

Diesel Jeans Ad Showing Tattooed Woman in Denim Burqa Offends Muslims

Islamophobic or empowering? Those are among the reactions to a new Diesel jeans ad featuring a heavily tattooed, topless white woman wearing a redesigned denim burqa.

The slogan next to her: "I Am Not What I Appear To Be."

Racist and condescending are among the criticisms that have been leveled at the ad, created by Nicola Formichetti, former stylist to Lady Gaga, who made waves last month with her song "Burqa." But others, including a female Muslim marketing consultant who advised Diesel, said the idea was to make people question assumptions and stereotypes.

"This was to challenge that idea that when you see a woman in a burqa, or niqab or even hijab, that you assume certain things about her," said Ameena Meer, an observant Muslim and founder and principal of Take-Out Media, the consulting firm that advised Diesel.

Not everyone sees it that way. Sana Saeed, senior editor at the Islamic legal news website Islawmix, tweeted that she has dreaded the day when capitalism would consume the veil.

And Shruti Parekh, a New York City videographer and member of the South Asian Women's Creative Collective, wrote that the ad is "rife with Islamophobia and attacks on the Muslim world."

While Muslim women in the West who wear burqas must suffer through negative connotations and open hostility, Parekh wrote, the white model in Diesel's ad doesn't.

"Brown, Muslim women in burqas are often looked at with distrust and fear or patronizing sympathy by Americans, while

this white woman represents fashion," Parekh wrote. "She is in fact bold, cutting edge, and rebellious."

Angel Millar, a writer specializing in religion and symbolism, said Western fashion has long been influenced by Islamic culture, and the Diesel ad is just the latest example.

While the controversy generated by the Diesel ad surprised her, ad consultant Meer said it was a good thing.

"As a Muslim, I felt like it was really important we're having these questions," she said. "We're talking about what it means."