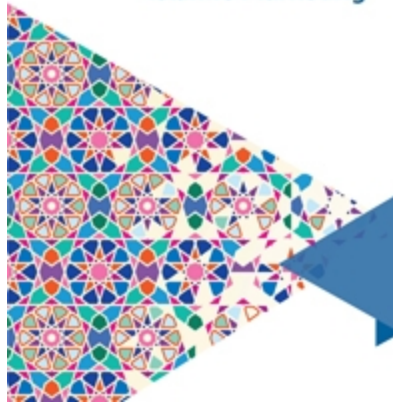




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From East to West: A Sentiment-Based Framework for Understanding Muslim Consumer Preferences in Imported Food Products

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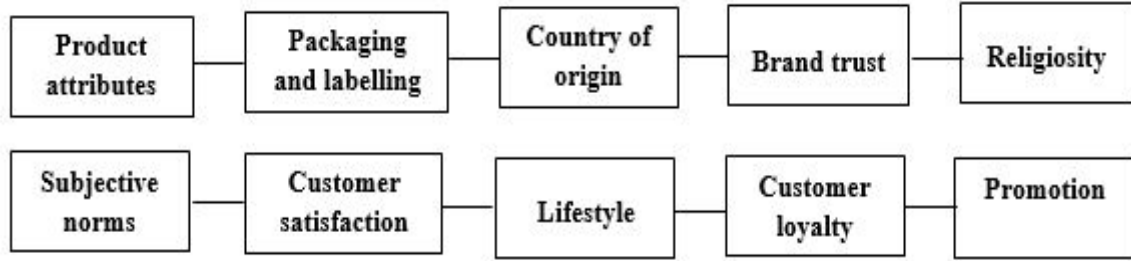


Figure 1: Themes emerged from the thematic content analysis

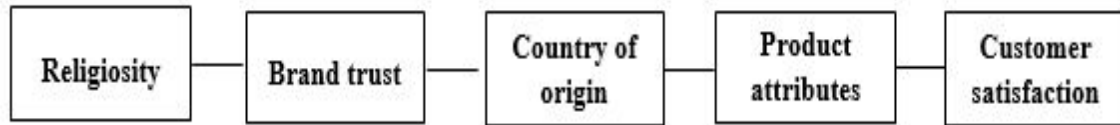


Figure 2: Cross city common themes emerged from the thematic content analysis

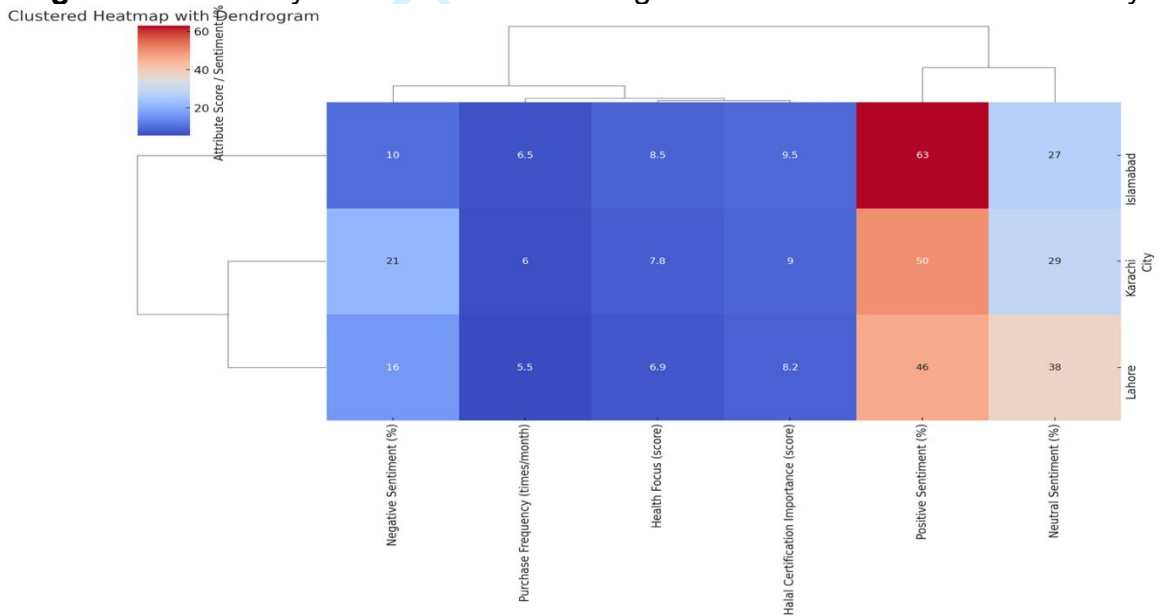


Figure 3: Heatmap with Clustered Dendrogram: this chart highlights cross city variations

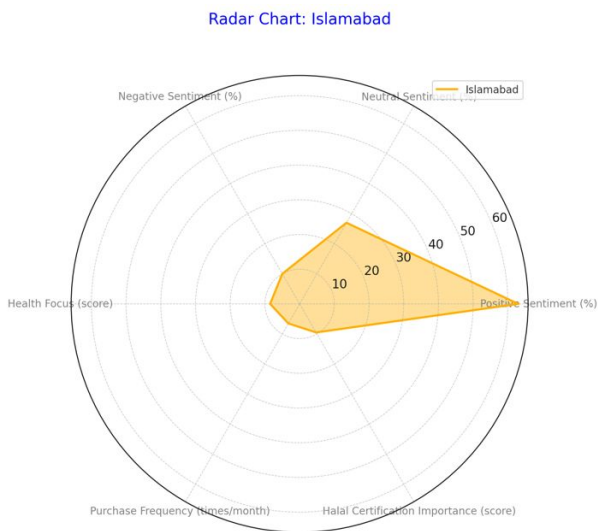
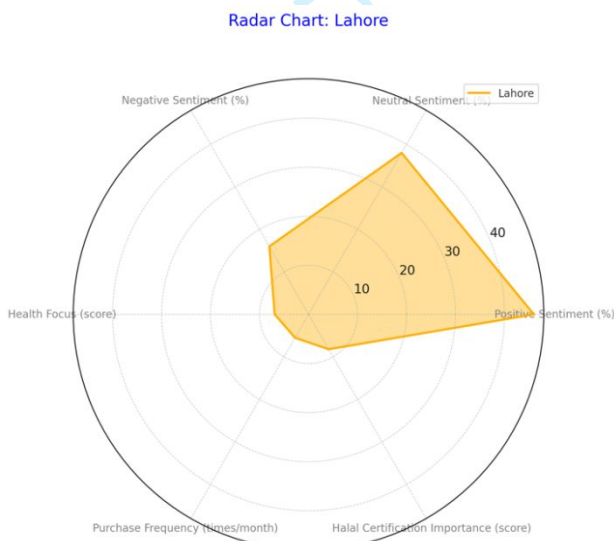
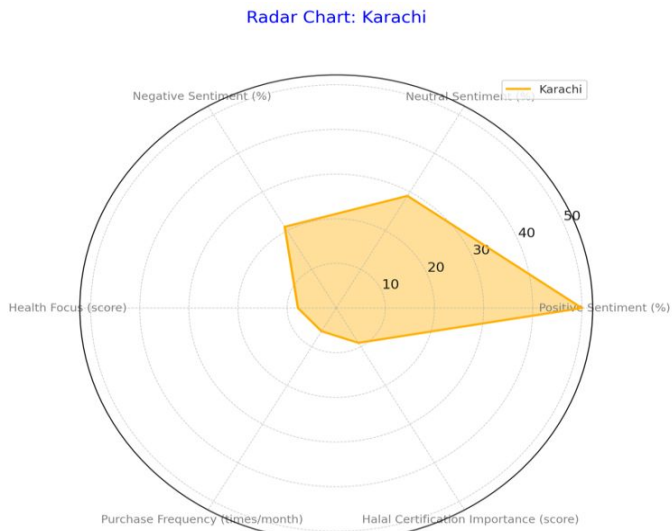


Figure 4: City wise Radar charts

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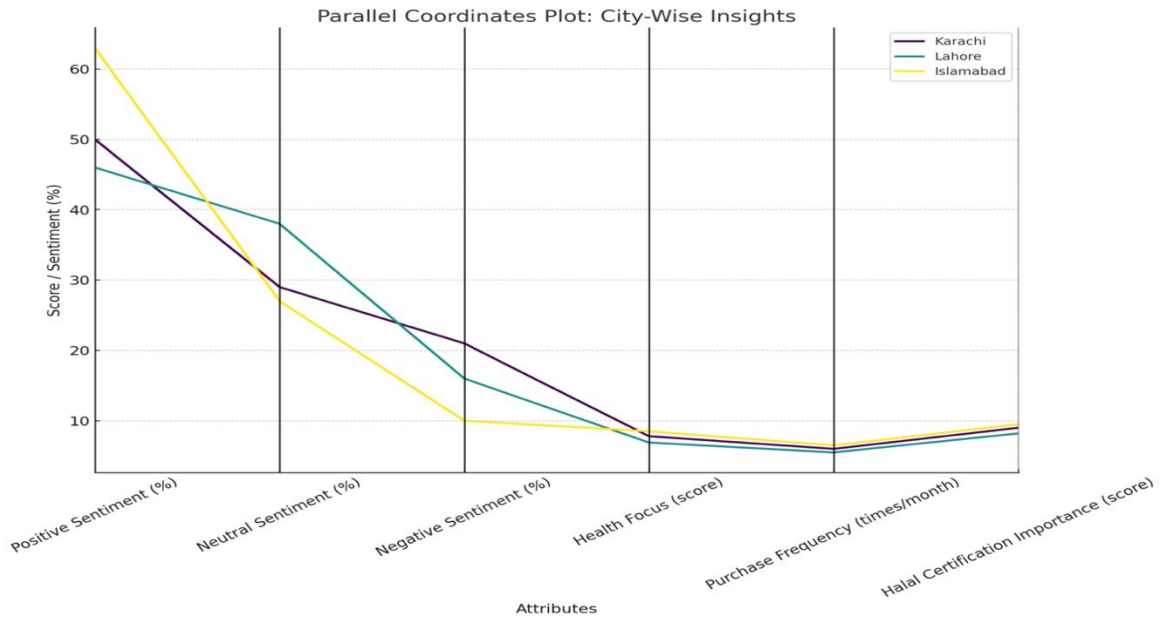


Figure 5: Parallel coordinates plot explanation

3D Cluster Visualization of Sentiment Across Cities

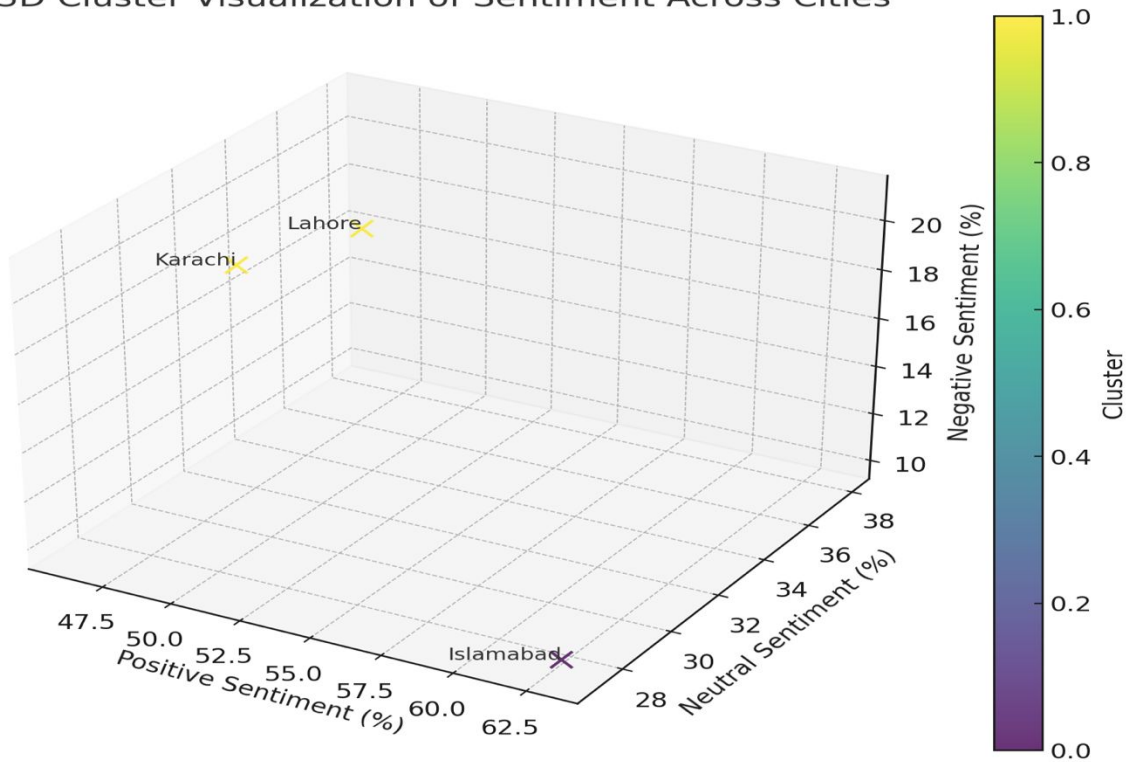


Figure 6: 3D cluster visualization

Extended Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) Framework for Western Imported Food Buying Behavior

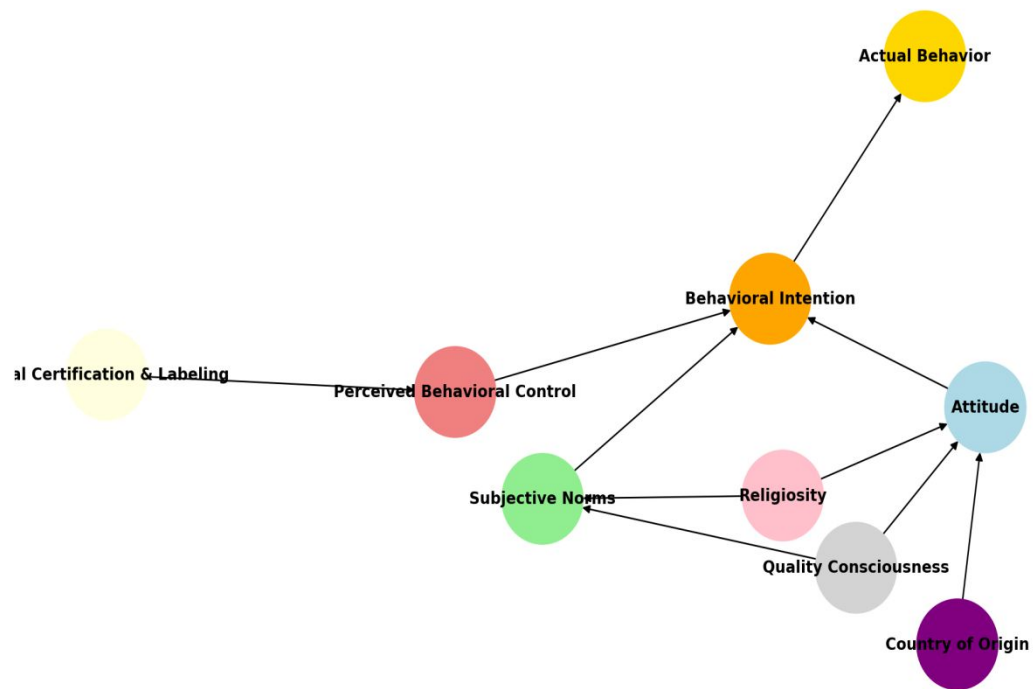
**Figure 7:** Extended Framework (TPB)

Table 1: Demographic profile of the respondents

Element	Characteristics	No of participants'
Gender	Male	22
	Female	23
Cities	Karachi	23
	Lahore	12
	Islamabad	10
Profession	Housewife	22
	Professionals	11
	University Students	12
Education	Bachelors	35
	Masters	10
	18 – 25	18
Age bracket	26 – 35	20
	35 - 45	07

Western imported food categories

The interview findings revealed the product categories of western imported food. Table 2 illustrates the food categories.

Table 2: Western imported food categories

Key categories	No. of participants	Percentage response
Chocolates	13	29
Fresh juices	10	22
Cereals	21	47
Dairy products	12	27
Vegetable oil	17	38
Ice creams	11	24
Biscuits	13	29
Baby products	12	27
Honey	15	33
Processed food	16	35
Coffee	18	40

Table 3: Themes emerged from the interview data extracted from Karachi

Participants quotations – 1 st order concepts	2 nd order categories	Themes emerged
<i>“Product attributes in terms of ingredients, taste, and hygiene plays an important role in selecting the imported food product” (Participant no. 05)</i>	Taste, ingredients, labelling	Product attributes
<i>“Product functionality is important and for me, it’s a deciding factor” (Participant no. 07)</i>		
<i>My first preference is product attributes, and this actually differentiate the western food products from the local food brands” (Participant no. 03)</i>	Tag mark, sticker	Packaging and labeling

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3 *“For me product packaging is important and gives you a sense of*
4 *direction towards product usage” (Participant no. 11)*
5 *“For me myself and experience is more important and I very often*
6 *follow my friends while selecting the imported food brands”*
7 *(Participant no. 13)*
8 *“In my opinion the origin of the product is quite vital as it ensures*
9 *the product quality” (Participant no. 19)*
10 *“Quality ingredient is my top priority and one of the deciding*
11 *factors” (Participant no. 23)*
12 *“I have a faith in such brands which is backed by my previous*
13 *experience” (Participant no. 16)*
14 *“The halal ingredients play a very important role when it comes to*
15 *western imported food products. My decision is solely based on*
16 *the product being halal, else I will not even think of product not*
17 *having halal ingredients” (Participant no. 17)*
18 *“My Islamic teachings doesn't allow me to go for non-halal*
19 *products” (Participant no. 01)*
20 *“I will definitely look for the halal logo, local or any imported food*
21 *product, for me display of halal logo is must” (Participant no. 20)*
22
23
24
25

Product home
manufacturer

Country of origin

Confidence and
conviction

Brand trust

Religiousness

Religiosity

Table 4: Themes emerged from the interview data extracted from City Lahore

Participants quotations – 1 st order concepts	2 nd order categories	Themes emerged
<i>“I consider my daily routine and the way I spend is directly related to choosing the imported food products” (Participant no. 33)</i>	Reference groups	Subjective norms
<i>“Yes, I do get my friends and family opinion when deciding upon the food products” (Participant no. 31)</i>	Product wrapping	Labelling
<i>“Appealing product wrapping sometimes a deciding factor at the time of purchase” (Participant no. 29)</i>		
<i>“I do see the product country of origin, and this is one of the deciding factors” (Participant no. 27)</i>		Customer satisfaction
<i>“I trust these imported food brands and due to this trust factor, I am able to take the purchase decision” (Participant no. 30)</i>	Fulfillment and delight	
<i>“I am highly satisfied from the western imported food products, its matches my lifestyle, personality and above all my taste bud” (Participant no. 32)</i>		
<i>“For me quality is more important, I don't see any relevance of religion with the food consumption. If I can afford, I will go for imported food product, I believe if the product is coming into Pakistan from the western side, it has to be halal, I will not seek for more in-depth information about the product ingredients” (Participant no. 35)</i>	Religiousness	Religiosity
<i>“My affordability, preference and experience are the deciding factors, religion or teaching does not impact my purchase decision. If I can afford then why not” (Participant no. 26)</i>		

1
2
3 *"I don't compromise on quality, and I may not be bothered of halal*
4 *logo if the quality is as per my requirements, I guess nobody*
5 *would look for the halal logo" (Participant no. 34)*
6

7 **Table 5:** Themes emerged from the interview data extracted from City Islamabad
8

9 Participants quotations – 1st order concepts	10 2nd order categories	11 Themes emerged
12 <i>"For me, lifestyle is very important, and I cannot compromise on</i> 13 <i>food quality and I believe that western imported food products are</i> 14 <i>a good combination of quality and promise" (Participant no. 36)</i>	15 Life pattern	16 Lifestyle
17 <i>"Product communication sometimes plays an important role but</i> 18 <i>not all the time, it's your own experience and preference"</i> 19 <i>(Participant no. 39)</i>		20 Promotion
21 <i>"My loyalty towards western imported food products is on a higher</i> 22 <i>side and I will wait if I don't find my choice of product. Even if I</i> 23 <i>need to switch, I will switch to other imported food brand, but for</i> 24 <i>the time being" (Participant no. 41)</i>	25 Communication and information	
26 <i>"Product country of manufacturing is really important me, food</i> 27 <i>products from the west signifies its quality and promise and this</i> 28 <i>is the first thing I see in the product label" (Participant no. 45)</i>	29 Faithfulness and obedience	30 Customer loyalty
31 <i>"I trust these western food brands as they always take care of</i> 32 <i>their processes, and this differentiate them from the rest"</i> 33 <i>(Participant no. 44)</i>	34 Product home manufacturer	35 Country of origin
36 <i>"Well for me quality of product is more important, I am not too</i> 37 <i>concerned about the ingredients, halal or no halal, it's not my</i> 38 <i>responsibility to check" (Participant no. 40)</i>		
39 <i>If I can afford, I will spend on western imported food products, I</i> 40 <i>won't be bothered to spend more as I cannot compromise on</i> 41 <i>quality" (Participant no. 27)</i>	42 Religiousness	43 Religiosity
44 <i>"I don't see any relevance between religion and food preference,</i> 45 <i>it's your own will and if the product is satisfying then why not"</i> 46 <i>(Participant no. 43)</i>		

47 **Source:** Developed by the author from interviews finding
48
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50
51
52

53 **Table 6:** Radar Chart analysis

54 City	55 Explanation
56	57
58	59
60	

Karachi

Karachi's radar chart reveals a balanced performance across most attributes, with moderately high scores in purchase frequency and positive sentiment. Its halal certification importance is relatively strong but not as pronounced as in Islamabad. Overall, Karachi consumers demonstrate consistent behavior, showing slightly lower health consciousness compared to other cities.

Lahore

Lahore displays a more varied pattern. While its neutral sentiment is higher, positive sentiment and halal certification importance are slightly lower. This suggests that consumers in Lahore may have mixed feelings about Western imported food products, focusing more on the practical aspects rather than strong positivity or religious considerations.

Islamabad

Islamabad stands out with a distinct peak in positive sentiment and halal certification importance, indicating that consumers here have a more favorable view of Western imported food products, especially when religious guidelines are met. It also shows a higher health focus, which aligns with its stronger inclination toward quality and well-being.

From East to West: A Sentiment-Based Framework for Understanding Muslim Consumer Preferences in Imported Food Products

Abstract

Purpose

This study's purpose was to explore the motives behind the purchase of Western imported food products from three metropolitan cities in Pakistan. The theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) enriches our understanding of consumption. This study expands the TPB framework by integrating religiosity, country of origin, quality consciousness, and halal certification as critical factors that shape consumers' buying decisions in a Muslim-majority country.

Design/methodology/approach

This qualitative analysis comprises three metropolitan cities: Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 45 participants, and a purposive sampling technique was used. The data was collected specifically from housewives, university students, and professionals and analyzed using thematic content analysis to explore the themes, followed by sentiment analysis to gauge and capture the emotional tone of the respondents.

Findings

The results unveiled not only significant regional variations but also a few surprising similarities. The participants' keen interest in product packaging, attributes, labeling, country of origin, and influence of reference groups for their purchase decision was a common thread. The element of religiosity, a significant factor in a Muslim-majority country, was also evident within a cross-city variation, adding an intriguing layer to the findings.

Originality

This study is a pioneering effort that offers Western exporters a unique perspective on the Asian consumer market. The insights it provides are not just useful, but they also confirm the originality of this research. By offering a comprehensive view of Muslim consumers' preferences when choosing Western imported food products, this paper stands out for its originality. The diverse consumer perception from a Muslim-majority state signifies the unique contribution of this study and the theoretical and practical implications it holds for marketers and researchers.

Key Words: Western Imported Food, Purchasing behavior, Motives, Religiosity

Introduction

Consumers play an essential role in any marketing activity. Marketers have numerous opportunities to offer value-added products to their current and potential customers (Lee, Fu, and Chen, 2020). Hence, companies heavily invest in brand innovation and communication to attract potential and existing consumers. The underlying factors are product attributes, promotion, price, social class, brand trust, loyalty, and, in some cases, religious orientation (Bukhari et al., 2019; Sajdakowska et al. 2018; Usman et al., 2024). Hence, consumer insights are essential and help the marketing department develop a meaningful product proposition for its current and prospective target audience. Food exporters are always looking for opportunities to explore potential new markets wherein their products can be differentiated and create a presence (DFAT, 2016).

Regarding potential markets, Pakistan allows exporters to penetrate diversified food product categories. The fiscal year 2023 recorded a significant US\$ 3.96 billion import of Western imported food products, including fruits, vegetables, and canned products. This mounting figure signifies the potential of imported food products in Pakistan and justifies exploring the reasons behind this significant growth (Ahmad, 2023; Trading Economics, 2025; Pakistan Bureau of

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3 Statistics, 2024). Pakistan is an agriculture-based country and grows good quality fruits and
4 vegetables. However, in 2017, the consumer base spent around 49.9 million US\$. In 2018,
5 phenomenal growth was reported, with approximately US\$74.9 million spent on such items. This
6 demonstrates an incremental increase of 67 percent of Western imported food products (Dawn,
7 2018); for example, the government of Pakistan spent US\$ 65 million on the import of
8 confectionary items such as chocolates, milk, ice creams, tea, coffee, and candies. Additionally,
9 US\$ 23.9 million was spent on live animal imports. This growth and consumption of Western
10 imported food products in Pakistan appears to oppose the religious doctrine of moderate spending,
11 which [emphasizes frugality and moderation in all aspects of life, including food consumption],
12 when imported food products are highly priced compared to locally produced products (Bukhari
13 et al., 2021; Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2024). However, the data suggests that Pakistani
14 consumers welcome Western imported food products and appreciate their presence when various
15 local food brands are available.
16

17
18 While existing literature has explored factors influencing consumers' purchasing behaviors
19 Santovito et al., (2023) there remains a significant gap in understanding the interplay between
20 religiosity and the consumption of Western imported food products in predominantly Muslim
21 countries like Pakistan. Studies such as Bukhari et al. (2019) have examined the role of religiosity
22 in consumer behavior; however, these investigations often lack a nuanced analysis of how religious
23 principles specifically impact preferences across various cities within a country. Furthermore,
24 recent research indicates that factors such as perceived product quality, brand trust, and the
25 availability of suitable local alternatives significantly influence consumer choices, sometimes
26 outweighing religious considerations (Aneesh & Siddiq, 2024; Usman et al., 2024; Rixom &
27 Rixom, 2023; Garay, Robayo-Pinzon & Rojas-Berrio, 2018). This suggests a complex decision-
28 making process where religiosity is one of multiple factors. Thus, its influence may vary depending
29 on individual consumer priorities, market and geographical contexts. Moreover, the existing body
30 of work has not sufficiently addressed the variations in consumer behavior with its unique socio-
31 economic and cultural dynamics (Kautish, Thaichon & Soni, 2024). This geographical gap limits
32 the generalizability of findings and overlooks regional differences that could inform more targeted
33 marketing strategies. Addressing this gap is crucial for developing a comprehensive understanding
34 of the factors driving consumer preferences in a diversified geographical setting, in order to
35 formulate effective marketing strategies that align with regional perspective, religious values and
36 consumer expectations.
37

38
39 This theoretical dearth and consumption of western food products in Pakistan warrants further
40 investigation to explore the motives for such inclination towards Western imported food.
41 Specifically, an exploration in a Muslim country, that surpasses the concept of moderate spending,
42 completely rationalizes a comprehensive exploratory investigation into the subject area, (Al-Hyari
43 et al., 2012; 2020; Bukhari et al., 2019; Bornemann, Scholer and Homburg, 2015; Chamhuri,
44 Kusumawaty and Batt, 2015; Wilson & Liu 2010). Moreover, the Western producers are also
45 looking for untapped opportunities to introduce their various food products in Asian consumer
46 markets. By addressing these gaps, the current study aims to provide a more nuanced
47 understanding of the factors influencing Pakistani Muslim consumers' preferences for Western
48 imported food products. This study considers the interplay between religiosity, perceived product
49 attributes, and regional socio-economic variations. To strengthen the scope, a cross-city
50 comparison within three metropolitan cities of Pakistan with diversified social, economic classes,
51 preferences, and motives would add value to the literature related to consumer behavior (Pakistan
52
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Bureau of Statistics, 2024). Furthermore, a country with a 97 percent Muslim population permits further exploration when the Islamic principles do not allow overspending. However, the amount spent on western imported food is on the higher side, thus justifying the investigation to find out the reasons behind such preference (Bukhari et al., 2019, 2021; Salman and Siddiqui, 2011).

The above-detailed discussion lead towards the research objective followed by the research question:

Research Objective

This study aims to investigate the consumer motives behind the preference for Western imported food products in Pakistan, despite the availability of local alternatives and religious emphasis on moderate spending.

Research Question

What are the reasons behind the preference of Western imported food products, when local food products are readily available within the three metropolitan cities of Pakistan?

Literature Review

Theoretical Background: The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) provides a robust framework for understanding the psychological factors influencing consumer behavior, making it particularly relevant for studying preferences for Western imported food, among consumers in a Muslim-majority country (Ashraf, 2023; Fraj Andres 2023). TPB suggests that behavior is driven by behavioral intentions, which are influenced by three key components: attitude (the degree to which an individual has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation of the behavior), subjective norms (the perceived social pressure to perform or not perform the behavior), and perceived behavioral control (the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behavior, reflecting past experiences and anticipated obstacles), (Khan et al., 2023; Ajzen, 1991). These components collectively shape not only intentions but also actual behavior, providing a comprehensive lens to study complex consumer decisions.

The appropriateness of TPB for this study is further validated by its widespread use in similar studies on consumer behavior. For instance, recent research by Kaur et al., (2023) demonstrated the applicability of TPB in predicting food choices and dietary habits, exploring halal food consumption and global consumer behavior have successfully used TPB to uncover the interplay between individual attitudes, societal norms, and perceived behavioral control. These studies emphasize TPB's ability to bridge psychological and environmental factors, making it ideal for understanding consumer preferences in a culturally and religiously nuanced market.

Additionally, the choice of TPB aligns with the study's objective of uncovering the motives behind preferences for Western imported food. This framework allows for a structured examination of how individual attitudes, societal expectations, and perceived barriers or facilitators influence purchasing behavior (Miguel, Marques & Duarte, 2022). The dynamic interaction of these factors is especially critical in a Muslim-majority country where religious and cultural considerations play a significant role in shaping consumer decisions. TPB also enables the integration of additional variables, such as religiosity or exposure to Western culture, into its core model, thus enhancing its explanatory power (Cao, Zheng & Li, 2024).

Islam and Consumer Purchasing behavior

1
2
3 Religion plays an important role and is somehow connected with consumer' purchasing behavior
4 (Bukhari et al., 2020 & 2022). Like every other religion, Islam has some guiding principles when
5 it comes to food consumption. In the past, many researchers established a strong relationship
6 between Islam and its influence on Muslim purchasing behavior (Osanlou & Razaei 2025). In a
7 study conducted by Terano and Mohamed (2017), the authors reported that Muslim consumers are
8 different from other religious doctrines, as their decisions consider Islamic teaching and principles.
9 A study by Shah et al., (2011) further reported that religious Muslims following the Islamic
10 principles of spending are not inclined towards impulse purchasing behavior. Moreover, a study
11 conducted by (Osanlou & Razaei 2025; Anam et al., 2018;) reported a significant relationship
12 between the importance of halal logos and ingredients at the time of purchase decision. The
13 consumers need confirmation that the food product is halal, and the logo is coming from a credible
14 authority, signifying its validity and suitability for Muslim consumers. Also, Muslim consumers
15 consider food brands as high-involvement products and therefore require detailed information
16 compared to non-Muslims who require less information on the food products. Hence, Muslim
17 consumers are specifically looking for information on whether the food product is halal or not.

21 ***Purchase motives***

22 Product attributes play a significant role in determining the unique and distinct identity of a brand
23 and helping the customers differentiate between the countless options and choices (Bukhari et al.,
24 2022). The product's features, such as taste, ingredients, components, alongside the packaging,
25 profoundly affect the customers' behavior regarding consuming goods (Bukhari et al., 2020). In
26 the previously published literature, the researchers have claimed that the product's concrete and
27 abstract features, like the taste, labels, originating country, ambiance, and functionality, are
28 extremely important. These aspects allow consumers to determine what they want to buy based on
29 their purchases (Bukhari et al., 2019). Furthermore, many characteristics of imported food goods
30 are directly linked with customers' likes in their purchasing behaviors (Merlino et al., 2023:
31 Widodo, 2013). Another study by Tarofder et al., (2021) claimed that product labelling is
32 significant, as it flaunts the labeling's characteristics. Labels enable the customers to observe and
33 analyse the product's information, which guides them into purchasing. Besides that, (Sharma,
34 Starcevic & Saha, 2024) had also explained that product's characteristics have a profound
35 relationship with customers' buying preferences.

36 Families, work partners and fellows also play a significant role in the purchasing behavior and
37 customer preferences in purchasing. In other words, approval from society also influences
38 customers' choice in purchasing something, as it directs them into buying certain products by
39 convincing and coercion, on occasion (Syahlani et al., 2024: Bukhari et al., 2020). On the other
40 hand, the published literature does not display any significance on the subjective norms related to
41 the customer's purchasing habits and behavior (Widodo, 2013). Furthermore, in the past, the
42 research undertaken on this topic proved that subjective norms had a significant influence over a
43 customer's purchasing choices (Bukhari et al., 2020). A study carried out by Choi and Jeong (2020)
44 also approved that families, fellows and partners influence the behavior of Chinese customers
45 while purchasing.

46 The attribute of trust also plays an essential role in the realm of food and related products, leading
47 to choices in buying these food products. This trust surfaces with the happenings of utility
48 experiences, originating country, ingredients, components, communication, and brand identity
49 (Iqbal and Nisha, 2016; Pauzi et al., 2025 & Usman et al., 2024). In a study carried out by Lassoued
50 and Hobbs (2015), trust is created based on the brand's characteristics that appease the customer's

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3 requirements, which eventually leads to the customer staying true and loyal to the brand of the
4 food products. Fuseini et al., (2017), discovered a profound relationship between brand trust and
5 customer's purchasing choices. The researchers reported an acute connection between the foreign
6 food brand name, previous buying and utility experience, originating country, effective
7 ingredients, packaging, labels, halal logo, and their influence on the customer's purchasing
8 behavior.
9

10 The aspect of customer satisfaction is a universal objective, which is why every company operating
11 in a market strives towards it. This is because a satisfied and an appeased consumer adds even
12 more value to the products of the companies (Okoro and Olowookere, 2024). A study conducted
13 by Hong et al., (2019), claimed that there is a profound connection between customers' satisfaction
14 and their purchasing choices. Furthermore, the study carried out by (Choi and Jeong, 2020; Abdou
15 et al., 2024), also claimed that countless aspects that improve customer satisfaction like
16 performance, effectiveness, looks, quality, and cost influence a customer's choices. On the
17 contrary, customer spending on a food product is linked with their satisfaction (Fuseini et al.,
18 (2017). Moreover, the factor of customer satisfaction is also linked with the production standards,
19 value-added proposition, product implication, utility, and the originating country of the product all
20 influence customer satisfaction (Bukhari et al., 2020).
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24 The promotion of goods is always very significant for Western countries so that they can reach
25 expanding markets. This promotion also includes promoting and importing their goods to Muslim
26 countries. It is essential because these countries have many consumer markets that produce great
27 opportunities for Western companies. According to the research conducted by Bukhari et al.,
28 (2020), Western companies need to distinguish the provisions of their product from the main
29 features, like the taste, quality and appealing packaging. This is because having a distinguished
30 sense within a product will aid customers in buying that product, despite the claims of risks that
31 are put forward by Muslims in purchasing food products imported from the West. Furthermore,
32 religiosity is the most crucial aspect that Western food companies need to adhere to while
33 promoting their products to Muslim markets; since Muslims are very keen on their religion and
34 consume their food only if it is Halal.
35
36

37 Another important aspect that companies operating in the food industry must adhere to is customer
38 loyalty. This is because when a customer is loyal to the brand, only then can the sales for the
39 company be deemed as prosperous effectively. A study conducted by Bukhari et al., (2020) and
40 Barbosa, Shabani, and Miranda (2023) put forward some attributes that can be found in Muslim
41 customers in terms of purchasing food products. These attributes were deemed both intrinsic and
42 extrinsic, and they determined the loyalty of Muslim customers to the food brands they buy their
43 services from. These characteristics or attributes were explored to be the components, the quality,
44 taste, freshness, brand identity, and the overall ambiance of the product. Packaging and labels also
45 play a paramount role.
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47

48 Another factor that affects the purchasing behavior of Muslims about Western imported food
49 products is religiosity. In a study conducted by Bukhari et al., (2019) whose primary purpose was
50 to see if religiosity impacted customers' purchasing behaviors in the Muslim population of
51 Pakistan. This behavior and attitude tended to vary according to the level of religiosity to which
52 the Muslim consumers gave value. The findings of this study revealed that if the aspect of
53 religiosity in a Muslim customer were very high, the consumer would follow all Islamic principles
54 while buying anything, including food. This eventually means that the consumers look for the
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3 Halal logo if it is a Western imported product, how it needs to be consumed, and what ingredients
4 are used in the product, in terms of Islamic values. The study also found that religiosity is more
5 about the needs of the consumers rather than religious preferences.
6

7 Another aspect that is frequently seen in the context of Muslim consumer behavior is their lifestyle.
8 Lifestyle consists of all the factors that influence the customers' lives, meaning their religion, their
9 social values, and what is popular around them these days (Hong et al., 2019). This study aimed
10 to pinpoint and find the connections between the literature review and Halal purchasing
11 preferences. The findings revealed that lifestyle had a lot to do with the Halal preference buying
12 of Muslim consumers because it was affected by their religious beliefs, their perception in the
13 means of society, and their own selves. Also, the endorsements put forward by their favorite
14 celebrities may inflict interest in their buying mind.
15

16 One factor that significantly impacts a Muslim consumer's behavior towards buying a Western
17 imported food product or a product, in general, is the consumer's country-of-origin. In this case,
18 the study by (Murtaza 2016; Andéhn, Nordin & Nilsson, 2016), shed some light on the aspect of
19 the country-of-origin on the purchasing behaviors towards purchasing mobile phones and various
20 product categories. Even though mobile phones are not food products, they are as important as food
21 in the current era. Hence, this study aimed to see how the country-of-origin affects customers'
22 purchasing behaviors regarding mobile phones and similar technological advanced materials. The
23 findings showed that country-of-origin in the means of the brand image had a significant impact
24 on the purchasing behavior and social class, as Pakistanis belonging to a higher class can afford
25 all kinds of mobile phones. This aspect can be applied to food products as well.
26
27
28

29 **Research Methodology**

30 This qualitative, exploratory research aimed to gauge the participants' lived experiences.
31 Qualitative research allows the respondents to address the topic through their own words and
32 experiences (Hollensbe et al., 2008). The data was collected from three cities in Pakistan: Karachi,
33 Lahore, and Islamabad. In-depth, face-to-face, and open-ended semi-structured interview
34 protocols were developed and used for data collection (Zikmund, 2013). Interviews are particularly
35 well suited to research, where the objective is to gather thick descriptions to deeply understand
36 participants' thought paths and choices (Freeman, 2014). Brashear et al., (2012) reported that in-
37 depth interviews work on the fundamental assumption that the meaning assigned to an experience
38 impacts engagement patterns in that experience. Sample selection is crucial in qualitative research
39 (Coynes, 1997). A purposive sampling method was used in this study. Initially, the researcher chose
40 convenience sampling to shortlist the participants for further data exploration. Once the
41 participants qualified for further investigation through a qualifying question, the researcher used
42 the purposive sampling method, and the inclusion criterion was based on those who have mainly
43 purchased and consumed Western imported food products. Further, the researcher ensured
44 temporal validity by collecting data from the participants who were relevant to the context and
45 representative of the population. (Bryman and Bell, 2007).
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49 The researcher followed a rigorous methodological strategy, beginning with a pre-test. The pre-
50 test, conducted with three participants, one from each of the cities of Karachi, Lahore, and
51 Islamabad, respectively, was a careful step to ensure the accuracy of the questions, length, and
52 meaning. The pre-test was a crucial tool in finalizing the interview questions before the pilot
53 testing. Following the pre-test, the researcher proceeded with the pilot testing. Three pilot
54 interviews were conducted within the stated cities to address any inconsistencies in the interview
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protocol. The participants for the pilot testing and final interview were carefully selected from a diverse range of backgrounds, including housewives and professionals from various sectors such as shipping, banking, academia, oil and gas, and university students at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The selection criterion was based on their preference for Western imported food products, with a focus on their healthy lifestyle, quality consciousness, brand trust, brand name, and country of origin (Bukhari et al., 2020). The participants were from diverse educational backgrounds, such as Bachelor, Master, and PhD, and varied socioeconomic statuses. The variation in participants with diverse academic and socioeconomic backgrounds was a careful consideration to capture the maximum variation in the responses. Each interview lasted approximately 20-35 minutes, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the participants' perspectives.

All the interviews were audio-recorded, and audio files were transferred from the recording device and saved to the researcher's computer in MP3 format, ensuring the data's safety. Once the data was collected and transcribed, the in-depth interview data were analyzed using the thematic content analysis method (Creswell and Clark, 2017). In parallel, sentiment analysis was conducted to quantify and analyze the emotional tone of the participants' responses. This approach provided an additional layer of understanding by capturing city-wise participants' attitudes, emotions, and sentiments toward Western imported food products. The integration of sentiment analysis with thematic analysis was crucial for several reasons. Firstly, while thematic analysis captured the "what" and "why" behind consumer choices, sentiment analysis revealed the "how" specifically, participants felt about different product attributes associated with Western imported food products. Secondly, the dual-method approach ensured a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior by combining objective emotional data with subjective thematic insights. Thirdly, sentiment analysis provides actionable insights for marketers seeking to tailor their approaches to Muslim consumers' emotional and cultural sensitivities (Vatambeti et al., 2024).

The researchers also ensured the reliability and validity of the data. To ensure the data's trustworthiness, the researcher sent the transcripts to the participants for self-validation, requested the three domain experts to validate the findings, developed an audit trail, allowed maximum time for data collection, and ensured variation in the sample to enable a diversified range of answers (Shenton, 2004).

Findings

The Demographic Profile of the Interview Participants

Spread evenly across the three cities; 45 interviews (with 22 males and 23 females) were conducted to explore the respondents' lived experiences in the context of Western imported food purchase behavior. The key criterion in selecting participants was that they were the consumers of Western imported food products. With regard to their highest academic qualifications, most had bachelor's degrees, and a majority of participants were females.

Table 1: Demographic profile of the respondents

Element	Characteristics	No of participants'
Gender	Male	22
	Female	23
Cities	Karachi	23
	Lahore	12
	Islamabad	10

	Housewife	22
Profession	Professionals	11
	University Students	12
Education	Bachelors	35
	Masters	10
Age bracket	18 – 25	18
	26 – 35	20
	35 - 45	07

Western imported food categories

The interview findings revealed the product categories of western imported food. Table 2 illustrates the food categories.

Table 2: Western imported food categories

Key categories	No. of participants	Percentage response
Chocolates	13	29
Fresh juices	10	22
Cereals	21	47
Dairy products	12	27
Vegetable oil	17	38
Ice creams	11	24
Biscuits	13	29
Baby products	12	27
Honey	15	33
Processed food	16	35
Coffee	18	40

Data Analysis

Thematic Content Analysis

The data was analyzed through thematic content analysis to extract the themes. Moreover, the researcher had used the data structure process. This allowed the researcher to organize the data into a visual representation from the raw data to the final content-rich themes, when conducting the analysis. Since this is a cross-city comparative study, the participants from the selected three cities expressed their sentiments which have been discussed in Table 3, 4 and 5. Once the interview transcripts of the 45 interviewees were completed and compiled, the answers provided by the interviewed participants were subjected to a qualitative or thematic analysis process. Firstly, the transcripts were read a few times thoroughly to obtain an understanding of the discussions that took place and the context provided by the interviews. Then, the transcripts were separated out one by one. Each transcript was then re-read with the research questions in mind. Interesting or relevant sections were highlighted at this time. Themes were then extracted, using the highlighted sections in each transcript. Subsequently, relevant sub-themes were found. These themes and sub-themes were then arranged in tables alongside their relevant quotes. The qualitative data analysis was performed, along the lines of the methods prescribed by Braun and Clarke (2006), who considered thematic analysis as a foundation for qualitative research. Table 3, 4 and 5 below illustrates the themes that emerged through data processing (Creswell and Clark, 2017).

Figure 1: Themes emerged from the thematic content analysis

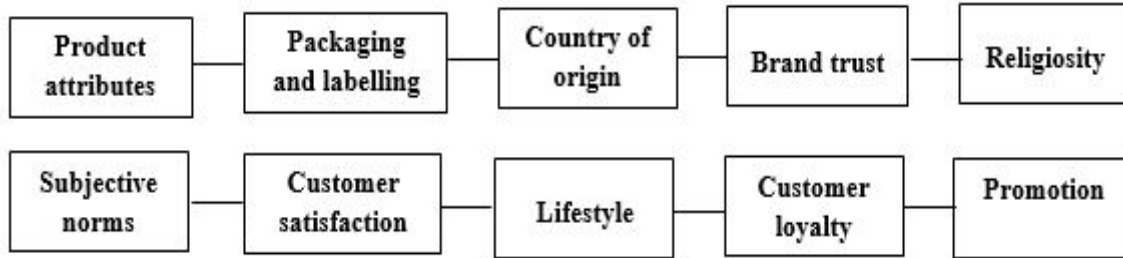


Figure 2: Cross city common themes emerged from the thematic content analysis

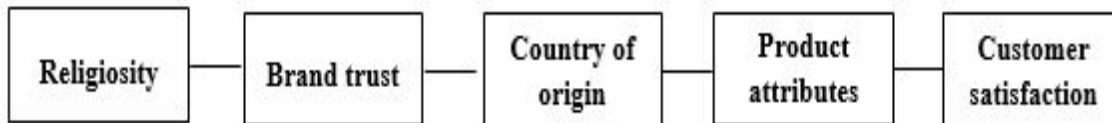


Table 3: Themes emerged from the interview data extracted from City Karachi

Participants quotations – 1 st order concepts	2 nd order categories	Themes emerged
“Product attributes in terms of ingredients, taste, and hygiene plays an important role in selecting the imported food product” (Participant no. 05)	Taste, ingredients, labelling	Product attributes
“Product functionality is important and for me, it’s a deciding factor” (Participant no. 07)		
My first preference is product attributes, and this actually differentiate the western food products from the local food brands” (Participant no. 03)	Tag mark, sticker	Packaging and labeling
“For me product packaging is important and gives you a sense of direction towards product usage” (Participant no. 11)		
“For me myself and experience is more important and I very often follow my friends while selecting the imported food brands” (Participant no. 13)	Product home manufacturer	Country of origin
“In my opinion the origin of the product is quite vital as it ensures the product quality” (Participant no. 19)		
“Quality ingredient is my top priority and one of the deciding factors” (Participant no. 23)		
“I have a faith in such brands which is backed by my previous experience” (Participant no. 16)	Confidence and conviction	Brand trust
“The halal ingredients play a very important role when it comes to western imported food products. My decision is solely based on the product being halal, else I will not even think of product not having halal ingredients” (Participant no. 17)		
“My Islamic teachings doesn’t allow me to go for non-halal products” (Participant no. 01)	Religiousness	Religiosity
“I will definitely look for the halal logo, local or any imported food product, for me display of halal logo is must” (Participant no. 20)		

Table 4: Themes emerged from the interview data extracted from City Lahore

Participants quotations – 1st order concepts**2nd order categories****Themes emerged**

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5 *“I consider my daily routine and the way I spend is directly related to*
6 *choosing the imported food products” (Participant no. 33)*

Reference groups

Subjective norms

7 *“Yes, I do get my friends and family opinion when deciding upon the*
8 *food products” (Participant no. 31)*

Product wrapping

Labelling

9 *“Appealing product wrapping sometimes a deciding factor at the time*
10 *of purchase” (Participant no. 29)*

11 *“I do see the product country of origin, and this is one of the deciding*
12 *factors” (Participant no. 27)*

Customer satisfaction

13 *“I trust these imported food brands and due to this trust factor, I am*
14 *able to take the purchase decision” (Participant no. 30)*

Fulfillment and delight

15 *“I am highly satisfied from the western imported food products, its*
16 *matches my lifestyle, personality and above all my taste bud”*
17 *(Participant no. 32)*

18 *“For me quality is more important, I don’t see any relevance of religion*
19 *with the food consumption. If I can afford, I will go for imported food*
20 *product, I believe if the product is coming into Pakistan from the western*
21 *side, it has to be halal, I will not seek for more in-depth information*
22 *about the product ingredients” (Participant no. 35)*

Religiousness

Religiosity

23 *“My affordability, preference and experience are the deciding factors,*
24 *religion or teaching does not impact my purchase decision. If I can*
25 *afford then why not” (Participant no. 26)*

26 *“I don’t compromise on quality, and I may not be bothered of halal logo*
27 *if the quality is as per my requirements, I guess nobody would look for*
28 *the halal logo” (Participant no. 34)*

Table 5: Themes emerged from the interview data extracted from City Islamabad**Participants quotations – 1st order concepts****2nd order categories****Themes emerged**

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36 *“For me, lifestyle is very important, and I cannot compromise on food*
37 *quality and I believe that western imported food products are a good*
38 *combination of quality and promise” (Participant no. 36)*

Life pattern

Lifestyle

39 *“Product communication sometimes plays an important role but not all*
40 *the time, it’s your own experience and preference” (Participant no. 39)*

Communication and information

Promotion

41 *“My loyalty towards western imported food products is on a higher side*
42 *and I will wait if I don’t find my choice of product. Even if I need to*
43 *switch, I will switch to other imported food brand, but for the time*
44 *being” (Participant no. 41)*

Faithfulness and obedience

Customer loyalty

45 *“Product country of manufacturing is really important me, food*
46 *products from the west signifies its quality and promise and this is the*
47 *first thing I see in the product label” (Participant no. 45)*

48 *“I trust these western food brands as they always take care of their*
49 *processes, and this differentiate them from the rest” (Participant no. 44)*

Product home manufacturer

Country of origin

50 *“Well for me quality of product is more important, I am not too*
51 *concerned about the ingredients, halal or no halal, it’s not my*
52 *responsibility to check” (Participant no. 40)*

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3 *If I can afford, I will spend on western imported food products, I won't*
4 *be bothered to spend more as I cannot compromise on quality"*
5 *(Participant no. 27)*
6
7 *"I don't see any relevance between religion and food preference, it's*
8 *your own will and if the product is satisfying then why not"* (Participant
9 *no. 43)*

Religiousness

Religiosity

10 **Source:** Developed by the author from interviews finding

11 **Empirical Findings: City Wise Comparative Analysis**

12 The city-wise analysis explored distinctive factors; however, the most common factors were the
13 country-of-origin, product labeling, packaging, and attributes. Also, the aspect of religiosity was
14 uncovered during the interview findings; however, surprisingly, the perspective of religiosity or
15 religiousness varies from city to city. This is quite surprising for a country that has a 97 percent
16 Muslim-dominated population. Participants residing in Karachi were quite keen and interested in
17 Western imported food products, but at the same time they had a strict value and moral obligation
18 when it comes to halal ingredients and labeling. This shows their high level of religious
19 commitment and orientation towards Islamic principles. On the contrary, participants residing in
20 Lahore and Islamabad had very different views. They believed that quality surpasses every aspect.
21 Their purchasing power, quality consciousness, lifestyle, loyalty, and satisfaction were cited above
22 the Islamic perspective of moderate spending and stickiness to halal ingredients. This demonstrates
23 that the central and northern part of Pakistan is more brand and quality conscious. They are more
24 interested in maintaining their lifestyle and loyalty towards Western food brands and under the
25 enormous influence of their peers, family members, and colleagues. Also, the country-of-origin
26 plays an imperative role in their purchase decision. There is a difference of opinion and preference
27 within one country, especially when it comes to religious doctrine. This further confirms that the
28 difference originates with the social circle, religious closeness, and above all, the level of
29 religiosity influences the Muslim consumer buying decision.
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36 **Sentiment analysis**

37 The methods we have selected are 3D Scatter Plot, Parallel Coordinates Plot, Radar Chart, and
38 Dendrogram. The 3D Scatter Plot provides a clear view of sentiment distribution across cities,
39 highlighting clusters and differences in sentiment profiles. The Parallel Coordinates Plot helps
40 compare multiple attributes across cities simultaneously, making it easy to spot patterns and
41 outliers. The Radar Chart visually contrasts city-wise strengths and weaknesses for various themes,
42 offering an intuitive summary. Lastly, the Dendrogram clusters cities and attributes hierarchically,
43 revealing hidden relationships and similarities. Together, these methods provide a comprehensive,
44 multidimensional understanding, perfectly aligned with our goal of conducting a cross-city
45 sentiment analysis with actionable insights.
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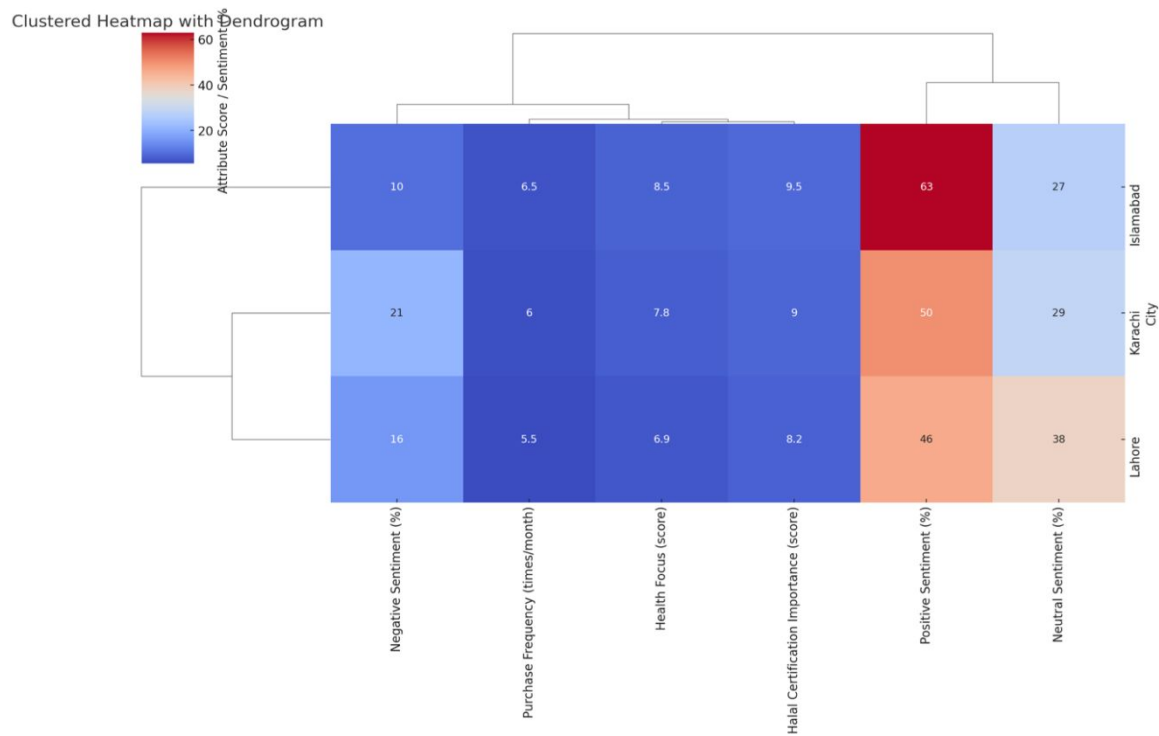


Figure 3: Heatmap with Clustered Dendrogram: this chart highlights cross city variations

The above clustered heatmap with dendrogram is a visual presentation tool that helps us understand and explain the differences and similarities in consumer behavior across cities (Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad). The heatmap uses colors to show how each city scores on various factors such as sentiment (positive, neutral, and negative), health focus, purchase frequency, and the importance of halal certification. On the left side of the chart, we see a tree-like structure called a dendrogram. This shows how closely related the cities are, based on their scores. For example, Karachi and Lahore are placed closer together, meaning their consumer behaviors are more similar. Islamabad, however, stands apart with higher scores in positive sentiment and halal certification, suggesting unique consumer preferences. At the top of the heatmap, another dendrogram groups the different factors based on how closely they are related. For instance, positive sentiment and halal certification are placed near each other, indicating that these two factors often go hand in hand across the cities. The colors in the heatmap tell us about the intensity of each factor. Blue areas show higher scores, while red areas show lower ones. Islamabad, for example, shows deep blue in the positive sentiment and halal certification rows, confirming its high scores in these areas.

Overall, the heatmap helps us see patterns in consumer preferences. It shows that Islamabad consumers are more focused on halal certification and have more positive sentiments, while Karachi and Lahore share similar, but slightly lower trends in these factors. This analysis is helpful in identifying which aspects matter most to consumers in different cities, guiding businesses in tailoring their strategies accordingly.

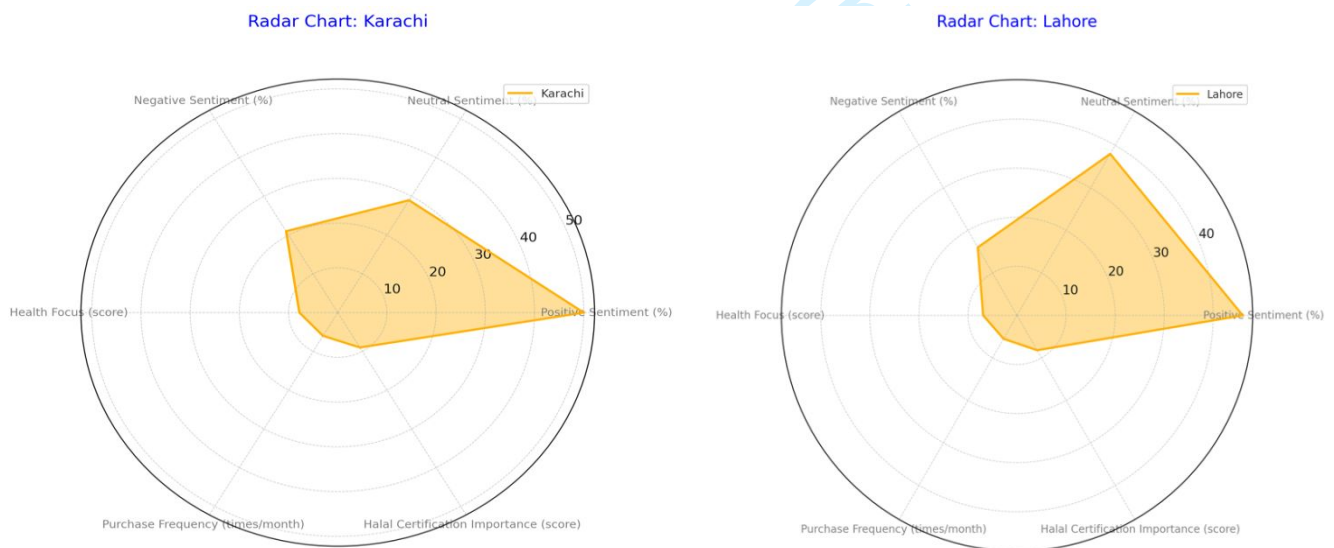
Radar Chart

The radar charts provide a comprehensive view of how each city (Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad) scores across multiple factors like sentiment (positive, neutral, and negative), health focus, purchase frequency, and the importance of halal certification.

Table 6: Radar Chart analysis

City	Explanation
Karachi	Karachi’s radar chart reveals a balanced performance across most attributes, with moderately high scores in purchase frequency and positive sentiment. Its halal certification importance is relatively strong but not as pronounced as in Islamabad. Overall, Karachi consumers demonstrate consistent behavior, showing slightly lower health consciousness compared to other cities.
Lahore	Lahore displays a more varied pattern. While its neutral sentiment is higher, positive sentiment and halal certification importance are slightly lower. This suggests that consumers in Lahore may have mixed feelings about Western imported food products, focusing more on the practical aspects rather than strong positivity or religious considerations.
Islamabad	Islamabad stands out with a distinct peak in positive sentiment and halal certification importance, indicating that consumers here have a more favorable view of Western imported food products, especially when religious guidelines are met. It also shows a higher health focus, which aligns with its stronger inclination toward quality and well-being.

These radar charts help identify which factors are more important in each city Karachi and Lahore exhibit balanced consumer preferences, with some focus on convenience and sentiment neutrality. Islamabad emerges as a standout city with strong emphasis on halal certification, health, and positive experiences.



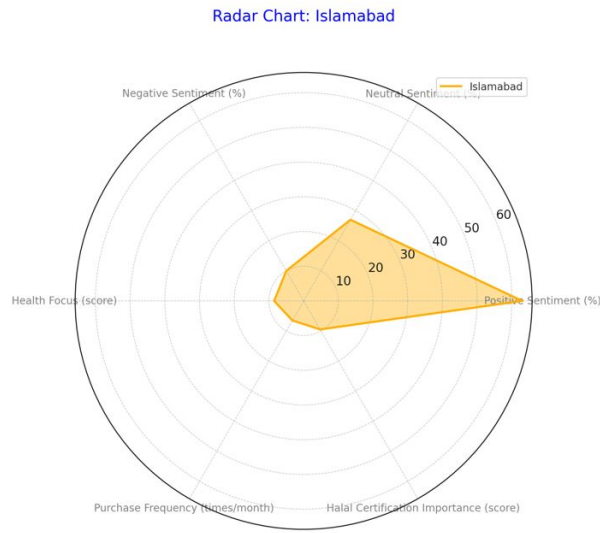


Figure 4: City wise Radar charts

Parallel Coordinates Plot Explanation

The plot highlights the distinct consumer behavior patterns across cities, emphasizing areas of strength and divergence.

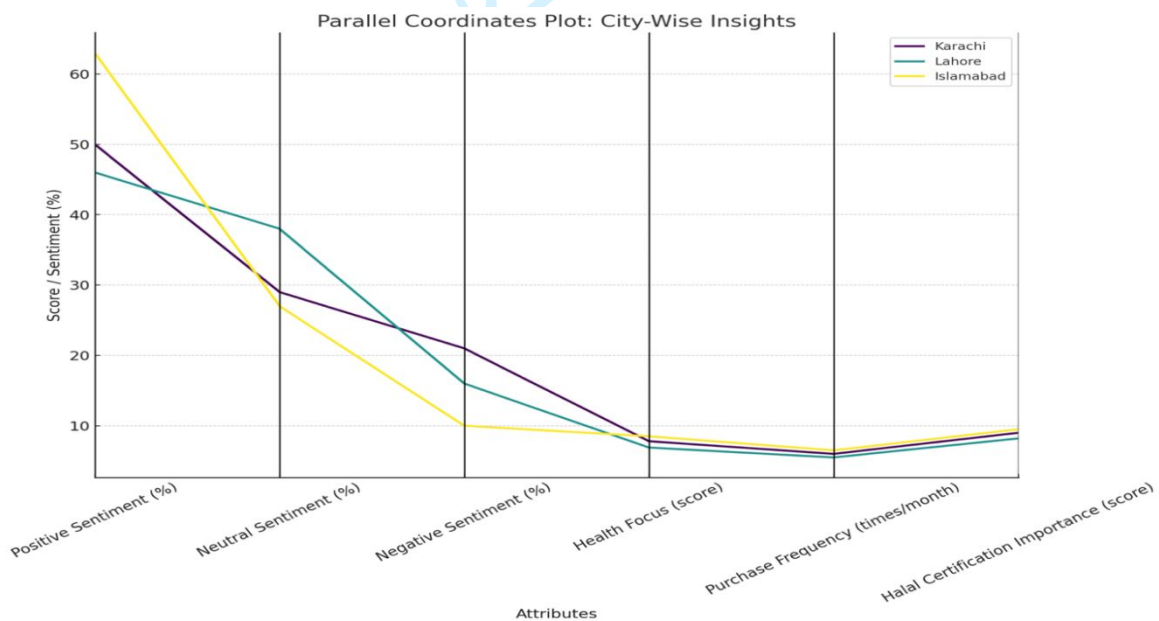


Figure 5: Parallel coordinates plot explanation

The parallel coordinates plot visualizes how the three cities compare across multiple sentiment and behavioral attributes simultaneously.

1. **Karachi** (purple line): Moderate scores across most attributes, showing balance in positive sentiment, purchase frequency, and health focus.
2. **Lahore** (green line): Shows higher neutral sentiment and slightly lower scores in halal certification importance and positive sentiment. Its trajectory indicates mixed consumer behavior.

3. **Islamabad** (yellow line): Stands out with the highest scores in positive sentiment, health focus, and halal certification importance, indicating strong consumer preferences in these areas.
 - **Positive Sentiment and Halal Certification:** Islamabad leads in both, highlighting its consumers' strong alignment with quality and religious values.
 - **Neutral Sentiment:** Lahore displays the highest neutral sentiment, suggesting mixed or undecided views.
 - **Health Focus:** Islamabad again takes the lead, aligning with its focus on quality and health-conscious purchasing.

3D Cluster visualization in Sentiments

3D Cluster Visualization of Sentiment Across Cities

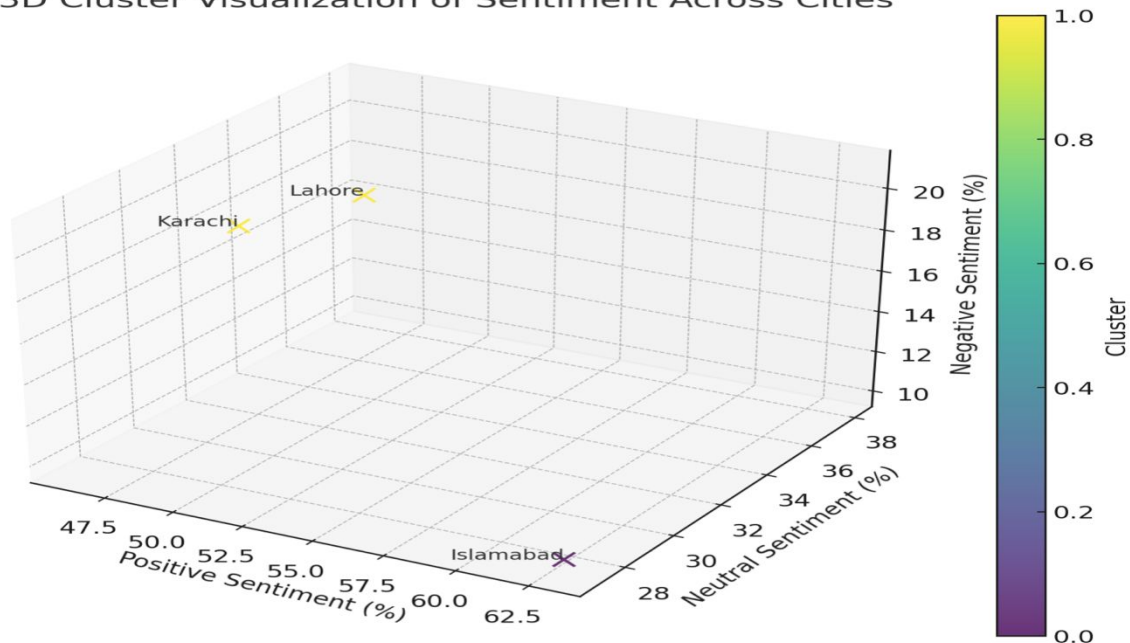


Figure 6: 3D cluster visualization

This 3D scatter plot represents how cities are grouped into clusters based on their sentiment profiles. Each city is plotted according to its positive, neutral, and negative sentiment scores, with colors distinguishing the clusters. From this we can extract the following:

Islamabad forms its own distinct cluster, highlighted in a different color. This reflects its unique sentiment pattern, characterized by higher positive sentiment and lower negative sentiment. This indicates that consumers in Islamabad have a more favorable view of Western imported food products.

Karachi and Lahore are grouped together in another cluster. Their sentiment scores are more balanced, showing a mix of neutral and positive sentiments. This suggests that consumer sentiment in these cities is less polarized and more consistent across different factors.

The visualization presentation confirms that Islamabad stands out in terms of sentiment, likely driven by stronger religious and health-conscious considerations. In contrast, Karachi and Lahore exhibit similar consumer behaviors, with a moderate and less extreme sentiment profile. This

analysis helps highlight where marketing strategies might need to be tailored differently across cities.

Discussion on application of TPB Components & qualitative findings

Theoretical Contribution and Extended Model

This study expands the TPB framework by integrating religiosity, country of origin, quality consciousness, and halal certification as critical factors that shape Muslim consumers' buying decisions in a Muslim-majority country. These additional dimensions reveal that the influence of attitudes, norms, and control factors can vary greatly based on religious orientation, social circles, and regional cultural dynamics. The Extended TPB Model presented in this study provides a more nuanced understanding of consumer behavior by recognizing the interplay between religious and cultural identity, lifestyle preferences, and ethical considerations in purchasing Western imported food.

Extended Factors Based on Findings

To account for the unique dynamics in this study, we propose an enhanced TPB model (Please refer to Figure 1) with additional factors that directly impact attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived control:

1. *Religiosity*: This factor significantly influences attitudes and subjective norms across cities. Religiosity shapes how consumers perceive Western food, with Karachi consumers displaying a strong inclination toward Islamic dietary laws. This factor moderates both the importance of halal certification (influencing attitudes) and the pressure to adhere to religious norms (affecting subjective norms).
2. *Country of Origin*: The origin of Western products plays a role in shaping attitudes, especially in Lahore and Islamabad, where consumers equate certain countries with high-quality standards. This factor contributes to the perception of Western brands as prestigious, positively influencing attitudes toward these products.
3. *Quality Consciousness*: Quality consciousness emerged as a critical factor influencing attitudes and subjective norms. Consumers in Lahore and Islamabad prioritize quality and brand reputation, often seeing it as more important than religious considerations. This reflects a lifestyle-oriented approach, particularly in urban, brand-conscious environments.
4. *Halal Certification & Labeling*: For Karachi consumers, perceived behavioral control is significantly influenced by the presence of halal certification. The availability and trust in halal labeling enhance their confidence in purchasing decisions, making this a key component in perceived control.

Extended Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) Framework for Western Imported Food Buying Behavior

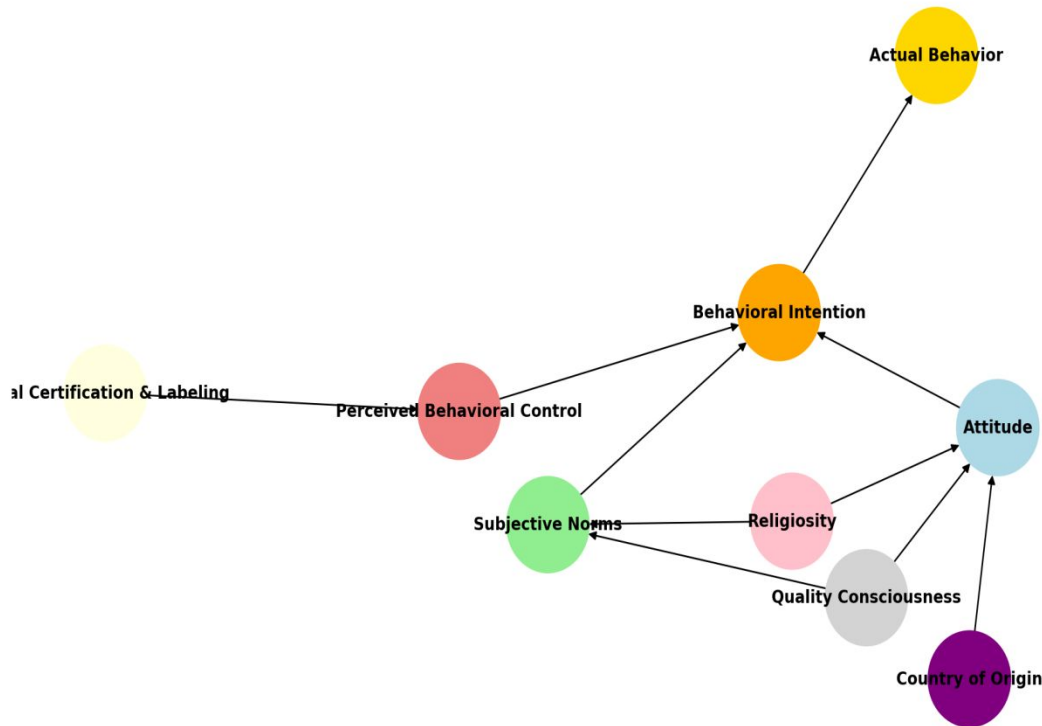


Figure 7: Extended Framework (TPB)

Qualitative findings

The qualitative inquiry revealed several factors related to consumer purchasing behavior. The cross-city analysis explored the variation in consumers' preferences and choices which is backed by various socio-economic classes. The interview revealed that product attributes comprise ingredients, flavor, nutrition value, and overall product quality, which are the key deciding factors and a point of comparison between local and imported food products. Product packaging and its labeling also play a crucial role in the consumers' buying decision. The attractive packaging with detailed labeling helps users confirm the usage instructions, ingredients used, and expiry date. Moreover, the country-of-origin also impacts decision-making along with the brand name. Also, the halal logo on the product packaging confirms that the product is coming from the right source, and Muslim consumers can confidently use the product. The study findings relate to the research conducted by Bukhari et al., (2020). The authors discussed that the product's intrinsic and extrinsic attributes along with the country-of-origin and placement of the Halal logo, play a pivotal role when making the purchase decision.

The interview respondents also discussed the importance of brand trust. Most of the respondents felt that trust is also one of the main deciding factors and does influence their purchase intention. Participants stated that trust is highly associated with the brand's production standards and overall quality check. Also, their consistent quality in delivering the quality product builds consumer trust. The study outcome aligns with the previous research of (Wijaya and Annisa, 2020). The authors' reported that the element of trust is important, especially with food products. This is a deciding factor and gives confidence to consumers to make the purchase decision.

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3 The element of customer loyalty was also under discussion. Participants reported their inclination
4 and commitment towards Western imported food. They did not want to switch even if any local
5 product was available. Few participants reported that they might switch to any other imported food
6 product or any local product, but the switching would be temporary. This signifies the participants'
7 loyalty level when it comes to adherence to the brand. This evidently delineates that the consumers
8 were very loyal and preferred not to switch to any other brand. The findings align with the past
9 research of (Bukhari et al., 2020; Savelli et al., 2019). The authors reported that such highly loyal
10 customers do not look for alternate options, and in fact, sometimes they wait for the product to
11 arrive. Their loyalty is on a significantly higher side with no compromises on product quality.
12
13

14 The aspect of customer satisfaction was also part of the interview discussion. Almost half of the
15 respondents showed their satisfaction with Western imported food. The key reasons were product
16 usage, standard procedures, brand name, country-of-origin, and above all, their previous user
17 experience. The results are closely associated with the research of Sobari, Kurniati and Usman
18 (2022) who also reported and confirmed the presence of customer satisfaction due to the overall
19 product quality and experience. With that, subjective norms were also discussed during the
20 interview process. Few of the participants reported that family, peers, and colleagues influence
21 their purchase decision. Their influence is mainly connected with healthy eating and a quality
22 lifestyle. The study outcome is also associated with the study conducted by (Al-Swidi et al., 2014).
23 The researchers concluded that there is a relevance of family or peer influence when it comes to
24 food products.
25
26

27 The aspect of consumers' lifestyles was also discussed during the interview process. Quite a few
28 interviewees reported that their lifestyle of consuming quality food products is essential in deciding
29 on food-related products. The findings of the study also align with (Lucian, 2017; Bolton,
30 Bhattacharjee and Reed 2015). The researchers' reported that the consumer's lifestyle to eat
31 quality yet healthy products is directly connected with food choices in connection with Western
32 imported food products. The interview participants revealed some interesting findings of product's
33 promotion and its connectivity with their purchase behavior. Though the literature does support
34 promotion which acts as a critical tool to communicate the product message and at the same time
35 creates purchase intention. However, the interview findings are quite contrary to past literature.
36 The participants also reported that product's promotion is vital to have brand awareness and
37 recognition; however, this is not a deciding factor. The product purchase decision is linked with
38 past usage experience, trust, and satisfaction.
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41 Though this study highlighted some very important factors related to consumers' purchase
42 decisions, a very important aspect was highlighted regarding consumers' religiousness. Since this
43 research is a comparative analysis between three metropolitan cities, this study has reported a
44 variation in the level of religiosity or religious commitment, among interview participants. One
45 cohort of consumers in Karachi reported their high inclination towards halal ingredients, halal
46 logo, and moderate spending. For them, religious commitment is fundamental, and there is no
47 compromise on Islamic principles. This opinion is supported by past research of (Borzooei and
48 Asgari 2013; Al-Hyari et al., 2012; Mukhtar and Mohsin Butt, 2012). The researchers stated a
49 strong link between religiosity and food purchasing behavior. Also, there is substantial concern
50 about following the Islamic principles when deciding to buy and consume Western imported food
51 products. Furthermore, Muslim consumers preferred products aligned with Islamic principles, such
52 as halal ingredients and the placement of a halal logo on the product packaging. However, the
53 interview participants residing in Lahore and Islamabad had an entirely different view of Western
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3 food buying. The participants expressed a moderate to low level of religious commitment. Their
4 purchase is based on their willingness to spend more, rather than being concerned about the
5 ingredients, and the placement of halal logo on the product's packaging. The key argument was
6 their own preferences, lifestyle, and willingness to use Western food products, without any
7 confirmation if the product is halal or not. They further claimed that the authorities are responsible
8 for this check and balance, which sets them free from any sort of confirmation and verification.
9 Hence, in general, the degree of religiosity varies among Muslim consumers and impacts their
10 purchase behavior (Essoo and Dibb, 2004). Henceforth, the individual's religious variances are
11 related to their choices and command them to select a particular food brand.
12
13

14 **Theoretical contribution**

15 This study makes a significant contribution to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) by expanding
16 its framework to incorporate cultural and religious dimensions that influence consumer decision-
17 making in a Muslim-majority market. While TPB traditionally explains consumer behavior
18 through attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, this study enhances the
19 model by integrating four additional factors—Religiosity, Country of Origin, Quality
20 Consciousness, and Halal Certification & Labeling that are particularly relevant in understanding
21 food consumption patterns in religiously and culturally sensitive markets (Fauzi et al., 2024).
22 Beyond refining TPB, this study extends the literature on consumer behavior by demonstrating
23 how religious and cultural identity, ethical considerations, and lifestyle preferences interplay in
24 shaping consumer choices. Prior research on TPB has primarily focused on general consumer
25 decision-making processes, often overlooking the role of religious orientation and cultural
26 dynamics in purchasing behaviors. By introducing an Extended TPB Model, this research fills an
27 existing gap in consumer behavior literature, particularly in the context of emerging markets where
28 globalization, religious values, and economic factors simultaneously influence purchasing
29 decisions.
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33 **Implication to Practice and Current Body of Knowledge**

34 This research has explored opportunities for exporters willing to explore a potential Asian food
35 consumer market. Understanding the consumers' perception of Western imported food products
36 would assist them in adding premium food products. The study findings would further help them
37 to provide a better alternative to domestically produced food products. Identifying various factors,
38 especially the mixed findings of religiousness towards Western imported food, is another critical
39 piece of information for these Western food exporters. Adding a halal logo on the product's
40 packaging would assist them in offering the product as per the consumer's religious identity and
41 needs. Also, the element of a halal product can be communicated through various platforms, such
42 as the company's website and other social media platforms. Since the information is from a
43 Muslim-majority country, the element of halal ingredients with complete information must be
44 placed on the product labeling. Henceforth, product labels should deliver ingredient information
45 since a label influences Muslim consumers' purchasing behavior (Azam, 2016). With the inception
46 of social media and other platforms, consumers are aware of imported products and welcome
47 quality products. This welcoming attitude allows Western food exporters to work on products that
48 exceed their quality, taste, ingredients, and hygiene expectations.
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51 **Limitations and Future Research Directions**

52 Since this study is a qualitative inquiry and is exploratory in nature, the generalizability of this
53 paper is quite limited. Additionally, a mixed-method approach integrating both qualitative and
54 quantitative techniques could enhance the depth and robustness of analysis, allowing for a more
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comprehensive examination of consumer motivations. Expanding the study to include more cities, particularly semi-urban and rural areas, could reveal regional variations in purchasing behavior, enabling a broader understanding of urban-rural consumer differences. Future studies can consider increasing the sample size to include a wider range of socio-economic backgrounds, providing more diverse perspectives on religious and quality-conscious consumption behavior. Moreover, comparative studies across different Muslim-majority countries could offer cross-cultural insights into the influence of religious identity on global food consumption patterns. Lastly, researchers could explore the impact of digital marketing and e-commerce on consumer behavior, particularly the role of social media influencers in shaping perceptions of Western imported food brands in religiously sensitive markets. By incorporating longitudinal studies, future research could also track shifts in consumer attitudes over time, particularly in response to economic fluctuations and evolving religious interpretations.

Implications to Local Producers and Pakistani Society

This study addressed numerous future opportunities and avenues for local food brand companies and consumers. Local food companies can enhance brand communication, highlighting trust, satisfaction, and usability. They can also work on product labeling with a halal logo, ensuring the product's credibility and source. This would enable local producers to retain and gain consumers' confidence, offering them the opportunity to penetrate and regain trust. These measures assist the firms in offering premium products and drawing upon the religious factor of halal, which is crucial in a Muslim-dominated region. This approach, centered on healthiness, ensures long-term adherence and significantly improves consumers' lifestyles and overall well-being.

Conclusion

The objective of this study was to develop a comparative analysis between three metropolitan cities from a Muslim majority state. The three cities reported varied responses with regards to their motives to purchase Western imported food products. Though the responses were related to product attributes, trust, loyalty, satisfaction, and lifestyle, considerable differences were also found in participants' religious orientation when selecting the Western imported food products. This is surprising when the consumers' seem to surpass the Islamic teaching of moderate spending and the importance of halal ingredients. Hence, this showcases the study's originality and valuable contribution to the literature of Muslim consumers' purchasing behavior and religiosity.

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