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Interviews

Anas Sillwood, Co-Founder and Managing Partner SHUKR Islamic Clothing (Jordan)

Business background

Launched in 2001, SHUKR was the first Islamic clothing company in the West to design and produce an innovative range of men's and women's clothing that combined Shariah principles for dressing with contemporary fashion.

SHUKR has registered companies in the USA, UK and Jordan and headquarters is based in Amman, Jordan. Production facilities are located in Jordan and Syria. It has its own distribution centre in Jordan and works with third party distribution centers in the USA and UK. SHUKR's main retail markets are North America and the UK, but there are substantial retail sales to over 50 countries across the world as well as numerous wholesale customers and franchisee holders.

Muslim consumer needs

SHUKR was the first Islamic clothing company to design and produce an innovative range of men's and women's clothing that combined Shariah principles for dressing with contemporary fashion. Rather than just focus on traditional Abayas, jilbabs, shalwar kameez and other styles found in the Muslim world, SHUKR introduced a unique product line of women's tops, skirts, trousers, dresses, jackets, coats, sportswear and knitwear, in addition to contemporary men's shirts, trousers, jackets and hats. SHUKR's products were initially aimed at meeting the needs of Muslim communities living in North America and in Europe where, especially after 9/11, there was a desperate need for contemporary Islamic clothing that was appropriate for Muslims living in the West.

Challenges

There are two types of challenges. One type is a business challenge and another a religious challenge.

As for the business challenge, it is related to the fact that the Islamic clothing market is still somewhat of a niche market. This causes production difficulties because producing high quality, competitively priced clothing normally requires significant production quantities, but the Islamic clothing market does not currently justify producing such large quantities in each style. Consequently, we have created our own production systems to deal with the problem of low volumes but still produced at high quality and at a competitive price.

As for the religious challenge, there is a tension between religion and commerce, in trying to find the right balance between Islamic modesty and producing and marketing attractive clothing.

Opportunities

Despite the explosion of Islamic clothing companies, Islamic fashion has not yet fully gone mainstream as a recognized industry, even in Muslim countries (except perhaps in Turkey). So there are numerous countries all around the world where there are untapped markets.

There are also no real multinational Islamic fashion brands like one finds in the mainstream fashion industry with solid presences in terms of brick-andmortar stores all across the world. SHUKR aims to establish itself as the first truly multinational Islamic fashion brand.

Finally, there is an opportunity for Islamic fashion to impact and cross over into the mainstream fashion sphere, appealing to non-Muslims as well as Muslims. There are many religious Christians, Jews and other faith communities who would like more modest offerings than what the current mainstream fashion industry offers. Although it may not be considered "trendy" to dress modestly, SHUKR hopes to help change this perspective, one garment at a time.



State of the GLOBAL ISLAMIC ECONOMY

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