 9/11

Social scientists mark the era since 9/11 as a major peak in the growth of systemic Islamophobia towards Muslims and Islam in the West. The 9/11 terrorist attacks increased the current anti-Muslim and anti-Islam dispositions in Western communities. Further terrorist attacks by radical Islamists in Spain, the UK, and France augmented and affirmed the severity of the security situation in Western awareness, thus increasing public consideration and hardening attitudes towards the (potentially dangerous Muslim) *other* (Green, 2015).

The wider political establishment adopted anti-Muslim and anti-Islam notions in the process of designing domestic and foreign security policy. This approach was apparent in US President George W. Bush's plea for a war on terror and his vision of imposing democracy across the

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[2] This is evident in the wide list of publications written about Osama bin Laden.
[3] Author's conversation with an Osama, Switzerland, 2011.

Middle East (i.e., the Bush doctrine) (Bouma, 2016: 67-68; Green, 2015: 113), a doctrine in which subliminal anti-Muslim and anti-Islam war rhetoric was rooted in the legacy of the crusades and the imperialist/colonialist period (Lyons, 2012: 33). The political establishment instilled a consciousness in the public that the war against terrorism was against Islam and the war against terrorists was against Muslims after it became public that the mastermind behind and implementers of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, in addition to their funders, were Muslims (originating in the Middle East) (Green, 2015: 120-121; Peterson, 2002: 59-77). President Bush employed phrases such as 'Islamic radicalism', 'Islamic extremists', and 'Islamo-fascism' to label the risks confronting the United States (Bush, 2005).

The atmosphere in the aftermath of 9/11 generated a climate favourable to Islamophobia and to a stronger radical right manifestation in the political realm, with outspoken opponents of a Muslim presence in the West. Anti-Muslim language that had formerly been restrained and Islamophobic jargon were revived. Right-wing politicians intentionally repackaged and popularised premodern notions and prejudices against Muslims and Islam, thus reducing Islam to a religion that promotes terrorism and violence (Wright, 2016: 45-46). Academic, societal and political circles enhanced public anxiety and fear of Muslims and Islam by promoting the construction of a powerful discourse towards Muslims as a novel enemy of Westerners and of Muslimness as alien to the Western way of life (Green, 2015: 103; Peterson, 2002). The post-9/11 discourse of *othering* Muslims confirms the rigid dynamic of the *us versus them* dichotomy (Said, 2003: 68-87) in which the former represents democracy, humanity and emancipation, and the latter embodies authoritarianism, fundamentalism and barbarism (Green, 2015).

Soon after 9/11, the terrorist attacks were connected to Osama bin Laden, the chief leader of the terrorist group al-Qaida. As the initiator of the terrorist attacks, Osama bin Laden became consistently and distinctively present in the media, and much public information appeared about and from him. Photographs of him were distributed widely through media channels. His origin as an Arab and a Muslim from Saudi Arabia, in the Middle East, became part of his profile as the most feared terrorist in the world. The internalisation of the personal brand of Osama bin Laden was launched by Osama bin Laden himself, who probably was aware of the significance of the propaganda angle as a strategic architect in today's interconnected digital age. He had been commodifying himself through self-promotion since 1993 via interviews, video messages and other communications about his visions and tenets (Scheuer, 2011: 1, 7).

In this article, I argue that Osama bin Laden served as a brand persona, which explains his success in electrifying the vox populi. He was a strategy conceptualiser for al-Qaida and a practitioner, i.e., a militant jihadist. The main components of his brand were (1) the idea of pan-Islamism, (2) a transnational militant jihad in the Muslim world against the Western military presence, and (3) an existential threat to Muslims (Here, I gained insights from O'Shaughnessy, 2009). Throughout his career, Osama bin Laden exhibited consistency in underlining his brand identity (brand values). As a brand persona, he triggered those values in the wider public, and his brand identity helped him continually recruit militants for al-Qaida. However, this brand identity does not mean that Osama bin Laden constituted or controlled his brand image, since the perception of a brand differs from one person to another (Jones & Slater, 2003: 32). His enthusiastic (militant) jihadist followers seem to have resonated strongly with their perceptions of his qualities, values and worldview, which gave these followers clarity in their ideas. Moreover, Osama's brand persona made such fanatics believe that it was conceivable to put pan-Islamism or militant jihadism into practice. Whereas the terrorist attacks made Osama bin Laden famous among his followers, they made him infamous in the West and elsewhere. In the USA, he became public enemy number one, shifting the emphasis from the Soviet/Russian threat (Green, 2015: 112).

The increasing exposure of Osama bin Laden created associations in people's minds based on his unique, unpleasing appearance and brand image, both of which put the *othering* of Muslims at centre stage in Islamophobia and caused brand awareness. Since then, the name Osama has constituted a profile—a brand. The components of its image are colour (dark skin and dark eyes), a specific ethnicity (Arab), religion (Islam), origin (the Middle East, Arab

world, and Islamic world), outward appearance (humble dress and bearded), and aggression. Notably, the name Osama became well known and unpopular, such that it became a reference to the labels attributed to Osama bin Laden, even though the name is also held by other brand personas. Osama became a household name. One of the methods to determine whether a name has become an umbrella image is to establish whether it is used as a metaphor or as a label for its type. A brief survey indicates that the name Osama has reached this stage.

Osama bin Laden managed to establish a solid presence in the public space such that when people hear the word 'terrorism', it is one of the first names that comes to mind. Since 9/11, Osama (bin Laden) has become one of the catchwords associated with the Middle East (Milton-Edwards, 2011: 3). A Google search for Osama reveals results on the first page and beyond for Osama bin Laden. Islamophobes label Muslims as Osama (bin Laden) and verbally attack members of minorities (of different religions and background) by calling them Osama (bin Laden), as has occurred in Ireland (Carr, 2015: 1, 90) and elsewhere. Moreover, Osama bin Laden is often referred to simply as Osama. Riordan, for instance, who writes about public diplomacy across Islamic societies, notes that public diplomacy is being used as a tool 'that can convince them [Muslims] that the West is not the enemy and that Osama is' (Riordan, 2005: 182). This use of the birth name Osama by itself, as in other cases, is done not (merely) for the sake of simplicity but rather because Osama has become the brand terrorist, as the following book titles indicate: 'Osama: The Making of a Terrorist' (Randal, 2004) and 'From Pablo to Osama: Trafficking and Terrorist Networks, Government Bureaucracies, and Competitive Adaptation' (Kenney, 2007). This use has appeared in other areas, including movies (e.g., Alex & Eve) and television series (e.g., House, M.D., season four). Multiple further examples can be found. Such negative branding of Muslims and Islam caused widespread impacts and harsh implications.

One implication is a loss of control of reputational capital. Muslim citizens have a negative image and disrespected status (among fragments of the majority) connected with recycled anti-Muslim and anti-Islam images that reloaded premodern prejudices or otherwise duplicated recent negative representations. The problem is self-evident. For a considerable length of time, ordinary Muslim citizens managed their brand entity, sought their brand identity, constructed a reputation, and preserved their intangible assets. They spent a fortune on education in addition to time and effort establishing their networks (Todd, 2005). Additionally, they had choices in individual reputation building, which until recently guarded their brand. The terrorist attacks and events that followed after 9/11 presented immediate and long-lasting challenges to their brand identity/image. Over time, a process of discontinuity in terms of the reception, perception and associated memory of their brand image, among other aspects, occurred. This fundamental shift meant a negative branding of their brand identity. For many Muslims, this shift caused unexpected damage to their reputational capital.

Second, a heated and sensitive political atmosphere generally heightened and hardened sensitivity to the *other*. Islamophobic sentiments among the wider Western populations increased, and questions were raised both for and against the concept of multiculturalism. Portions of the people (the majority) questioned the integrity and assimilation of citizens with a migration background (second- and third-generation citizens) (Leach & Dunne, 2007: 12; Weaver, 2010). Debates about Islam and its compatibility with Western ideas and paradigms, such as democracy and modernity, re-emerged (in both academia and the public sector), steered by both specialists and non-area experts. The direct or underlying premise of many publications and speeches has been that Islam is incompatible with Western values. Muslims are portrayed as the opposite of Westerners. The shadow of earlier Islamophobic images fell over ordinary Muslims as mere custom (Fekete, 2009: 4; Todd, 2005; Vidal, 2014), handicapping them in public life and the official sector (Carr, 2015: 4; Fekete, 2009). The treatment of the *other* ranges from social distancing through discrimination to physical force. Bans on head scarves, veils and burkinis is one implication of the *othering* process.

Since 9/11, traditional names and bad-type names have received individual attention. The legacy of such names affects their holders, decreasing their added value (familiarity, degree of trustworthiness, and reduction of risk). Osama, for example, gives a mysterious aura and a

negative (first) impression, leading to distrust of the person and complicating the socialisation process. The current brand name Osama involves the transmission of negative imperatives supporting coldness and distance in response to the name holder. Convincing colleagues, potential friends and employers to update their unreasonable (Islamophobic) beliefs requires effort. Traditional names and bad-type names such as Osama become bearers of reputation. The name Osama as a brand persona or in association with Osama bin Laden has declined in value and opportunity, as has been commonly observed by people with that name (Kaabour & Schwab, 2004; Tadelis, 1999).

Discrimination is evident in some cases against persons who have Osama as a forename, not just in the USA and Europe but also in the Middle East. Some have lost their jobs. In other cases, the brand name acted as a barrier to finding employment (Kaabour and Schwab 2004; Author talk with an Osama, Switzerland, 2011). The name has a history that has been inherited by Osamas everywhere. Thus, employers seem to reflect upon the expected value of a person's performance in the wake of perceived associations with the 'other's' performance, i.e., that of Osama bin Laden, even though other holders of the name are not responsible for that history and may have different brand values and worldviews. In addition, some employers may perceive social skills and teamwork capabilities as observable from the experience of the *other* (Jones & Slater, 2003; Tadelis, 1999; Todd, 2005).

Third, the *othering* process has resulted in increasing securitisation practices (in the form of racial profiling) at airports and train stations regarding (perceived) Muslims owing to the belief that they may eventually exhibit terroristic potential (Leach & Dunne, 2007: 12; Little, 2016: 226). Because names are not isolated entities, traditional names, and above all, bad-type names such as Osama, were singled out due to their identifiability. The name Osama reveals the background of the holder as part of the *other* who is considered a foe by some segments of the people (Obeidallah, 2011). Due to the negative brand image, certain international airport/train station employees are sceptical when a person named Osama arrives with a Western passport. Customs officers may increase security measures to a higher level than they would otherwise and test the authenticity of the passport. Some Osamas have been held for interrogation for these reasons (Kaabour & Schwab, 2004; Author talk with an Osama, Switzerland.). Another example was related by an Osama who had a similar experience when crossing the German border: the German border police became worried about his identity and found it necessary to confirm that he spoke German.

Fragments of majority populations in the West have become accustomed to a certain level of a discursive reality of power towards Muslims and Islam that serves the interests of political and societal circles rather than social peace and multiculturalism (Green, 2015). Due to this discursive reality, these fragments have developed a critical attitude and sceptical approach towards the local Muslim minority that is informed by watching and listening to the *other* as a tool that legitimates fighting terrorism. Multiculturalism has therefore suffered a setback (Little, 2016).

Due to these implications, some Osamas have been advised to address the novel ambiguity of their name. Such a name holder has three choices. Some have held on to the name but use it with some hesitation and uncertainty, for example, introducing themselves by saying in advance, 'Please do not be shocked; my name is Osama'. Others use a nickname such as Sam or just give their family name. The powerful associations have destroyed the emotional attachment of some holders to their name, i.e., the reference to their brand entity; thus, they have decided to discontinue their brand name and to take a new name, hoping to create a new and positive image and to begin afresh with a clean record (Kaabour & Schwab, 2004). However, a name change, nota bene, requires some ingenuity—it is a primary alteration that may expose the person to identity crises. Alienation and estrangement are potential implications. Thus, some may decide in the future to retain their name.

CONCLUSION

Before 9/11, the brand image of the name Osama was rather neutral in the West; it was considered refreshing, with an interesting flavour, and was closely tied to the appearance of the name holder and his attitude and behaviours. Since 9/11, the abovementioned process of *othering* abolished many positive associations with the brand name identity; the likeability of the name did not survive. The previously demonstrated negative branding of Osama (bin Laden) established an umbrella image for the given name Osama. Typecasting is one implication. Associations with Osama bin Laden are inscribed on other holders of the name Osama, regardless of the personhood of the name holder. Osamas everywhere have become strongly identified with the brand image of Osama bin Laden, with all its weaknesses and notoriety, its pettiness, mania, and dogmas. The name came to belong to the bad type because it triggered a series of emotions ranging from scepticism and mistrust to outright hatred due to concerns and feelings of danger (Sadiki, 2011). Such a reputational downgrade of the brand name Osama has caused a strong depreciation of the brand persona's capital value, with harmful repercussions, as described above. The killing of Osama bin Laden in 2011 affirmed the personal brand of Osama bin Laden and reloaded the negative associations of the brand name. However, his death unlocked an opportunity to rebrand the name Osama, although the process will be time consuming because the images are persistent.

Interestingly, whereas other bad-type names such as Adolf Hitler were branded with their surname (i.e., Hitler), Osama bin Laden was branded with his birth name. An initial exploration indicates that this selection may perhaps indicate the informality of the 21st century, when most people are on a first-name basis, regardless of familiarity or social standing. Based on this reasoning, the formality of the 1940s and beyond might have led to the use of the surnames Hitler, Stalin, and Mussolini. A deeper exploration, however, reveals that we refer to other contemporary branded names by surname, such as Mugabe, Arafat and Qaddafi. An exception is Saddam. The use of the birth name humanises and at worst demonises the holder of the name.

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