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ARTICLE



'Reading the ads in al-Da'wa magazine: commercialism and Islamist activism in al-Sadat's Egypt'

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ABSTRACT

This article probes the return of the Muslim Brotherhood to prominence in 1970s Egypt through a systematic analysis of advertisements in the organization's flagship periodical, *al-Da'wa* (The Call). In every issue of the magazine, which was published between June 1976 and October 1981, entreaties to proper conduct and appeals to Islamic solidarity appeared alongside advertisements for everything from Pepsi to breakfast biscuits to automobiles. We utilize the methodological insights of social and cultural historians to the value of advertisements to cast new light on the reconstruction of the Brotherhood, its relationship with the diverse institutions comprising the Egyptian state, and on how the Muslim Brotherhood's vision of piety both reflected and challenged a changing economic reality. Moving beyond a story of the Brotherhood's return as a product of independent Islamist enterprise that had emerged due to both the Gulf oil boom and Egypt's economic liberalization programme, significant public sector advertising in *al-Da'wa*, especially prominent across the most valuable advertising real estate, underscores both internal divisions within the Egyptian state as well as the tangible ways that various state institutions were patrons of religious change.

In October 1976, an Egyptian engineer named Mustafa Farghal wrote to the editors of the Muslim Brotherhood's flagship magazine, *al-Da'wa* (The Call). While letters to *al-Da'wa* often spanned concerns regarding the application of Islamic law, the daily challenges to living a pious life, and the religious credentials of the ruling regime, Farghal was particularly concerned about the religious status of women's beauty products. His question, however, was not merely about whether such products were prohibited but also why, if makeup was forbidden, did *al-Da'wa* contain advertisements for such products?¹

That issue of *al-Da'wa* appeared at a tumultuous time as the Muslim Brotherhood tentatively stepped back into the Egyptian public sphere. Authors in just the October 1976 issue discussed Islamic law, tourism, cinema, lessons from the Prophet's life for the modern age, and the destruction of Muslim neighbourhoods in New Delhi. The issue's cover eulogized the Muslim Brotherhood thinker Sayyid Qutb, who 'was executed by the tyrants for his writings' (*a'damahu al-ṭughāt bi-sabab mu'alafātihi*). But juxtaposed with

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¹Bab al-Ifta', *al-Da'wa*, October 1976/Shawwal 1396, 15.

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the Brotherhood's calls for religious activism and sociopolitical awareness were dozens of commercial advertisements like the one for makeup that caught Farghal's eye. Readers of just this issue would have also thumbed past ads for cheese, jewellery, bedroom furniture sets, plasticware, jam, and fruit juice. In every issue across the five year run of the magazine, which was published between June 1976 and October 1981, the story was the same: entreaties to proper conduct and appeals to Islamic solidarity appeared alongside advertisements for everything from Pepsi to breakfast biscuits to automobiles.

In this article, we show that the advertisements that were such a prominent visual feature of *al-Da'wa* during this time constitute an important and underutilized cache of source material that provides a new perspective on this critical period of Egyptian history. Previous accounts of the Muslim Brotherhood under al-Sadat have drawn on the substantive articles and frequent popular correspondence within *al-Da'wa* to trace the Brotherhood's return.² This study utilizes the methodological insights of social and cultural historians as to the value of advertisements as a source of history³ to cast new light on the reconstruction of the Brotherhood, its relationship with the diverse institutions comprising the Egyptian state, and on how the Muslim Brotherhood's vision of piety both reflected and challenged a changing economic reality.

Concrete descriptive statistics about who was reading *al-Da'wa*—and thus who may have been the target audience of advertisers—are not available, although we can make tentative inferences from other aspects of the magazine itself. To the extent that is representative of the overall readership, the social profile of those whose letters to the editor were published in *al-Da'wa*—individuals like Mustafa Farghal—indicate a solidly middle class, professional audience⁴ Prior research has also indicated that a key task for the Brotherhood during the early al-Sadat era was outreach to, and eventually co-optation of, a burgeoning university student movement to infuse a new energy into the movement.⁵ This theme runs through the particular history of *al-Da'wa* as well. For example, in a hagiography of 'Umar al-Tilmisani, one of *al-Da'wa's* editors singled university students as one segment of the magazine's readership.⁶ The products that appear in our data set align with these predictions, and suggest that advertisers were generally

²Abdullah al-Arian, *Answering the Call: Popular Islamic Activism in Sadat's Egypt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 176–214; Gilles Kepel (au.) Jon Rothschild (trans.), *Muslim Extremism in Egypt: The Prophet and the Pharaoh* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), 103–23; and Aaron Rock-Singer, 'Prayer and the Islamic Revival: A Timely Challenge,' *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 48, no. 2 (April 2016): 293–312.

³Historians of Egypt and beyond have previously drawn on advertisements to trace sociocultural shifts. For an example from Egypt, see Relli Shechter, 'Reading Advertisements in a Colonial/Development Context: Cigarette Advertising and Identity Politics in Egypt, c. 1919–1939,' *Journal of Social History* 3, no. 2 (2005): 483–503; Nancy Y. Reynolds, 'National Socks and the "Nylon Woman": Materiality, Gender, and Nationalism in Textile Marketing in Semicolonial Egypt, 1930–1956', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43, no. 1 (2011): 49–74; Mona Russell, *Creating the New Egyptian Woman: Consumerism, Education, and National Identity, 1863–1922* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 49–78. For an Indian example, see Madhuri Sharma, 'Creating a Consumer: Exploring Medical Advertisements in Colonial India', in *The Social History of Health and Medicine in Colonial India*, Biswamoy Pati and Mark Harrison eds. (New York: Routledge, 2009), 213–228. In China, see Xin, Zhao, and Russell W. Belk, 'Politicizing Consumer Culture: Advertising's Appropriation of Political Ideology in China's Social Transition,' *Journal of Consumer Research* 35, no. 2 (August 2008): 231–44. For two American examples see Janet Goldon, *A Social History of Wet Nursing in America: From Breast to Bottle* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2001) and Daniel Delis Hill, *Advertising to the American Woman, 1900–1999* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2002).

⁴Aaron Rock-Singer, 'A Pious Public: Islamic Magazines and Revival in Egypt, 1976–1981,' *The British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 42, no. 4 (2015): 427–46.

⁵Abdullah al-Arian, *Answering the Call: Popular Islamic Activism in Sadat's Egypt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁶Badr Muhammad Badr, *Sutur min Hayat al-Da'iyya al-Rabbani 'Umar al-Tilmisani* (Cairo, Egypt: N.P., n.d.). 64–5.

attuned to the idea that *al-Da'wa's* readership was more than just an older, religiously-committed segment of society. Instead, *al-Da'wa's* advertisers were selling a middle class lifestyle—furniture, prepared foods, appliances, leisure clothing—to those whose education and employment had conditioned them to aspire to precisely this.

Systematically considering the position of advertisements in *al-Da'wa* provides new insights into how the Muslim Brotherhood returned to social and political prominence within al-Sadat's Egypt.⁷ Scholars have previously emphasized the centrality of financial support from Gulf countries,⁸ as well as the Brotherhood's success in taking advantage of the economic opportunities of al-Sadat's open-door economic policy, known as the *Infitah*, to fund their project during this period.⁹ This emphasis on Gulf capital and *Infitah*-fuelled Islamist businesses extends to perhaps the only attempt to understand the place of advertising in *al-Da'wa*.¹⁰ As that study notes, however, '[t]his scattered information about how the magazine was financed... gives us only an impressionistic view...that allows no definite conclusions.'¹¹ Our approach, which combines a broader analysis of the Brotherhood and Egypt during this critical time with a systematic cataloguing of each of the advertisements that appeared in *al-Da'wa* during its run (1,272 in total) enables a deeper investigation of the relative balance between Islamist enterprise and other sources of revenue during this crucial period of the Brotherhood's history.

In so doing, our article also complicates the relationship between the state and Islamist movements in al-Sadat's Egypt. Prominent scholars have linked the Brotherhood's organizational resurgence during this period to their ability to leverage the resources of a 'parallel' Islamic sector of businesses, mosques, and social institutions that tended to operate in spaces on the frontiers of state control.¹² Our study of the Brotherhood's most prominent ideological product during this time—their monthly magazine *al-Da'wa*—reveals the equally significant role of a diversity of state institutions, via advertising revenue, for their enterprise.

⁷See Carrie Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 96–102; Joel Beinin, 'Political Islam and the New Global Economy: The Political Economy of an Egyptian Social Movement,' *The New Centennial Review* 5, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 111–39, cit. 115; Kirk Beattie, *Egypt During the Sadat Years* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000); Gilles Kepel (au.) Jon Rothschild (trans.), *Muslim Extremism in Egypt: The Prophet and the Pharaoh* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984); Raymond William Baker, *Sadat and After: Struggles for Egypt's Political Soul*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990); Mark Cooper, *The Transformation of Egypt* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982); Raymond Hinnebusch, *Egyptian Politics under Sadat: the Post-populist Development of an Authoritarian Modernizing State* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1988); and Salih 'Isa, 'Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun: ma'sat al-Madi Wa-Mushkilat al-Mustaqbal,' Introduction to the translated version of Richard Mitchell's *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* (Cairo: Madbuli, 1977), 3–50.

⁸Abdullah al-Arian. *Answering the Call: Popular Islamic Activism in Sadat's Egypt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 28.

⁹Hazem Kandil, *Inside the Brotherhood* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), 78.

¹⁰Most notably, Gilles Kepel emphasizes that the vast majority of advertising in *al-Da'wa* came from private sector companies, particularly from companies controlled by Brothers who had made a fortune in Saudi Arabia and then invested in Egypt. While Kepel notes the presence of public sector advertisers, he suggests that such advertisers represented no more than twenty per cent of the total; See Gilles Kepel (au.) Jon Rothschild (trans.), *Muslim Extremism in Egypt: The Prophet and the Pharaoh* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), 108; Also see Abdullah al-Arian. *Answering the Call: Popular Islamic Activism in Sadat's Egypt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 183; Abd al-Monein Said Aly and Manfred W. Wenner, 'Modern Islamic Reform Movements: The Muslim Brotherhood in Contemporary Egypt,' *Middle East Journal* 36, no. 3 (Summer 1982): 336–61, cit. 346; and Robert Springborg, *Mubarak's Egypt: Fragmentation of the Political Order*, (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1989), 235–6.

¹¹Gilles Kepel (au.) Jon Rothschild (trans.), *Muslim Extremism in Egypt: The Prophet and the Pharaoh* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), 110.

¹²Carrie Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); and Sheri Berman, 'Islamism, Revolution, and Civil Society,' *Perspectives on Politics* 1, no. 2 (June 2003).

The frequent and prominent appearance of public sector advertisers in *al-Da'wa* provides a concrete example of the central role that particular pockets of a sprawling Egyptian state played in the Muslim Brotherhood's organizational rebirth.

Finally, the financial circumstances of the Brotherhood's return shaped the particular ways that the group's broader social and intellectual product unfolded on the ground. Previous studies on this particular time in Egyptian history have said little about the relationship among economic shifts, consumerism, and religious thought. Leading studies of this crucial period of the Brotherhood's return in both English and Arabic are silent on this question,¹³ as are broader studies of piety movements within Egypt since the 1970s.¹⁴ An exception to this broad trend within scholarship on Islam in Egypt is a study of the cultural consequences of the *Infitah* that emphasizes the linkage between the rise of a 'local market society' and the popularization of Islamism,¹⁵ and a second study that traces the emergence of a marketplace for religious commodities during the early years of Mubarak's rule (1981–2011).¹⁶ As we show, the tension engendered by the need to set substantive sociopolitical content alongside pervasive commercial advertising was not lost on the editors of *al-Da'wa*, who reacted by compartmentalizing a purist vision of religious practice from material interests and a consumerist culture that was reshaping Egyptian society.

We begin this article by situating the Brotherhood's infrastructure, economic assets, and preaching apparatus in the first half of al-Sadat's rule (1970–75), particularly focusing on how quotidian concerns about funding incentivized the organization to rely on commercial advertisements to support their print product. We then present basic descriptive statistics on advertising in *al-Da'wa*, in the process showing the significant role public-sector advertisers played in the magazine's production. We then examine how editors, writers, and readers within *al-Da'wa* understood the increasingly prominent place of advertisements specifically and consumerism more generally in this self-consciously *Islamic* periodical. We close by noting potential extensions of our findings and summarizing their implications for literatures on Islamic movements, state-society relations, and everyday practices of piety and consumerism.

The Muslim brotherhood in the aftermath of 'Abd al-Nasir

At the dawn of the al-Sadat period, the Muslim Brotherhood's preaching (*da'wa*) efforts were quite limited. Following 'Abd al-Nasir's (r. 1954–1970) crackdown on the organization, it had fractured and turned inwards; the question of how to compose and transmit an ideological project to the masses had been hardly relevant in the

¹³See al-Arian, *Answering the Call*. For Arabic language studies, see Rif'at Sayyid Ahmad, *al-Harakat al-Islamiyya fi Misr wa Iran* (Cairo: Sayna' l-il-Nashr, 1989); Wa'il 'Uthman, *Asrar al-Haraka al-Islamiyya fi Misr 1968–1975* (Cairo: al-Shirka al-Misriyya l-il-Tiba'a, N.D.); and Salih 'Isa, 'al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun: Ma'sat al-Madi Wa-Mushkilat al-Mustaqbal,' in Richard P. Mitchell (au.) and Salih 'Isa (trans.) *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* (Cairo: Madbuli, 1977), 3–50.

¹⁴See Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006); and Saba Mahmood, *The Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

¹⁵See Relli Shechter, 'From Effendi to Infitahi? Consumerism and its Malcontents in the Emergence of Egyptian Market Society,' *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 36, no. 1 (2009): 21–35, cit. 24.

¹⁶Gregory Starrett, 'The Political Economy of Religious Commodities in Cairo,' *American Anthropologist*, 97, no. 1 (March 1995): 51–68.

face of continued torture, jailing and even executions.¹⁷ Neither was the al-Sadat period one of unrestricted return: political prisoners belonging to the Brotherhood were released slowly over the course of the first half of the 1970s.¹⁸ As Khalid ‘Abd al-Qadir ‘Awda, an Islamic student activist in the Upper Egyptian city of Asyut, described the period, ‘there was no organization (*tanẓīm*)... there was merely the idea of the Brotherhood (*fīkrat al-ikhwān*).¹⁹ The question at hand was simple but critical: how could the Brotherhood emerge from imprisonment and hiding to once again spread its call to the Egyptian public?

As the organization pondered a return to public life, restrictions on mass media and social spaces alike posed challenges. Islamist activists had little to no access to television, radio or daily newspaper, while al-Sadat harnessed these mediums to transmit ‘correct’ religion. Egypt’s self-described ‘believing president’ (*al-raʿīs al-muʿmin*) used state television to stage ostensible dialogues in which a state-approved representative—whether from al-Azhar or even a lay preacher—was given the opportunity ‘to set out the issues properly for the benefit of those confused or ill-informed Muslims who might have come under the unhealthy influence of fanatics.’²⁰ Similarly, radio functioned, as it had under ‘Abd al-Nasir, as a means of reaching the broader population, some 60 per cent of whom were illiterate. Crucially, both mediums were not only subsidized but in many cases, such as Radio Cairo and the Pan-Arab Voice of the Arabs (*Ṣawt al-‘Arab*) directly funded and controlled by the regime.²¹

In June 1976, the Muslim Brotherhood managed to carve out a niche in this otherwise inhospitable media environment. That month, the group’s flagship magazine *al-Daʿwa* reappeared after decades of absence. The Brotherhood had first published *al-Daʿwa* on 3 January 1951 and continued to do so until a 1953 split between Salih ‘Ashmawi and Hasan al-Hudaybi, the Brotherhood’s General Guide (*al-murshid al-āmm*). With the exit of ‘Ashmawi, who held the publishing license for the magazine, the Brotherhood lost its legal right to publish.²² By the mid-1970s, rapprochement was afoot between ‘Umar al-Tilmisani, the new General Guide of the Brotherhood, and ‘Ashmawi, who brought his publishing license back to *al-Daʿwa*.²³

The return of *al-Daʿwa* required more than just re-acquiring a publishing license. Al-Tilmisani’s vigorous efforts revitalize the Brotherhood’s roots in Egyptian society were sharply constrained by simpler concerns, namely money. In prior periods the

¹⁷Barbara Zollner, ‘Prison Talk: The Muslim Brotherhood’s Internal Struggle During Gamal Abdel Nasser’s Persecution, 1954–1971,’ *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 39, no. 3 (August 2007): 411–33.

¹⁸Amr Shamikh, *al-Waqaʿi al-Ikhwanīyya* (Cairo: Dar al-Tawzīʿ wa-l-Nashr, 2012), 83. In an interview, ‘Abd al-Salam Bashandi, a lifelong member of the Muslim Brotherhood (and a member of parliament from 2011–2012) echoed that the Brotherhood didn’t feel free to speak publicly until after all the political prisoners from the organization had been freed in 1974. Bashandi, Personal interview. Cairo, Egypt: 20 February 2013.

¹⁹*Hadith Dhikrayat Maʿ Khalid ‘Abd Al-Qadir ‘Awda*. Perf. Khalid ‘Abd Al-Qadir ‘Awda. Ikhwantube, 2010.

²⁰Patrick D. Gaffney, *The Prophet’s Pulpit: Islamic Preaching in Contemporary Egypt* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994), 266–7.

²¹Paul Starkey, ‘Modern Egyptian Culture in the Arab World,’ in *The Cambridge History of Egypt: Modern Egypt from 1517 to the End of the Twentieth Century Vol. 2*, M.W. Daly ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 424; For an overview of Anwar al-Sadat’s use of media; and see Anwar Alam, *Religion and State: Egypt, Iran and Saudi Arabia* (Delhi, India: Gyan Sagar Publications, 1998), 93.

²²Muhammad Mansur Mahmud Hayba, *al-Sihafa al-Islamiyya fi Misr: Bayna ‘Abd al-Nasir wa-l-Sadat* (Cairo: Dar al-Wafa l-il-Tibaʿa wa-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzīʿ, 1990), 230.

²³Muhammad Mansur Mahmud Hayba, *al-Sihafa al-Islamiyya fi Misr: Bayna ‘Abd al-Nasir wa-l-Sadat* (Cairo: Dar al-Wafa l-il-Tibaʿa wa-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzīʿ, 1990), 237.

Brotherhood's extensive membership directly subsidized the organization's print media,²⁴ yet for an organization still very much regaining its footing outside prison walls, no such funding source existed. So while the Brotherhood may have aspired to publish perhaps a weekly or bi-weekly magazine, an editorial note in the February 1977 issue of *al-Da'wa* admitted that this was not yet financially possible.²⁵ Indeed, despite its popularity—estimates of sales of 60,000–150,000 copies per issue dwarf the mean distribution of Islamic print media during this period²⁶—subscription fees alone could not support the magazine.

In response, al-Tilmisani and his colleagues at *al-Da'wa* turned to a tried and true formula to support the endeavour: they sold commercial advertisements. As Richard Ohmann notes regarding American periodicals in the twentieth century: '[p]ublishers mass-produced a physical product, which they sold at a loss, and used it to mass-produce an immaterial product, the attention of readers, which they sold at a profit. . . .'²⁷ This dynamic was crucial to the Brotherhood's publishing efforts: Badr Muhammad Badr, editor of the 'Youth and Universities' section of *al-Da'wa* between 1979 and 1981, explained that it was only through advertising that the magazine was able to cover its cost, including salaries for editors.²⁸ Put differently, without such advertising, the Brotherhood would have been unable to reach a broad Egyptian public in a period that would prove crucial to its history.

The Brotherhood's reliance on commercial advertising correlated to the specific physical form the magazine would take. Perhaps the most comparable Islamic magazine, *al-I'tisam*, published weekly by the Salafi-Islamist *al-Jam'iyya al-Shar'iyya*²⁹ contained a glossy cover and photographs like *al-Da'wa*, yet it had very few commercial advertisements and most of the page space was taken up by dense text.³⁰ It was also considerably smaller, about 60% of the size of *al-Da'wa*. Instead, in size and layout *al-Da'wa* more closely resembled the various

²⁴Prior to 1952, the Muslim Brotherhood financed its various socio-economic and political program through membership dues. See Shu'ayb al-Ghubashi, *Sihafat al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin: Dirasa fi-l-Usul wa-l-Funun* (Cairo: Dar al-Tawzi' wa-l-Nashr al-Islamiyya, 2004), 28–47; and This situation was even more challenging in 1970: The Brotherhood had yet to rebuild its membership base and was in little position to offer even modest subsidies, let alone those necessary to produce a glossy magazine. 'Abd al-Salam Bashandi, Personal interview, Cairo, Egypt, 20 February 2013.

²⁵Barid al-Da'wa, *Al-Da'wa*, February 1977/Rabi' al-Awwal 1397, 70.

²⁶Raymond Hinnebusch cites circulation of between 80,000–150,000 copies, while John Esposito cites 100,000 copies; See Raymond Hinnebusch, *Egyptian Politics Under Sadat: The Post-Populist Development of an Authoritarian-Modernizing State* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 205; John Esposito, *Islam and Politics* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1998), 237 respectively. Carrie Wickham uses Esposito's estimate in *Mobilizing Islam*, 96; Badr Muhammad Badr estimated average circulation at 60,000 copies, with increases during times of political tension such as the Camp David Accords. Badr Muhammad Badr. Personal interview. Cairo, Egypt, 26 February 2013. The mean distribution of Islamic magazines and journals in 1979 was 3,681 copies; and See *al-Ihsa'at al-Thaqafiyya: al-Idha'a wa-l-Sihafa 1979* (Cairo: Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS), 1983), 25–6.

²⁷See Richard M. Ohmann, *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets and Class at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Verso, 1996), 346.

²⁸Badr Muhammad Badr, Personal interview (Rock-Singer) Cairo, Egypt: 26 February 2013.

²⁹*Al-I'tisam*, though not formerly affiliated with the Jam'iyya Shar'iyya, was run by its leading members, mostly notably Ahmad 'Isa 'Ashur and 'Abd al-Latif Mushtahiri and each issue's cover or inner flap included the statement that the magazine 'follows the principles of the Jam'iyya al-Shar'iyya.' (*tasir 'ala mabadi' al-Jam'iyya al-Shar'iyya*) Particular elites, most notably Mushtahiri and Mahmud 'Abd al-Wahhab Fayyad, melded a Salafi commitment to neo-Hanbali theology and the derivation of law exclusively from the Quran and Sunna and a commitment to Brotherhood-style social and political transformation. For example, Mushtahiri emphasized the JS's commitment to the 'straight path of the Salaf' (*ṣirāṭ al-Salaf al-mustaqim*)... We work day and night to adhere to the principles of the monotheism (*mabadi' al-Tawhid*)."; See "al-Jam'iyya Shar'iyya wa Sum'atuha fi al-Bilad al-'Arabiyya wa-l-Islamiyya, *al-I'tisam*, June 1978/Rajab 1398, 41. Questions of the relative role of neo-Hanbali (i.e. Salafi) and Ash'ari theology in the organization, however, remain a source of controversy and dispute to this day.

³⁰*Al-I'tisam* adopted a visual style more akin to *al-Da'wa* following a cover reformat in October of 1979, although the dimensions of the magazine remained the same.

popular magazines of the period, such as *October* (Uktubir) or *Sabah al-Khayr*. Like these magazines *al-Da'wa* was large format with visually arresting, and even provocative, covers—the type of presence meant to grab the attention of a consumer who might not have already been interested in the substantive content. In this sense, *al-Da'wa* approximated a relatively new synergy of religious content and capitalist form, a presentation that encompassed both the physical appearance of the magazine, and the use of commercial advertising as the key method of financial support.

A recognition that rather than an oddity, commercial advertising was integral to the operation of *al-Da'wa*, and thus to the Brotherhood's activities more generally, shifts our attention from the political conditions under which it was possible for the Brotherhood to re-emerge to the economic drivers of this return and its implications for the projects of piety that would follow. In the remainder of the article, we focus on two related questions. First, and quite simply, what do the statistics about these advertisements tell us? Who were the hundreds of businesses who bought advertisements in *al-Da'wa* and, relatedly, what do these entities tell us about financial support for a key organ within Egypt's broader Islamic revival? Second, as Mustafa Farghal's question to *al-Da'wa's* editors laid plain, what did the imbrication of commercial advertising and substantive content dedicated to the Islamic transformation of state and society mean for readers of the magazine? How did the Muslim Brotherhood's call deal with newly resurgent questions of consumerism?

Probing the brotherhood's return: a systematic analysis of advertisements in al-Da'wa

The Brotherhood's revitalization is frequently understood in terms of leading Islamists. Whether as a replication of the foundational model of Hasan al-Banna (d. 1949) or the organizational vision of the leader at this time, 'Umar al-Tilmisani, the history of the Muslim Brotherhood is often told as one of top-down processes spurred by particular leaders' ideas and decisions.³¹ Other histories of this period emphasize the role of Islamic print culture, particularly the Brotherhood's publishing house *Dar al-Tawzi' wa-l-Nashr al-Islamiyya* and the array of smaller printing houses that arose around the Brotherhood to publish pamphlets on how to live a pious life through daily practices of prayer, domestic relations, and modesty.³² Although such approaches are valuable in illuminating the politics, key personalities, ideas, and sites of transmission that would shape the Brotherhood's return, they tend to reveal little about the financial sources of the Brotherhood's return. When authors do focus on this question, the investigation rarely probes deeper

³¹ Abdullah al-Arian, *Answering the Call: Popular Islamic Activism in Sadat's Egypt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Zohurul Bari, *Re-Emergence of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt* (New Delhi: Lancers, 1995); and Kirk Beattie, *Egypt During the Sadat Years* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000).

³² For example, see Gilles Kepel (au.) Jon Rothschild (trans.), *Muslim Extremism in Egypt: The Prophet and the Pharaoh* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), 103–28; and Aaron Rock-Singer, 'Prayer and the Islamic Revival: A Timely Challenge,' *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 48 (2016), 293–312.

than speculation about access to Gulf-based oil money or support from an Islamist bourgeois buoyed by Egypt's transforming economy.³³

The advertisers in *al-Da'wa* are a unique cache of data that helps to identify the economic bases of the Brotherhood's return. We systematically canvassed all 65 issues of the magazine—its entire print run from its re-emergence in 1976 to its shuttering in September 1981 amidst Anwar al-Sadat's 'Autumn of Fury' that presaged his assassination one month later³⁴—in order to identify key trends in the advertising that appeared in the magazine.³⁵ Specifically, for each advertisement that appeared in the magazine during this period, we recorded the issue number and date (Hijri and Gregorian), as well as whether or not the issue occurred during Ramadan, the page upon which the advertisement appeared, the specific product being advertised, the company name, the industry, whether or not the advertiser was a private sector or public sector company,³⁶ whether or not the advertisement was for a religious product, and whether or not the advertisement featured English. We also calculated the physical size of the advertisement (cm²) on the page. In conjunction with our measure of the size of each ad we also calculated a 'total page space per issue measure' by multiplying the total page size (cm²) by the number of pages in each issue.³⁷ This allows us to determine an overall measure of how much total page space per issue was devoted to advertisements (as opposed to articles). Our dataset yielded a total of 1,272 total advertisements from 354 distinct companies, which we sorted into 21 broad categories of industry,³⁸

Certain trends are immediately apparent. Most directly, the size of the dataset shows that, throughout the Brotherhood's return to public life, advertising was an inescapable visual presence in their call. The average issue of *al-Da'wa* during the period under study contained approximately 20 individual ads, and the average size of one ad during the period was about 200 cm², approximately 25% of the size of one page. A different measure, which takes into account the available page space in each issue, shows that during the period under study approximately 7.5% of the total page space of each issue was devoted to advertisements.

To contextualize the visual impact of advertising, we also catalogued the length of the opening editorial of each issue (entitled *iftitahiyyat al-'adad*) during the period.

³³See Gilles Kepel (au.) Jon Rothschild (trans.), *Muslim Extremism in Egypt: The Prophet and the Pharaoh* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), 110; Carrie Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 96–102; Joel Beinin, 'Political Islam and the New Global Economy: The Political Economy of an Egyptian Social Movement,' *The New Centennial Review* 5, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 111–39, cit. 115; Kirk Beattie, *Egypt During the Sadat Years* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000); Abdullah al-Arian, *Answering the Call: Popular Islamic Activism in Sadat's Egypt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 28; Hazem Kandil, *Inside the Brotherhood* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), 78; and Robert Springborg, *Mubarak's Egypt: Fragmentation of the Political Order* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1989), 235–6.

³⁴*Al-Da'wa's* closure occurred in the context of al-Sadat's broader crackdown on the Egyptian opposition, Islamist and Leftist, in September 1981.

³⁵The complete dataset is available by contacting the authors.

³⁶Less than one per cent fell into a third category, associations. In many cases assignment to the public or private sector was clear-cut, especially for the ubiquitous Nasir Companies; See Mona Abaza, *The Changing Consumer Culture of Modern Egypt, Cairo's Urban Reshaping* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 90–6; and We also used a 1978 Egyptian Company Directory, which was published as a supplement to *Middle East Observer* that sorted companies based on the sector to which they were affiliated.

³⁷The physical layout of the magazine remained constant throughout the period 1976–1981. The number of inside (non-cover) pages varied slightly over the period, from a minimum of 60 (issues #1 and #3) to a maximum of 82 (issue #55).

³⁸These were, specifically, Islamic publishing, commerce, consumer goods, textiles, food, industrial production, chemical production, services, medicine, automobiles, finance, pharmacy, jewellery, construction, real estate, vanity/personal, government, general (non-Islamic) publishing, organization, political/activist, and unknown.

These columns took up the first few pages of the magazine and were usually written by the Brotherhood's General Guide 'Umar al-Tilmisani in order to articulate the Muslim Brotherhood's position on key issues of the day, whether economic reform, moral decline, political (de)liberalization, or al-Sadat's negotiations with Israel. During the period 1976–1981, the average editorial from the Brotherhood's leadership comprised almost 4% of the page space of each issue. What this tells us is that commercial advertising took up nearly twice the space of the Brotherhood's leaders' discussions about what they saw as the most important issues of the day.

In addition to their visual prominence, *al-Da'wa's* advertisers also indexed the dominant religious and economic trends of this period. The most frequently appearing company that advertised in *al-Da'wa* was the Islamic publishing house Dar al-Ansar, which contributed 186 total advertisements (an average of nearly three advertisements an issue, 14.62% of the total advertisements in our data). Other companies that predominated in the pages of *al-Da'wa* were the 'Gud Mawbil' furniture company (3.77%), the Salem Bin Hasan al-Ansari and Sons Company (a Qatar-based commercial services company, 4.09%), the 'Triko Havana' textile company (3.38%), and the Sharif Plastics Manufacturer (3.22%). Repeat advertisers such as these, however, were the exception; most companies appeared in the magazine only once over the five-year period. In terms of broader industries, our data captures arguably the most important trends transforming Egypt during the 1970s: religious revival and economic expansion. The most well represented industry, in terms of raw number of advertisements during this period, was Islamic publishing (474 advertisements, over 37% of the total). The second most prolific industry was commerce, encompassing various broker services and contracting firms of the type that had emerged to take advantage of opportunities offered by the *infitah* (148 advertisements, approximately 11.5% of the total). Other notable categories were textiles (8.57%), food (7.39%), and industrial and chemical production (4.87% and 4.01%, respectively).

As the above figures suggest, advertisements in *al-Da'wa* fell generally into two broad categories: those that billed themselves in Islamic terms and those that did not. Many of the religious advertisements were fairly unobtrusive and introduced readers to the myriad smaller bookshops, magazines, and printing houses—such as Dar al-Ansar—that proliferated during this period. But while these advertisements were numerous they played little role in generating revenue for *al-Da'wa's* operations: these types of advertisements were usually freely bartered among organs in the burgeoning Islamic publishing sector rather than bought and sold.³⁹ So while the religious advertisements are interesting for the ways that their simple existence speaks to the potential tensions between capitalism and Islam (see below), they tend to be less useful for understanding the financial profile of companies that supported the Islamic call.

Advertisements for religious products, ranging from books to religious tourism, were a significant part of the physical presentation of *al-Da'wa*, yet, by virtue of being bartered, they were far less important for the magazine's basic commercial operation. Instead, the majority of the advertisements (58.25%) were for non-religious—and thus

³⁹Badr Muhammad Badr, Personal interview (Rock-Singer). Cairo, Egypt, 26 February 2013.

bought—products. This finding supports the qualitative evidence above that one of the main motivations for using advertisements in the first place was to obtain access to a consistent stream of revenue.

Who funded the brotherhood's return?

Advertising for non-religious products constituted an important source of funding for the Brotherhood's print product. But what do we know about the array of advertisers captured by this broad category? In this section, we further differentiate non-religious advertisers by whether they represented Egypt's private or public sector. This allows us to make basic arguments about whether the money flowing into *al-Da'wa* came from private individuals and enterprises or from segments of the diverse Egyptian state.

Focusing on non-religious advertisers allows us to intervene in arguments about the relationship among religious change, economic liberalization, and the role of state institutions in al-Sadat's Egypt. Specifically, a common claim is that the Brotherhood, lacking the internal resources that had sustained them in earlier eras, managed to rebuild under al-Sadat by cleverly situating themselves at the nexus of *infitah* capitalism and oil boom. For example, Abdullah al-Arian argues that, under Sadat, the Brotherhood 'no longer sustained itself financially, but rather relied increasingly on outside support, especially from the Gulf countries.'⁴⁰ Davis and Robinson argue that the Brotherhood funds their activities through 'Zakat...given by supporters, by contributions from Brothers who had fled Egypt during the Nasser era, made their fortunes in the Persian Gulf, and returned to Egypt, and by the profits of the Brotherhood's businesses, hospitals, and clinics.'⁴¹ Similarly, Hazem Kandil points to 'the hundreds of Brothers who settled in the Gulf in the 1960s [and] profited from the oil price hikes of the following decade. Economic liberalization in the mid-1970s allowed Brothers to invest oil remittances back into Egypt's burgeoning consumption bonanza through import-export firms, supermarkets, and money-exchange companies.'⁴² And Joel Beinin tells us that 'the 20-fold increase in the price of oil from 1973 to 1981 certainly had something to do with the upsurge of political Islam.'⁴³

Claims that the Brotherhood was able to access these outside sources of revenues, such as an Islamist private sector or wealthy Gulf states, are linked to arguments that the group was somehow able to establish sites of social and civic activism that remained outside of the control, or even the notice, of the Egyptian state. Wickham notes how a tide of Gulf investment helped the Brotherhood to capture enough revenue to establish a 'vast network of Islamic institutions with de facto autonomy from state control.'⁴⁴ Because the group managed to draw their resources from sources that bypassed the

⁴⁰Abdullah al-Arian, *Answering the Call: Popular Islamic Activism in Sadat's Egypt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 28.

⁴¹Nancy J. Davis and Robert V. Robinson, *Claiming Society for God: Religious Movements and Social Welfare* (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 2012), 48–9.

⁴²Hazem Kandil, *Inside the Brotherhood* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), 78.

⁴³Joel Beinin, 'Political Islam and the New Global Economy: The Political Economy of an Egyptian Social Movement,' *The New Centennial Review* 5:1 (Spring 2005), 111–39, cit. 115; and See also Sheri Berman, 'Islamism, Revolution, and Civil Society,' *Perspectives on Politics* 1, no. 2 (June 2003): 260.

⁴⁴Carrie Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 93.

state, the argument proceeds, they managed to preserve a degree of autonomy that was crucial for their alternative ideological project.⁴⁵

These arguments establish empirical implications that we can assess by examining the advertising in *al-Da'wa*. To the extent that the above arguments are correct, we might expect to find two trends in our advertising data. First, private sector advertisers with links to the Brotherhood or the general Islamic trend—the stereotypical Islamic bourgeois—should be overrepresented amongst the advertisers in *al-Da'wa*. Relatedly, to the extent that *al-Da'wa* exemplifies an Islamist project that is thought to operate at a distance from state control, there should be comparatively little representation of Egypt's public sector among the advertisers (i.e. government-controlled funding flowing, via the purchase of advertisement, into the coffers of the Brotherhood).

As a first cut, we sorted the non-religious advertisers in our dataset into public and private companies. The private sector numerically predominates: over 80% of the non-religious advertisements are linked to ostensibly private businesses. These included many smaller companies, including aforementioned stalwarts such as Triko Havana knitting, Artlezer Leather, and Gud Mawbil furniture, companies whose small ads (usually around 125 cm²) dotted the interior of nearly every issue. These advertisers were periodically joined by other small businesses, from electronics to bicycles to clothing, which represented a fairly broad swathe of the emerging market economy. By contrast, public sector advertising in *al-Da'wa* was less numerically prominent: slightly less than 20% of the ads that we logged hailed from companies operated by the Egyptian state. While the approximately 20% of public company advertisers is notable, these first cut results potentially support arguments about the role of the *'infithahi* bourgeois' in financing the Brotherhood's return.⁴⁶ While we lack comprehensive ownership data on these companies beyond suggestive information that they are privately owned, it is plausible—if not likely—that some of these non-public sector companies were helmed by precisely those figures envisioned by arguments that the Brotherhood's re-emergence was fuelled by nouveau riche business capital sympathetic to the Islamist cause.⁴⁷

We can make further inferences about funding by using the *areas* of the magazine in which the advertisements appear to deduce information about the costs of the ads themselves. Specifically, the most expensive advertising real estate in *al-Da'wa* was the inside front cover, the inside back cover, and the back cover. In contrast to the monochrome newsprint of the interior, these three pages—almost always devoted to full page advertising—were glossy, multi-coloured, and more substantial which, presumably, made them the most expensive for advertisers to purchase. Limiting the analysis to these three pages helps to identify the sources of a large share of advertising revenue for the magazine.

The largest financial supporters of *al-Da'wa* by industry, judged by percent of advertisements appearing on the most valuable real estate in the magazine, were food producers (23.83% of all ads on these three pages), commerce (17.29%), industry

⁴⁵Asef Bayat, *Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007).

⁴⁶This is similar to the ratio offered by Kepel; and see Gilles Kepel (au.) Jon Rothschild (trans.), *Muslim Extremism in Egypt: The Prophet and the Pharaoh* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), 108.

⁴⁷One potential way to identify the Islamist-oriented businesses among the less prominent advertisers would be to focus on those who appeared in the earliest issues of the magazine, who would assumedly have made decisions to place advertisements based on social connections to the magazine's publishers rather than purely commercial concerns about an ability to reach certain audiences.

(15.89%), and automobiles (9.35%). Refocusing on the company side, three particular businesses accounted for over 25% of the advertisements.⁴⁸ By far the most frequent contributor was the Sharif Plastics Factory, which appeared on these three prominent pages 28 times (13.08%). Next was the automobile import company Modern Motors (7.94%), and thirdly the Massara Company for Trading and Contracting (6.54%).

Here, again, is evidence in favour of the traditional understanding of who funded the Brotherhood's return. These specific advertisers in *al-Da'wa* were linked to or sympathetic towards the Brotherhood. For example, the eponymous owner of Sharif Plastics Factory, 'Abd al-Latif Sharif, was an important figure in the Brotherhood's re-emergence in Egypt.⁴⁹ Hesham al-Awadi describes him as 'an independent Islamist and manufacturer who owned a small plastics firm [who] benefitted from Sadat's *infitah* and his business expanded rapidly throughout the 1970s.' As the *infitah* developed, al-Sharif's company became both an attractive option for Gulf-based Muslim Brothers looking 'for safe opportunities to invest back home' as well as those Egypt-based [Muslim Brothers] looking for jobs in Egypt's expanding private sector.⁵⁰ Kepel specifically points to Sharif Plastics, Modern Motors, and Massara to highlight the role of the Islamist bourgeois in the operations of *al-Da'wa*, claiming that these three companies were 'controlled by Muslim Brethren.'⁵¹

At the same time, however, the evidence derived from these three pages cautions against overlooking the important role of Egypt's public sector companies in supporting *al-Da'wa*. Although these state bodies were less numerous than their private sector counterparts in terms of total advertisements in *al-Da'wa*, they were considerably over-represented in their financial contribution. While less than ten per cent of the advertising in the less valuable interior (newsprint) pages came from public companies, this number jumps to 27% when the sample is restricted to just these three major (glossy and colour) pages. And when these public sector companies bought ads, they targeted these pages: over half of the total ads placed by public sector companies were on the inside front cover, inside back cover, or the back of the magazine. And as this would suggest, the physical presence of the public companies' advertisements was considerable: their average size was over 400 cm², over double the size of the average private sector advertisers and roughly half the size of one of *al-Da'wa*'s pages. Put simply, it seems to be the case that *al-Da'wa* would have struggled to stay in the black had Egypt's public sector companies steered clear of advertising in its (most expensive) pages.

In his history of the al-Sadat era, Beattie tells us that 'Fat cat wealth knew no specific ideological orientation.'⁵² An analysis of the largest funders of advertisers in *al-Da'wa* confirms this. On the one hand, our results support prior literature by suggesting that a steady source of funding emerged from a rising Islamist bourgeois who channelled

⁴⁸Most, but not all, of these advertisements were full page.

⁴⁹When he died in 2017 he was eulogized by the Freedom and Justice Party: 'Wifaa al-Iqtisadi 'Abd al-Latif Sharif Sahib al-S'ad wa al-Sharif li-l-Blastik,' *Bawabat al-Hurriya wa al-'Adala*, 29 June 2017. Available online at: http://www.fj-p.com/PartyActive_Details.aspx?News_ID=117684.

⁵⁰Hesham al-Awadi, *The Muslim Brothers in Pursuit of Legitimacy: Power and Political Islam in Egypt Under Mubarak* (London: IB Tauris, 2004), 68.

⁵¹Gilles Kepel (au.) Jon Rothschild (trans.), *Muslim Extremism in Egypt: The Prophet and the Pharaoh* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), 108.

⁵²Kirk Beattie, *Egypt During the Sadat Years* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 153.

wealth to the Brotherhood by advertising in the group's flagship magazine. And it is possible, if not likely, that our approach undercounts the contribution of these types of advertisers: we lack sufficient data to determine the specific owners, let alone the ideological orientation, of those hundreds of companies who placed small ads for everything from shoes to sunglasses in the inner pages of *al-Da'wa*. On the other hand, we find that Egypt's public sector enterprises made significant financial contributions to the Muslim Brotherhood's key ideological product, buying advertising space on the magazine's most prominent pages.

The public sector's outside role in *al-Da'wa's* advertising suggests that, far from operating at arm's length, in parallel to, or underground, the Brotherhood's return to public prominence in al-Sadat's Egypt occurred with the support of certain Egyptian state institutions. Scholars have intimated this connection between state and society by pointing to Anwar al-Sadat's attempts to shore up his own religious credentials and to balance against remnants of Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir's Arab Nationalist Regime. Less attention, however, is paid to the particular ways these top-down manifestations of state support for Islamic revival were implemented on the ground.⁵³ Advertising in *al-Da'wa* is an important and concrete indicator of Egyptian state support for an important constituent part of the Islamic revival: new modes of Islamist rhetoric and behaviour were introduced to the Egyptian population via the pages of this magazine, which was itself paid for by advertising revenue coming from diverse sources within the Egyptian state.

Living piety while ignoring profit

The primary intended message of *al-Da'wa* was not a call for unrestrained consumerism wrapped in an Islamic idiom. Far from it: the magazine's slogan, which appeared on the cover of every issue, reiterated its aspiration to serve as the 'voice of truth, power and freedom' (*ṣawt al-ḥaqq wa-l-quwwa wa-l-ḥuriyya*),⁵⁴ and, in a February 1979 article, *al-Da'wa* asserted that its tie (*rābi'a*) with the reader was based not on a political party (*ḥizb*) but rather on a shared connection to God.⁵⁵ These claims, however, could avoid but not entirely obscure the mutually constitutive relationship between the Muslim Brotherhood's social and ideological project and the commercial advertising in its premier organ. A considerable number of businesses—public and private—bought space in *al-Da'wa* first and foremost to sell their products. These advertisements, in turn, enabled the Muslim Brotherhood to reach a broad audience. In other words, the centrality of advertising to the viability of *al-Da'wa* entrenched basic questions of consumerism within the Brotherhood's overall ideological project.

The demands of producing a periodical in an age of expanding print capitalism forced the Brotherhood to adapt their project to a variety of new realities. As mentioned above, the Brotherhood's various pre-1952 publications—most notably *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin* (1933–1938, 1943–1946, 1954) and *al-Ta'ruf* (1945–1947)—were financed by member contributions, which made advertising revenue superfluous. Furthermore, the idea of commercial advertising sat uneasily with the conception of what an ostensibly 'Islamic' print commodity was

⁵³One notable exception is the tripartite interaction between the Islamist movement, the al-Sadat government, and an emergent student movement detailed in Abdullah al-Arian, *Answering the Call: Popular Islamic Activism in Sadat's Egypt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁵⁴For example, see the inaugural June 1976/Jumada al-Thaniyya 1376 issue of the magazine.

⁵⁵'*al-Da'wa fi 'Ammiha al-Thamin wa-l-'Ashrin*, *Al-Da'wa*, February 1979/Rabi' al-Awwal 1399, 12–3.

supposed to be. The most prominent Islamic journal of this period—*al-Manar*—featured scant advertising during its run between 1898 and 1935.⁵⁶ Indeed, during this time the Brotherhood flatly refused to accept advertisements for ‘un-Islamic’ products in their interwar periodicals (a luxury at least partially afforded by an alternative, membership-based revenue stream).⁵⁷

These sensibilities were largely driven by the fact that these periodicals were considered, first and foremost, as a religious product. They were distributed in particular ways that emphasized the religiously authoritative claims of the producers: issues of *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin* often included guides to distribution points for ‘Islamic papers and magazines’ (*al-jarā'id wa-l-majallāt al-Islāmiyya*) which included all Muslim Brotherhood branches (*furū'*), Muhib al-Din al-Khatib's Salafi bookstore (*al-maktaba al-Salafiyya*), a series of libraries and private residences throughout Cairo, Alexandria and the Nile Delta, and even locations in Fez (Morocco) and Tunis (Tunisia), respectively.⁵⁸ The magazines themselves even gently reminded readers of their responsibilities vis-à-vis the primarily religious product they held in their hands: the cover page of *Jaridat al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*, for example, featured a warning on top of its list of distribution sites: [P] reserve the cover (*ghilāf*) of the newspaper and its pages as it contains [information on] the rituals of Islam (*sha'ā'ir al-Islam*) and the noble verses of God (*ayāt Allah al-karīma*).⁵⁹

By the 1970s, however, Islamic magazine distribution was enmeshed in an increasingly commercialized system of production and marketing, and in this environment anxiety over the implications of placement of ostensibly religious texts alongside their secular counterparts only grew. Consumerism, while present under 'Abd al-Nasir,⁶⁰ increased substantially under al-Sadat, particularly in the field of religious production. This included audiocassette sermons and popular Islamic books (*islāmiyyāt*), as well as more mundane items such as key chains, colouring books, prayer beads and stickers.⁶¹ Just as importantly, Islamic magazines were sold not in religious bookstores but rather at open-air book and newspaper sellers or kiosks. While scholarly tomes may have been for sale nearby, these magazines more frequently shared shelf space—or, more accurately, cardboard-cushioned pavement real estate—with secular periodicals and books and religious commodities. The intersection of calls to piety and commercialization of this period was thus at risk of being questioned in ways that it had

⁵⁶Given an average circulation of 300–400 copies per issue, it is doubtful that *al-Manar* was a particularly attractive advertising space. For information of *al-Manar*'s circulation figures; and see Ami Ayalon, *Arab Press in the Middle East* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 148.

⁵⁷The Brotherhood rejected ads for the cinema, alcohol, cigarettes, women's clothing or razors. According to a history of the organization's periodicals, distributed by the Brotherhood's official publishing house, the refusal to accept razor ads stemmed from the status of beards in Islam as an authoritative prophetic practice (*Sunna*). See Shu'ayb al-Ghubashi, *Sihafat al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin: Dirasa fi-l-Usul wa-l-Funun* (Cairo: Dar al-Tawzi' wa-l-Nashr al-Islamiyya, 2004), 47. There is, however, reason to be sceptical of this claim as the beard was not yet an assumed feature of male appearance for the Brotherhood. For example, all six of the Muslim Brotherhood members whose pictures were featured in the 23 June 1936 issue of the organization's official periodical, *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*, lacked a beard with some sporting a mustache. See 'Majmu'at Suwar al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin,' *Jaridat al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*, 23 June 1932/4 Rabi' al-Thani 1355, back page.

⁵⁸For example, see *Jaridat al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*, 29 Dhu al-Qa'da 1352, back page.

⁵⁹*Jaridat al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*, 29 Dhu al-Qa'da 1352, back page.

⁶⁰For more on the consumerism of the 'Abd al-Nasir periods and its continuities into the al-Sadat period, see Mona Abaza, *Changing Consumer Cultures of Modern Egypt: Cairo's Urban Reshaping* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 94–113.

⁶¹Gregory Starrett, 'The Political Economy of Religious Commodities in Cairo,' *American Anthropologist* 97, no. 1 (March 1995), 53.

not been prior. Indeed, it was precisely this state of affairs that prompted Mustafa Farghal to query the editors of *al-Da'wa*.

The newly competitive print marketplace—and the role of advertising both in that marketplace generally and in the pages of *al-Da'wa* specifically—forced the Brotherhood to confront a series of new challenges. One was primarily technical: the demands of attracting and holding reader attention (and thus value for advertisers) in a crowded marketplace of textual products meant that the aesthetics of the magazine could not be avoided. In *al-Da'wa's* February 1981 issue, al-Tilmsani explained that the periodical had prioritized 'form' (*al-shakl*) over 'content' (*al-maḍmūn*); noting the response of 'Brothers around the world,' he promised that the next step would be to develop the content (*taḥwīr al-maḍmūn*) further.⁶² Al-Tilmsani, though responsive, was hardly ahead of the curve: a January 1979 letter in *al-Da'wa* had compared the level of printing and editing in this periodical unfavourably with that of its Salafi-Islamist peer led by elites within the Jam'iyya Shar'iyya, *al-I'tisam*.⁶³ Though it is unclear as to whether this was a fair criticism on the technical end—*al-I'tisam's* production values tended to be inferior to those of *al-Da'wa* throughout the entire period in which they were both published—this letter speaks to the pressure produced by a competitive market.

Technical development, in particular the shift to a glossy print product, was a relatively simple side of the dilemma the Brotherhood faced and producers of Quranic recitation and audiocassette sermons had long confronted the challenge of meeting broader 'popular' expectations while maintaining a distinctive religious style.⁶⁴ What was new, and much more challenging for those involved in *al-Da'wa*, was to navigate the environment of religious products placed immediately alongside their non-religious and sometimes irreligious counterparts—a scenario which Starrett terms commercial 'disorder'⁶⁵—that came with new consumerism. These editors had to fully integrate advertisements alongside visions of piety while stabilizing these popular textual objects as 'religious.'

At first glance, it would appear that such challenges would have been lessened by a *growth* of Islamic advertisements over the 1976–1981 period. Our data show a clear increase in the number of religious advertisements that appeared in the magazine over time. On average, in the earliest issues of *al-Da'wa*, advertisements for religious products took a clear backseat, in numerical terms, to non-religious products. But by the end of *al-Da'wa's* run in 1981 the balance approached, and in some cases even exceeded, parity. Neither was this

⁶²Kalimat al-Tahrir, *al-Da'wa* February 1981/Rabi' al-Thani 1401, 1.

⁶³Barid al-Qurra, *al-Da'wa*, January 1979/Safar 1399, 65.

⁶⁴The overlap in styles of religious and non-religious media in Egypt is well documented. For an analysis of the debate over the musicality of contemporary Quran recitation, see Kristina Nelson, *The Art of Reciting the Quran*, (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2010), 32–51; The polemic over whether or not particular styles of Quranic recitation constituted music is analogous to the question of whether 'Islamic magazines' were distinct from non-Islamic print media. The efforts in favor of and against musicality in Quranic recitation were part of a broader process by which religious media was expected to compete with non-Islamic offerings for the attention of listeners even as it retained an amorphous 'religious' nature. As Charles Hirschkind notes with regard to Islamic cassette sermons in the 1990s, '[a]s sermons moved outside the mosque to become a popular media practice, one competing with other forms of media entertainment, listeners came to expect some of the same pleasure and cathartic experience that Umm Kulthum's music had previously made available'; See Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 54. In this context of Islamic magazines, the question of commodification was the polemical issue through which Islamicity was debated.

⁶⁵Gregory Starrett, 'The Political Economy of Religious Commodities in Cairo,' *American Anthropologist* 97, no. 1 (March 1995): 56–9.

changing balance the result of declining non-religious advertising: instead, the average number of non-religious ads per issue remained remarkably stable over the five-year period (approximately 15), with the increase being driven instead by more and more advertisements for Islamic products appearing in later issues of the magazine. One interpretation of this trend, in line with the above arguments about the broader changes in the religious marketplace under al-Sadat, is that the pages of *al-Da'wa* are essentially capturing the fact that by the early 1980s there was simply a greater circulation of religious products and a general commodification of the religious revival than had existed in the mid-1970s. This advertising trend assumedly would not have troubled men like Mustafa Farghal, who fretted to *al-Da'wa's* editors about an ostensibly Islamic magazine showcasing non-religious products.

A straightforward count of the relative balance of Islamic and non-Islamic advertisements, however, tells only a portion of the changing profile of the magazine. Advertisements from non-religious companies remained numerically stable over the run of the magazine, but they grew increasingly prominent on the page. In 1976, the mean size of a non-religious advertisement was approximately 225 cm², whereas by 1981 the average had grown to approximately 325 cm² (a growth of about 65%; as noted, the raw count of non-religious advertisements had basically remained stable over the period). Using another measure, by the last year that *al-Da'wa* appeared (1981), ads for non-religious products were, on average, over four times larger than those for religious ones. Put simply, it became harder and harder to read *al-Da'wa* without passing one's eye across advertisements for a variety of products with no obvious connection to the content of the substantive articles.

It is precisely because of the inescapability of commercial advertisements that *al-Da'wa's* editors maintained that external financial considerations would not compromise the mission of the magazine. Most prominently, in an editorial note in the July 1981 issue, 'Umar al-Tilmisani explained that Islamic papers (*al-ṣuḥuf al-islāmiyya*) differed from other papers on a root level (*ikhtilāfan jidhriyyan*) because they reject the notion of media as a commercial enterprise (*tijāra*). Though they sought to increase their readership, such success must not come at the expense of religious principles (*akhlaqiyyāt al-Islām*).⁶⁶ Yet, it is not a coincidence that the opening anecdote of this article—a letter that questioned whether advertisements for makeup were religiosity licit—was never answered. Indeed, in light of the centrality of advertisements to *al-Da'wa's* financial viability and their ubiquitous presence in its page, however, we must see claims to purity of mission not as a statement of fact but rather as a polemical stance intended to shield *al-Da'wa's* ideological mission from the economic conditions that made it possible.

Advertising's prominence in the pages of *al-Da'wa* reflected the growing consumerist wave and linked to anxieties over moral decline playing out in Egyptian life writ large under al-Sadat. Never before had the content of magazines and the marketplace of ideas (and magazines) been so tied to economic processes with such tendentious connection to Islam. These questions joined longstanding debates over the authority to write and the motivations for publishing. Between 1976 and 1981, debates over these issues, old and new, played out as editors, writers and readers sought to constitute the 'Islamic magazine' as a politically relevant, religiously legitimate, and commercially-competitive

⁶⁶'Akhi al-Qari,' *al-Da'wa*, July 1981/Ramadan 1401, 3.

text. The financial challenges faced by *al-Da'wa* and its reliance on advertisers of varying ideological stripes suggests that one could not make a claim to a fundamental difference between Islamic magazines and their non-religious counterparts based on advertisements. And, whatever the ambivalences of Mustafa Farghal's, *al-Da'wa's* editors seemed to have little objection to the relationship between print media to Egypt's new economic order; instead, the ultimate influence and thus importance of *al-Da'wa* was defined not by its purity but by its ideological opponents of popularity and scarcity.⁶⁷

Conclusion

We make three interrelated claims in this article. First, that far from an anomaly or curiosity, commercial advertising was a critical constituent part of the Muslim Brotherhood's *al-Da'wa*: without it, the magazine would have struggled to remain financially viable. Second, a considerable portion of the advertising revenue came from Egypt's ubiquitous state-owned enterprises, which provides a concrete illustration of the ways in which portions of the Egyptian state were intricately connected to the return of the Muslim Brotherhood to public life and a broader project of Islamic Revival during the 1970s. And finally, the ubiquity of commercial advertising posed a challenge to the Brotherhood's vision of ideological purity because the latter depended on the claim that the organization's call to Islam was insulated from economic shifts or cultural whims.

Departing 'Abd al-Nasir's prisons as an out-of-touch and aging clique, the Brotherhood rapidly rebuilt their organization. In this article, we have attempted to study *how* they managed to do so by examining the sources of financial support for their flagship monthly magazine *al-Da'wa*, specifically the nearly 1,300 commercial advertisements that appeared therein. This perspective allows us to indirectly assess the financial underpinnings of that return, and to broaden an existing narrative that argues that the revitalization of Islamism in Egypt was built directly on the activities of an Islamist-allied segment of *Infitah* capitalists. We have added an appreciation of the significance of public sector companies to the funding of this key Brotherhood organ, suggesting a concrete reason why the history of the Brotherhood's re-emergence cannot be told without reference to the considerable support given by a sprawling and internally diverse state bureaucracy.

In his history of Egypt under al-Sadat, Kirk Beattie laments that 'a detailed history of Egypt's Islamist bourgeois and Islamist middle-class has yet to be written, but no one can deny that it existed, and its presence had a heavy impact on Egyptian society and Egypt's political economy.'⁶⁸ This article uses advertising to explore one of the ways that Islamism, an aspiration to live as a member of the middle class, and consumerism intersected in al-Sadat's Egypt. Specifically, we argue that debates over authenticity in *al-Da'wa* were shaped by the tension between purity and consumerism and a general anxiety over the spread of consumerism during this period. Indeed, as the opening anecdote of Mustafa Farghal and the quantitative and qualitative analysis of advertising

⁶⁷See 'Akhi al-Qari,' *al-Da'wa*, August 1976/ Sha'ban 1396, 1.

⁶⁸Kirk Beattie, *Egypt During the Sadat Years* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 254.

and commercialism and in *al-Da'wa* suggest, the Brotherhood's call to Islam arose within a broad consumerist vision of an aspirational middle class lifestyle.

Finally, this article demonstrates the value of advertising as a source for insight into important sociopolitical processes. Drawing inspiration from studies of cultural history, we have also shown how the juxtaposition of commercial advertising and substantive Islamic content can inform understandings of social movement formation, the interrelationship among regime, state institutions and society, and the mutually constitutive relationship between economic and religious change. It reveals not only the diverse sources of support for the Brotherhood's project, but also the ways in which, far from a coherent top-down body, the Egyptian state constitutes a wide and internally diverse conglomerate of institutions.

Our research also suggests a variety of avenues for additional investigation. Future scholars may wish to continue to explore the rich trove of advertisements we have catalogued, for example by probing the backgrounds of particular advertisers and/or examining how the substance of specific advertisements either challenged or supported the vision of social, cultural, and religious reform championed by the authors in the pages of *al-Da'wa*. In the process, a natural area of expansion would be a comparative analysis, setting the analysis of advertising in a self-consciously 'religious' magazine such as *al-Da'wa* against a periodical of different ideological orientation or demographic profile.

Stories of piety are rarely told with reference to advertisements. We have offered a new perspective on 1970s Egypt through a narrow but perceptive window: commercial advertising in a religious publication. Literally wedged between advertisements for leather shoes, detergent and plastic plates, the Brotherhood sounded an urgent call to reform Egyptian society that depended on the support of the broader economic and cultural forces that it vowed to combat.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.