22862 - Can One Accept Prizes Given by Stores in Islam?

the question

Every so often a group of stores or newspapers etc., run competitions offering prizes in order to attract a greater number of customers. I hope that you can explain to me the ruling on taking part in these competitions, quoting whatever you can from the fatwas of well-known scholars on this subject so that I can have a good idea. May Allah reward you with good.

Summary of answer

Contemporary scholars differ with regard to offering prizes in order to attract customers and there are two views, one of which is that it is not allowed at all, and the other is that it may be permissible, so long as certain conditions are met.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Offering prizes in order to attract a greater number of customers is a modern issue in marketing due to the competition that exists in the marketplace and the keenness of sellers to promote their products. Contemporary scholars differ with regard to this issue and there are two views, one of which is that it is not allowed at all, and the other is that it may be permissible, so long as certain conditions are met.

Among those who are of the view that it is not allowed and is prohibited are the scholars of the Standing Committee for Issuing Fatwas and Shaykh Ibn Baz (may Allah have mercy on him). There follow some of their Fatwas:

The Standing Committee for Issuing Fatwas was asked: There are some food stores in America that, when you buy from them, give you some numbers. When you have collected a certain

amount of numbers as stipulated by the store, you get a prize, namely a sum of money. Is it permissible for a Muslim to take this prize, knowing that he has not paid anything for it, and it is simply because he has bought from the store or has visited the store that he has been given these numbers through which he won that prize.

They replied:

“If the matter is as described, it is not permissible for you to take this prize which is given by the store because of your buying from them or because you visited them. Your choosing these numbers which were unknown to you at the time when you chose them and became known only after you chose them is a kind of gambling, and it is known that gambling is prohibited according to the Quran and Sunnah and the consensus of the scholars.” (Fatwa no. 5847. "(Fatawa Al-Lajnah Ad-Da`imah, 15/191)

The Standing Committee was also asked: There are some merchants who sell a certain item for one hundred Riyals, which is sold by other for approximately twenty Riyals, with a chance to win a prize of a car or some other prize, and the people rush to buy from them because they want to win that prize. Is this permissible? Please advise us, may Allah reward you with good.

They replied:

“What you have asked about is not permissible, rather it is an evil action and a kind of gambling which Allah has forbidden because it involves risks and deceit, and consuming people’s wealth unlawfully. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“O you who believe! Intoxicants, and gambling, and Al-Ansab (slaughtering for idols), and Al-Azlam (drawing lots seeking luck or to make a decision) are an abomination of Satan’s handiwork. So avoid (strictly all) that (abomination) in order that you may be successful.

91. Satan wants only to excite enmity and hatred between you with intoxicants and gambling, and hinder you from the remembrance of Allah and from As-Salah (the prayer). So, will you not then abstain?” [Al-Ma'idah 5:90-95]

“O you who believe! Eat not up your property among yourselves unjustly” [An-Nisa’ 4:29]

It was narrated in an authentic Hadith that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) forbade deceitful and ambiguous sales. May Allah help you to do all that is good and make things easy for you.” (Fatwa no. 18324."(Fatawa Al-Lajnah, 15/195)

The Committee was also asked: What is the ruling on prizes that are offered by some phone companies to entice callers to call more than once?

They replied:

“The prizes that are given to callers using the public phones in centres are not permissible because that involves gambling and deceiving the people and consuming their wealth unlawfully in order to promote use of the telephones and increase the company’s earnings from them, as well as the enmity that it stirs up among the owners of the centres themselves and the callers. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“O you who believe! Intoxicants, and gambling, and Al-Ansab (slaughtering for idols), and Al-Azlam (drawing lots seeking luck or to make a decision) are an abomination of Satan’s handiwork. So avoid (strictly all) that (abomination) in order that you may be successful.

91. Satan wants only to excite enmity and hatred between you with intoxicants and gambling, and hinder you from the remembrance of Allah and from As-Salah (the prayer). So, will you not then abstain?” [Al-Ma'idah 5:90-95] (Fatwa no. 19560, Fatawa Al-Lajnah Ad-Da’imah, 15/196)

Shaykh Ibn Baz (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked the following question: In our city there is a co-operative association which displays cars in front of their entrance; whoever buys something from them for one hundred Dirhams or more is given a free ticket on which is printed “worth ten Dirhams.” After that a draw is made in which the lucky person – as they say – is given the car that was on display. My question is:

1 – What is the ruling on taking part in this draw with this ticket that is given for free, and the participant does not lose anything if he does not win?

2 – What is the ruling on buying from that co-op with the intention of getting the ticket mentioned so that one can take part in the competition? The people here, even the educated ones, are confused about this matter. I hope that you can answer these two questions with whatever evidence is available so that the Muslims may understand this matter better on the basis of religious teaching. May Allah reward you with good.

He (may Allah have mercy on him) replied as follows:

“This competition is regarded as a form of gambling, which Allah has forbidden as He says (interpretation of the meaning):

“O you who believe! Intoxicants, and gambling, and Al-Ansab (slaughtering for idols), and Al-Azlam (drawing lots seeking luck or to make a decision) are an abomination of Satan’s handiwork. So avoid (strictly all) that (abomination) in order that you may be successful.

91. Satan wants only to excite enmity and hatred between you with intoxicants and gambling, and hinder you from the remembrance of Allah and from As-Salah (the prayer). So, will you not then abstain?” [Al-Ma'idah 5:90-95]

The authorities and scholars in Fujayrah and elsewhere should denounce these competitions and warn against them, because that goes against the Book of Allah and is also consuming the people’s wealth unlawfully. May Allah bless us all with guidance and adherence to the truth.” (Majallat Ad-Da’wah, issue no. 1145, dated 29/10/1408 AH)

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him) discussed in detail the ruling on taking part in these competitions. He said that it is permissible so long as two conditions are met. He said:

Companies nowadays offer prizes to those who buy from them. We say that there is nothing wrong with these so long as two conditions are met:

1. The price – of the goods purchased – should be their true price, i.e., the price should not be raised because of the prize. If the price is raised because of the prize then this is gambling and is not permissible.

2. The customer should not buy the product in order to win the prize. If he buys it only because he wants to win the prize, and he has no need for the product, then this is a waste of money. We have heard that some people buy a carton of milk or yoghurt which they do not need, but they hope that they will win a prize, so you see them buying it then throwing it away in the market or outside the house. This is not permissible, because it is a waste of money, and the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) forbade wasting money." (As'ilat Al-Bab Al-Maftuh, no. 1162)

This view is more correct – in sha Allah – so long as a person is certain that he is fulfilling the second condition, because he is the only one who knows what he feels in his heart; no other human being can know that.

We ask Allah to grant us provision that is good and permissible, and to bless us with conviction and contentment, and to keep us away from that which is haram and that which leads to it.

And Allah knows best.