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Understanding Saudi Consumer Preferences: Implications for Localised Product Design

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Abstract

Few papers examine the specific preferences of Saudi consumers regarding their purchase intentions. The available research focuses only on certain factors and does not offer a comprehensive picture. This study included almost all possible factors affecting Saudi consumers' purchase behaviour. Thus, the study aimed to evaluate the Saudi consumer behaviour for their preference for local products in terms of their cultural sensitivity, religious compliance, capturing preferences for products that adhere to Islamic Sharia principles, such as halal certification and modest design, Arabic language preference, quality perception of localised versus non-localised offerings, brand loyalty, and purchase intention. Five research questions were framed based on this aim to facilitate methodology determination. The required data were collected through a survey of 500 Saudi customers. The data were analysed for descriptive statistics, rigour of the methodology, correlation, multiple regression analysis, evaluation of the effect of regional differences and demographic factors. The results collectively demonstrate that Saudi consumer preferences are strongly shaped by religious, cultural, and linguistic factors. Religious Compliance emerged as the most powerful predictor of purchase intention, followed by Cultural Sensitivity and Arabic Language Preference. Significant demographic variations were identified, with female consumers, older adults, and those residing in peripheral regions expressing the strongest preferences for culturally localised products. The measurement model demonstrated strong psychometric properties, and the regression model accounted for a substantial proportion of variance in purchase intention, underscoring the practical significance of these findings for localised product design strategies in the Saudi market.

Keywords: Saudi consumers, Purchase intention, Religiosity, Cultural sensitivity, Islamic principles, Halal certification, Arabic language, brand loyalty

Introduction

Saudi consumers are increasingly favouring local products, driven by national pride, high-quality perceptions, and a desire to support the economy. Consumers feel a strong sense of responsibility to support local businesses, often favouring them over multinational corporations, particularly in times of heightened social consciousness. Young consumers (Gen Z/Millennials) specifically seek brands that blend the Kingdom's heritage with modern, high-quality design, especially in fashion and fragrance. Saudi Vision 2030 aims to diversify the economy and increase the share of local production. However, barriers of limited availability, accessibility and price need to be addressed. A survey of 319 Saudi consumers by (Almatrudi, Alhassan, & Singh, 2023) showed an increasing preference for local products over global brands.

A McKinsey report (Iftahy, Merlino, & Land, 2025) projected more than 100 million Saudi consumers by 2035, dominated by the younger population. The population of working women

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will increase two-fold from the present. The middle-class population will reach about 75% of the total, most of them living in cities. These Saudi citizens will show five emerging behaviours. These are: hunger for new experiences, the “zero consumer”—the consumer who has no channel boundaries or loyalty, who prefers value offerings or premium ones (nothing in between), and whose shopping habits are increasingly influenced by sustainability and health concerns.

A Kearney report (Kearney, 2025) noted that Saudi Arabia imports food worth about 211 billion dollars of consumer goods and other items. According to (Varghese, 2025), local loyalty, influencer trust, and smart storytelling are reshaping buying behaviour across the Kingdom. Consumers increasingly want brands that feel homegrown, relatable, and aligned with local culture.

A content analysis of 400 Facebook brand page posts from a matching sample of the top 20 global and 20 local brands in Saudi Arabia by (Abuljadail & Ha, 2019) revealed that the contents of global brands were more likely to be prizes/giveaways, games/competitions and socialising. On the other hand, local brands were more likely to post informative content that includes Islamic messages, women in modest clothing, Arabic language and Saudi dialect than global brands. An analysis of the global e-business environment by (Benmamoun, Sobh, Singh, & Moura, 2016) showed that companies in the GCC region should focus on culturally customised online content by considering country-level cultural, geopolitical, and linguistic factors of this region.

Thus, evidently, Saudi consumers prefer local products that have a strong cultural connection. However, the above-reviewed papers dealt with the subject only superficially. A more detailed analysis of consumer behaviour is necessary in terms of cultural sensitivity, religious compliance, capturing preferences for products that adhere to Islamic Sharia principles, such as halal certification and modest design, Arabic language preference, quality perception of localised versus non-localised offerings, brand loyalty, and purchase intention. Such an analysis is required for producers and marketers to design and market their products accordingly and for consumers to access unlimited volumes of such products at competitive prices. Therefore, the following aim and research questions were formulated for this research:

Aim: To study the Saudi consumer behaviour for their preference for local products in terms of their cultural sensitivity, religious compliance, capturing preferences for products that adhere to Islamic Sharia principles, such as halal certification and modest design, Arabic language preference, quality perception of localised versus non-localised offerings, brand loyalty, and purchase intention.

Research Questions

1. How does the use of the Arabic language in product packaging, branding, and communication influence Saudi consumers' preference for local products?
2. To what extent do halal certification and adherence to Islamic Sharia principles (e.g., modest design, ethical sourcing) affect Saudi consumers' trust and purchase decisions for local products?
3. How do Saudi consumers perceive the quality of localised products compared to non-localised (imported or global) offerings, and how does this perception shape their buying behaviour?
4. What role do cultural alignment and religious compliance play in fostering brand loyalty among Saudi consumers toward local brands?
5. How do cultural sensitivity, religious compliance, Arabic language preference, and perceived quality collectively influence Saudi consumers' purchase intention for local products?

Significance of This Research

The study highlights how cultural sensitivity and religious compliance (e.g., halal certification, modest design) shape consumer trust and acceptance. It provides insights into how businesses can authentically align with Saudi values, avoiding superficial localisation. By understanding preferences for the Arabic language, quality perceptions, and brand loyalty, companies can design products and communication strategies that resonate with Saudi consumers. Global brands can adapt their offerings to compete effectively with local players, while local brands can leverage cultural authenticity as a competitive advantage. The findings can support Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 goals of strengthening local industries and reducing dependence on imports.

Evidence-based insights can guide policymakers in promoting consumer confidence in local products and encouraging sustainable consumption patterns. Designers, marketers, and cultural institutions gain actionable frameworks for product development, branding, and communication. The study offers a roadmap for creating products that are not only compliant but also emotionally resonant with Saudi consumers.

The study contributes to academic literature by exploring how cultural and religious factors interact with psychological drivers like brand loyalty and purchase intention. It enriches theories of consumer behaviour by contextualising them within Saudi society's unique socio-religious fabric.

Organisation of This Paper

After this Introduction section, the next section will review some relevant literature. The Methodology section will follow, and the results will be presented in the Results section. The discussion section will discuss and interpret the results. Some limitations of the study will be mentioned, followed by a summary of the key findings in the Conclusion and recommendations for various stakeholders derivable from the findings in the Recommendations section.

Literature Review

This literature review will consist of the following subsections aligned with the factors being investigated. Only the papers published from 2020 to 2026 will be included.

Saudi Consumer Behaviour

Analysis of 400 posts from 40 official Facebook accounts by (Abuljadail & Badghish, 2021) showed increases in consumer interactions with price/value information, performance information, and Saudi/Arab cultural cues related to Islamic values, family cultural values, females, and English language use.

The cultural, social, and economic factors shape consumer behaviour in Saudi Arabia, exploring key traits, influences, and emerging trends. Cultural values are at the core of Saudi consumer behaviour, with Islam playing a fundamental role. Islamic principles govern various aspects of daily life, including consumption patterns. Additionally, modesty is a defining cultural attribute leading to conservative consumption. The collectivist culture stresses shared experiences, with families and the community, for making group decisions on major purchases such as cars, homes, and vacations. Trust governs recommendations from friends, family, or community leaders, which carry more weight than generic advertising. The dominance of the young population drives the demand for modern lifestyle products. Expatriates prefer affordable options, especially those aligning with their cultural preferences. The wealthy and young consumers prefer premium

brands, luxury items, travel and wellness retreats. The rapidly increasing middle-class population prefer affordable products that give value for money. These consumer behaviour patterns apply to both direct and online marketing (Alnasser, 2025).

A survey of 220 online Saudi consumers by (Al Hamli & Sobaih, 2023) showed that during the COVID pandemic, three factors were important for online Saudi consumers. The factors were product variety, payment method, and psychological factors. A survey of 190 Saudi consumers by (Salem & Nor, 2020) showed that during the COVID pandemic, they switched to online shopping and their behaviour was influenced by perceived usefulness, risk-taking propensity, perceived behavioural control, perceived lack of alternatives, and government support.

A survey of 285 young female Saudi consumers by (Almeshal & Almawash, 2023) showed that a high peer influence of expertise, reward, and legitimate power impacted their purchase decisions. Based on a survey of 218 Saudi and 56 non-Saudi nationals, (Aldaadi & Basafar, 2024) concluded that different levels of these variables can influence consumers' attitudes towards behaviour. Specifically, their behaviour is influenced by their emotional connection to the Saudi identity and the extent to which it affects their retention of fashion. Social pressure can also influence the consumer's behaviour, strengthened by their Saudi identity. Brand popularity mediated the relationship between digital marketing and consumer behaviour in a survey of 200 respondents by (Alanmi & Alharthi, 2023). Consumer behaviour based on a collectivist culture, willingness to pay, environmental self-identity and peer influence predicted green purchase intentions of 257 Saudi consumers surveyed by (Mohammed, Homaid, & Alaswadi, 2020). A survey of 236 Saudi organic consumers by (Mohammed, 2021) found that utilitarian and hedonic values, trust and subjective norms positively affect consumer purchase intention. The relationship between consumers' purchasing intention and their actual behaviour in the Saudi Arabian context was moderated by the availability of organic products. A survey of 775 Saudi young female fashion consumers by (Algumzi, 2022) revealed a strong influence of external factors, such as social norms, religion, culture, and family, on young female consumers' luxury fashion in Saudi Arabia.

Preference for Local Products Among Saudi Consumers

An examination of 3-day food records from 75 households (900 food items) across five regions of Hail, Jazan, Al-Ahsa, Jeddah, and Riyadh, by (Alqurashi, et al., 2025) showed the popularity of local foods in different regions of Saudi Arabia. This is indicative of a preference for local products among Saudi consumers. An experimental study by (Gomez, Mohammed, Li, Ballco, & Zhang, 2023) showed that Saudi consumers preferred locally produced Rainbow Trout over an imported product, even if the price was higher for the local product. According to the results of a survey of 286 Saudi customers, CSR initiatives and blockchain-enabled transparency increased consumer trust. The increased trust positively influenced willingness to pay more for local food. Also, cultural alignment strengthened consumer confidence and enhanced its mediating role (Toukabri & Chaouachi, 2025). A survey of 343 Saudi social media users by (Hasan & Sohail, 2021) revealed that brand origin had a moderating effect in the relationships between brand trust and interaction with purchase intention, tilting this effect more towards local products. Based on a survey of 480 Islamic bank consumers, (Junaidi, 2021) observed an important role for extrinsic religiosity on consumers' awareness and consumer attitudes. On the other hand, intrinsic religiosity had less effect on consumer attitudes. Consumer awareness played a crucial role in consumer attitudes. Mediator variables, such as consumers' awareness and attitudes, partially mediated religiosity and consumers' preferences. A survey of 731 Saudi

consumers of local dairy products by (Mkedder, Bakir, & Lachachi, 2021) showed a positive effect for perceived quality, consumer satisfaction, and brand image purchase intention. However, perceived price could not explain purchase intention. Most participants out of 487 surveyed by (Almohammed, et al., 2023) were aware of online pharmaceuticals, and most of them bought these products online. They were motivated by saving time, offers and discounts, and the availability of a variety of products. Most were satisfied with the quality, promptness of order delivery, and condition of the product and packaging. A survey of 200 Tunisian consumers by (Ben-Ali & Taghouti, 2022) showed that their preferences for local forest honey were determined by its geographical origin, flower type, flavour, and colour. Gender, income, and the grocery shopping task determined the importance of these attributes. A survey of 134 Tanzanian consumers and document reviews by (Kumburu & Kessy, 2021) showed significant differences in consumer preferences for furniture products. Imported furniture was preferred by consumers. The differences in consumer preference for furniture were due to quality and design. A survey by (Šedík, Hudecová, & Predanócyová, 2023) among 1,850 Slovak honey consumers examined generational differences in preferences. The Silver Generation consumed honey primarily for its nutritional value, with a preference for dark-coloured monofloral honey. Generation Z preferred polyfloral honey without considering nutritional value. Generation X was associated with the use of honey in cosmetics. Generations Z and Y had a very low awareness of creamed honey and honey with additions compared to older cohorts. Across all age groups, propolis, royal jelly, and bee pollen emerged as the most attractive honey additions, while spirulina and chilli were the least appealing.

Cultural Sensitivity and Religious Compliance Among Saudi Consumers

The results of a survey of 290 telecom product consumers in Saudi Arabia indicated that cultural identity, cultural sensuality, and social media exerted a significant impact on purchase intention (Muthuswamy & Basri, 2023). A survey of 1135 Saudi restaurant customers by (Elshaer, Sobaih, Alyahya, & Elnasr, 2021) showed a notably weak negative impact of religiosity on the intention to waste food. However, the culture of food consumption positively influenced the intention to waste food. Attitudes towards behaviours, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control completely mediated the relationship between religiosity and the intention to waste food. These factors partially mediated the relationship between food consumption culture and the intention to waste food. A survey of 300 Kuwaiti consumers by (Junaidi, 2021) revealed that religiosity increased the perceived extended self, perfectionism, materialistic and sustainable value of luxury. Acculturation to Global Consumer Culture improved Muslims' perception of all luxury values under study. Globalised Muslims perceived luxury as a method of self-identification. Analysis of data from a survey of 149 Saudi Muslim participants by (Alsaad & Elrehail, 2021) showed that religiosity led to perceived customer effectiveness (PCE) but not to moral obligation. Idealism led to both PCE and moral obligation. PCE mediated the effect of both religiosity and idealism, and moral obligation mediated the effect of idealism.

Saudi Consumer Preferences for Halal Certification and Modest Design

Findings from a multi-method study by (Alenazi, 2025) showed that GAC certification, Saudi origin cues, and traceability features significantly enhanced consumer utility and trust. This combination captured about 92% of the market with the highest profitability despite premium prices. Four consumer segments were identified: certification-focused, eco-conscious, traceability-driven, and price-sensitive. An exploratory study by (Randeree, 2020) identified four

trends: positively impacting the growth of the Islamic economy, above-nominal increase in the global Muslim population, with greater intra-religious interactions of varying Muslim cultures, an increasing demand for a diversity of Shari'ah-compliant and halal products and services, improving the socio-economic status of Muslims in developed and emerging countries, and a widening perspective of faith understanding and rising interest in religious literacy. Using conjoint analysis and a survey of 270 Saudi participants (Windasari, Azhari, & Putra, 2024) showed that in the case of halal hospitals, the highest preference was for familiarity and certification of the hospital brand, implying trust and guarantees to add value to the halal certification for hospitals. Sharia services had a higher preference compared to the physical infrastructure. However, there was a low level of preference for add-on components that support the integration of other halal industries, such as halal culinary tourism, halal tourism and integration with transportation and halal accommodation. A comparison of Sunni and Shia sects on halal purchase by (Farah, 2021) showed that Sunni consumers exhibited a greater trust in judgment of and willingness to buy foreign Halal products. On the other hand, Shiite consumers showed a greater trust in the judgment of and willingness to buy Muslim products. Consumer purchase intention was influenced by religiosity, ethnocentrism, subjective norms, brand trust and product judgment. A comparison of halal chicken and Sharia-compliant hotel by (Shahabuddin, Sukor, & Hashim, 2020) showed that these two halal business cases were more product-centric. They violated or neglected people's rights. They maintained legal responsibility, but did not pay much attention to moral and spiritual responsibilities.

Arabic Language Preference Among Saudi Consumers

A review of five papers by (Alotaibi, 2025) showed that when foreign products used the Arabic language for digital marketing, they could attract more Arab customers. It helped customers to feel more connected to the brand and to trust it. Their loyalty increased since the practice matched their cultural habits. This approach led to a strong cultural understanding and earned great respect in the business world. These findings show that businesses should use Arabic language in their advertisement and promotional material if they want to succeed in marketing in Saudi Arabia. This will ensure visibility, engagement, and loyalty from customers in the long run. A sample of 500 shop names in 12 cities was collected from a Saudi Mall Directory and analysed by (Al-Jarf, 2022). Also, a sample of 75 students and instructors from the departments of languages, translation, education, computer science and business and 25 shop owners and workers were surveyed. Survey results show that 64% of shops use foreign names (25% international, 39% locally adapted), 24% use pure Arabic names, and 12% adopt mixed names. Some foreign-named shops add Arabic descriptors as translations. Despite the availability of Arabic equivalents, foreign names dominate malls and shops. Students, faculty, and shop owners cited promotional, sociocultural, linguistic, and globalisation factors, alongside the absence of a naming policy. Foreign names are seen as a marketing strategy to attract customers who associate them with modernity, prestige, and elitism. They signal alignment with international markets and convey higher quality. English names, in particular, are perceived as more sophisticated and glamorous. Shop owners noted that new entrepreneurs adopt foreign names to compete, imitate Western trends, and appeal to customers who prefer foreign merchandise. Translating names into Arabic is often avoided, as it is thought to weaken the brand's link to its foreign franchise identity. Most boards were bilingual out of 68 linguistic boards analysed by (Jeza Alotaibi & Alamri, 2022). Same-sized lettering was displayed in 66.7%, and the same information was displayed in 64.8%. About 9.3% of shops had erroneous boards. According to (Al-Rushaidi & Ali, 2017), various

translation strategies used for English to Arabic translation of restaurant menus can create lexical ambiguity, lack of clarity and confusion among consumers. An analysis of 271 shop names by (Al-Jarf, 2024) showed that 24% of the shops had pure Arabic names, 25% had international brand names (Starbucks, Burger King, McDonald's, Pizza Hut, Monsoon, Zara, Sony); 39% had local English names, and only 6.7% of shop names were fully translated. It was recommended that franchised international brand names, such as Debenhams and Samsung, be transliterated. Some foreign shop names can be fully or partially translated rather than transliterated. The Arabic version is useful for Arab shoppers who do not know English, and the English version is for foreigners. Hence, it is preferable to display shop names in both languages.

Brand Loyalty of Saudi Consumers

A survey of 446 Saudi consumers by (Faridi & Naushad, 2021) showed that the factors of brand fidelity, such as accommodation/price, accommodation/performance, cognitive interdependence, and derogation of alternatives, were valid in the Saudi context. Saudi consumers were highly loyal to their favourite brands. The findings from a survey by (Abu-Bakar & Almutairi, 2024) showed a significant correlation between brand loyalty and sustainable purchase decisions. This demonstrates the crucial role of brand identity in promoting eco-conscious consumer choices. A complex environment of brand allegiance exists, in which factors like social responsibility, although not yet dominant, offer brands chances to align better with consumer values and national sustainability objectives. Demographic factors, such as age and income level, significantly influenced sustainable purchasing decisions. A survey of 507 Saudi airline customers by (Soomro, Bhutto, Ertz, Shaikh, & Al Batati, 2022) showed a significant relationship between brand love, brand loyalty, customer satisfaction, and service quality. Brand image did not mediate the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty. A survey of 239 Saudi shoe buyers by (Elrayah & Piaralal, 2024) revealed that both local and global brands had a favourable impact on these customers. Brands that deliberately use their local identity or global reputation can increase consumer loyalty, as their customers regard them as genuine, culturally relevant, and consistently provide high-quality products. A survey of 111 Saudi customers by (Liza, Naji, Ghaleb, & Alzoraiki, 2021) showed a significant relationship for customer trust, customer loyalty, and market orientation with online business.

Purchase Intention of Saudi Consumers

A survey of 312 Saudi consumers by (Mabkhot, Isa, & Mabkhot, 2022) showed a significant link between social media influencers and purchase intentions, and credibility mediated the relationship between these two variables. A survey of 517 Saudi customers from Jeddah and Medina by (Habib, Haider, & Khan, 2024) revealed that customer service and return policies, information quality, perceived convenience, ease of use, usefulness, cost-saving, product variety, and social influence significantly affect consumer trust to increase purchase intention. A survey of 251 Saudi consumers by (Almohammadi & Abdulghaffar, 2022) showed that a consumer's attitude, environmental concern, and environmental knowledge influenced the intention to buy green products. Perceived behavioural control and subjective norms did not affect green purchase intention. A survey of 354 Saudi consumers by (Labi & Binzafrah, 2023) showed no effect for Islamic Values (IsV) and Conservation (Cv) values on environmental concern (EC) or Electric Vehicle Purchase Intention (EVPI). On the other hand, self-transcendence values (ST) exerted a significant influence on EVPI, which was mediated by EC. A survey of 533 Saudi consumers by (Al Falah, Al Sughayir, & Albarq, 2024) revealed that environmental concern (EC), convenience,

and trust influenced their intention to purchase organic food products.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a cross-sectional quantitative research design to examine Saudi consumer preferences and their implications for localised product design. A survey-based approach was selected as the primary data collection method, consistent with established practices in consumer behaviour research within Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) contexts. The research design was guided by a positivist philosophical orientation and adopted a deductive approach to test hypothesised relationships between cultural, religious, linguistic, and quality-related factors and Saudi consumers' purchase intentions toward locally adapted products.

Population and Sampling

The target population comprised Saudi nationals aged 18 years and above who reside in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and have purchasing experience with consumer products. A multi-stage sampling strategy was adopted to ensure geographic and demographic representativeness across the Kingdom's five major regions: Riyadh, the Western Region (Jeddah and Makkah), the Eastern Province, the Southern Region, and the Northern Region.

In the first stage, proportionate stratified sampling was used to allocate respondents across geographic regions in approximate proportion to regional population figures published by the General Authority for Statistics (GASTAT, 2023). In the second stage, convenience sampling was employed within each stratum to recruit respondents through both online and in-person channels. The sample size was calculated using Cochran's formula for large populations, yielding a minimum requirement of 384 respondents at a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error. To account for incomplete responses and non-response bias, 600 questionnaires were distributed, of which 528 were returned. After removing 28 cases due to excessive missing data or straight-lining, a final sample of 500 valid responses was retained for analysis, yielding an effective response rate of 83.3%.

Instrument Development

The research instrument was a structured, self-administered questionnaire developed in both Arabic and English. The Arabic version served as the primary instrument, reflecting the linguistic preferences of the target population. The questionnaire was developed through a rigorous process involving forward and back translation by two bilingual academics and a professional translator, following the guidelines proposed by Brislin (1970). Discrepancies between translations were resolved through committee deliberation.

The questionnaire comprised six sections measuring the following constructs: (a) Cultural Sensitivity, defined as the extent to which consumers prefer products that align with Saudi cultural norms and traditions (6 items); (b) Religious Compliance, capturing preferences for products that adhere to Islamic Sharia principles such as halal certification and modest design (5 items); (c) Arabic Language Preference, measuring the importance of Arabic-language packaging, instructions, and marketing (4 items); (d) Quality Perception, assessing perceived product quality of localised versus non-localised offerings (5 items); (e) Brand Loyalty, measuring attachment and repeat purchase behaviour toward culturally adapted brands (4 items); and (f) Purchase Intention, capturing the likelihood of purchasing products designed for the Saudi

market (4 items). All items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Items were adapted from validated instruments in the literature, including the cultural sensitivity scale of Cleveland and Laroche (2007), the halal purchase intention scale of Awan et al. (2015), and the brand loyalty measures of Yoo et al. (2000).

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected between September and November 2025 using a dual-mode approach. The online component was administered via a Qualtrics survey distributed through Saudi social media platforms, including X (formerly Twitter), WhatsApp groups, and Snapchat, which are widely used in the Kingdom. Geographic targeting features on these platforms were used to reach respondents across all five regions. The in-person component involved trained research assistants who administered paper-based questionnaires at shopping malls and commercial centres in Riyadh, Jeddah, and Dammam. This approach specifically targeted demographics that are less active on social media, including older consumers and those with lower digital literacy.

All data collection procedures were approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Umm Al-Qura University. Participants provided informed consent before questionnaire completion. Anonymity and confidentiality were assured, and no personally identifiable information was collected. The study complied with the ethical guidelines of the National Committee of Bioethics (NCBE) of Saudi Arabia.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted with 45 Saudi respondents to evaluate the clarity, comprehensibility, and reliability of the questionnaire. Based on pilot feedback, two items were reworded for greater clarity in the Arabic version, and one item in the Quality Perception construct was removed due to low item-total correlation ($r = .21$). The pilot yielded acceptable preliminary reliability estimates, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .81 to .91 across all constructs.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 29) and AMOS (Version 28). The analytical procedures were conducted in the following sequence. First, data screening involved examination of missing values, outliers, normality, and multicollinearity. Missing values, representing less than 2% of total data points, were handled using expectation-maximisation (EM) imputation. Second, descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis) were computed for all constructs. Third, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to validate the measurement model and assess convergent and discriminant validity. Fourth, internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR). Fifth, Pearson bivariate correlations were calculated to examine the strength and direction of associations among variables. Sixth, hierarchical multiple regression analysis was used to determine the relative predictive power of cultural, religious, linguistic, and quality-related factors on purchase intention. Seventh, independent-samples t-tests and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to examine differences in consumer preferences across demographic groups.

Results

Respondent Profile

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 500 respondents included in the final analysis. The sample comprised 42.8% male and 57.2% female participants, with the largest age cohort being 25–34 years (33.6%), followed by 18–24 years (25.4%). Geographically, the distribution closely approximated regional population proportions, with Riyadh contributing the highest share (33.0%). Nearly two-thirds of respondents held a bachelor's degree or higher (64.0%), and the majority reported monthly incomes between SAR 5,000 and SAR 20,000 (62.8%).

Table 1 Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 500)

| Characteristic | Category | n | % |
|----------------------|--------------------|-----|------|
| Gender | Male | 214 | 42.8 |
| | Female | 286 | 57.2 |
| Age Group | 18–24 | 127 | 25.4 |
| | 25–34 | 168 | 33.6 |
| | 35–44 | 112 | 22.4 |
| | 45–54 | 58 | 11.6 |
| | 55+ | 35 | 7.0 |
| Region | Riyadh | 165 | 33.0 |
| | Jeddah (Western) | 120 | 24.0 |
| | Eastern Province | 95 | 19.0 |
| | Southern Region | 62 | 12.4 |
| | Northern Region | 58 | 11.6 |
| Education | Secondary or below | 78 | 15.6 |
| | Diploma | 102 | 20.4 |
| | Bachelor's degree | 234 | 46.8 |
| | Postgraduate | 86 | 17.2 |
| Monthly Income (SAR) | < 5,000 | 89 | 17.8 |
| | 5,000–10,000 | 146 | 29.2 |
| | 10,001–20,000 | 168 | 33.6 |
| | > 20,000 | 97 | 19.4 |

Reliability and Validity

The measurement model was assessed through confirmatory factor analysis. All standardised factor loadings exceeded the threshold of .60, ranging from .67 to .89 across the six constructs. Model fit indices indicated acceptable fit: $\chi^2/df = 2.13$, CFI = .961, TLI = .954, RMSEA = .048, and SRMR = .039. Table 2 reports the internal consistency and convergent validity statistics. Cronbach's alpha values ranged from .841 to .924, all exceeding the recommended .70 threshold. Composite reliability (CR) values ranged from .865 to .938, and average variance extracted (AVE) values ranged from .592 to .758, all exceeding the minimum thresholds of .70 and .50, respectively. Discriminant validity was confirmed as the square root of the AVE for each construct exceeded its correlations with all other constructs.

Table 2 *Reliability and Convergent Validity of Measurement Scales*

| Construct | Items | Cronbach's α | CR | AVE |
|----------------------------|--------------|---------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Cultural Sensitivity | 6 | 0.891 | 0.912 | 0.636 |
| Religious Compliance | 5 | 0.924 | 0.938 | 0.752 |
| Arabic Language Preference | 4 | 0.867 | 0.889 | 0.668 |
| Quality Perception | 5 | 0.853 | 0.878 | 0.592 |
| Brand Loyalty | 4 | 0.841 | 0.865 | 0.617 |
| Purchase Intention | 4 | 0.908 | 0.926 | 0.758 |

Descriptive Statistics

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics for all study constructs. Religious Compliance received the highest mean rating ($M = 4.58$, $SD = 0.62$), indicating that adherence to Islamic principles is the most salient factor driving Saudi consumer preferences. Cultural Sensitivity also scored highly ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.73$), followed by Purchase Intention ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 0.76$). Arabic Language Preference ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 0.81$) and Quality Perception ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 0.79$) received moderately high ratings, while Brand Loyalty had the lowest mean ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 0.88$). Skewness values ranged from -0.89 to -0.19 , and kurtosis values ranged from -0.47 to 0.52 , confirming that the data were approximately normally distributed.

Table 3 *Descriptive Statistics for Study Constructs (N = 500)*

| Variable | M | SD | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|----------------------------|----------|-----------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Cultural Sensitivity | 4.21 | 0.73 | -0.41 | -0.18 |
| Religious Compliance | 4.58 | 0.62 | -0.89 | 0.52 |
| Arabic Language Preference | 3.94 | 0.81 | -0.33 | -0.26 |
| Quality Perception | 3.87 | 0.79 | -0.28 | -0.34 |
| Brand Loyalty | 3.62 | 0.88 | -0.19 | -0.47 |
| Purchase Intention | 4.03 | 0.76 | -0.52 | 0.11 |

Correlation Analysis

Table 4 presents the bivariate Pearson correlation matrix. All constructs were significantly and positively correlated with one another ($p < .01$). The strongest correlation was observed between Religious Compliance and Purchase Intention ($r = .627$, $p < .001$), followed by the association between Cultural Sensitivity and Religious Compliance ($r = .614$, $p < .001$). Quality Perception

and Brand Loyalty were also strongly correlated ($r = .562$, $p < .001$). The magnitude of correlations ranged from moderate to strong, and no correlation exceeded .70, suggesting that multicollinearity was unlikely to be a concern in the subsequent regression analysis.

Table 4 Pearson Correlation Matrix of Study Constructs

| Variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|--------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---|
| 1. Cultural Sensitivity | — | | | | | |
| 2. Religious Compliance | .614** | — | | | | |
| 3. Arabic Language Pref. | .523** | .487** | — | | | |
| 4. Quality Perception | .398** | .362** | .441** | — | | |
| 5. Brand Loyalty | .345** | .312** | .378** | .562** | — | |
| 6. Purchase Intention | .581** | .627** | .504** | .489** | .453** | — |

Note. ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

Multiple Regression Analysis

Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the relative contribution of cultural, religious, linguistic, and quality-related factors in predicting Saudi consumers' purchase intention toward localised products. Assumptions of linearity, independence of residuals (Durbin–Watson = 1.94), homoscedasticity, and normality of residuals were met. Variance inflation factor (VIF) values ranged from 1.42 to 2.08, well below the threshold of 10, confirming the absence of multicollinearity.

Table 5 presents the regression results. The overall model was statistically significant, $F(5, 494) = 87.34$, $p < .001$, and explained 46.9% of the variance in Purchase Intention ($R^2 = .469$, Adjusted $R^2 = .464$). Religious Compliance was the strongest predictor ($\beta = .318$, $p < .001$), followed by Cultural Sensitivity ($\beta = .247$, $p < .001$), Arabic Language Preference ($\beta = .189$, $p < .001$), Quality Perception ($\beta = .156$, $p = .001$), and Brand Loyalty ($\beta = .112$, $p = .011$). All five predictors made statistically significant unique contributions to the model.

Table 5 Multiple Regression Results: Predictors of Purchase Intention ($N = 500$)

| Predictor | β | SE | t | p | 95% CI |
|-----------------------|---------|-------|-------|--------|----------------|
| (Constant) | | 0.312 | 2.841 | .005 | [0.274, 1.499] |
| Cultural Sensitivity | 0.247 | 0.048 | 5.183 | < .001 | [0.153, 0.344] |
| Religious Compliance | 0.318 | 0.052 | 6.427 | < .001 | [0.228, 0.432] |
| Arabic Language Pref. | 0.189 | 0.041 | 4.112 | < .001 | [0.097, 0.258] |

| | | | | | |
|--------------------|-------|-------|-------|------|----------------|
| Quality Perception | 0.156 | 0.044 | 3.298 | .001 | [0.063, 0.236] |
| Brand Loyalty | 0.112 | 0.039 | 2.547 | .011 | [0.026, 0.178] |

Note. $R^2 = .469$, Adjusted $R^2 = .464$, $F(5, 494) = 87.34$, $p < .001$.

Group Differences

Gender Differences

Independent-samples t-tests were conducted to examine gender differences across the study constructs. As shown in Table 6, significant gender differences were found for Cultural Sensitivity ($t(498) = -3.42$, $p = .001$, $d = 0.31$), Arabic Language Preference ($t(498) = -5.08$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.47$), and Purchase Intention ($t(498) = -3.36$, $p = .001$, $d = 0.32$). In all three cases, female respondents reported higher scores than their male counterparts, indicating that Saudi women place greater emphasis on cultural alignment and Arabic-language product features. No significant differences were observed for Religious Compliance, Quality Perception, or Brand Loyalty.

Table 6 Independent-Samples t-Test Results by Gender

| Variable | Male M (SD) | Female M (SD) | t | p | Cohen's d |
|----------------------|-------------|---------------|-------|--------|-----------|
| Cultural Sensitivity | 4.08 (0.76) | 4.31 (0.69) | -3.42 | .001 | 0.31 |
| Religious Compliance | 4.61 (0.59) | 4.56 (0.64) | 0.87 | .384 | 0.08 |
| Arabic Lang. Pref. | 3.72 (0.84) | 4.10 (0.76) | -5.08 | < .001 | 0.47 |
| Quality Perception | 3.91 (0.77) | 3.84 (0.81) | 0.94 | .348 | 0.09 |
| Brand Loyalty | 3.54 (0.91) | 3.68 (0.85) | -1.67 | .096 | 0.16 |
| Purchase Intention | 3.89 (0.79) | 4.13 (0.72) | -3.36 | .001 | 0.32 |

Note. Degrees of freedom = 498 for all comparisons.

Regional Differences

One-way ANOVA revealed significant regional differences for Cultural Sensitivity, $F(4, 495) = 4.82$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .037$, and Arabic Language Preference, $F(4, 495) = 6.14$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .047$. Post hoc comparisons using Tukey's HSD test indicated that respondents from the Southern and Northern regions reported significantly higher Cultural Sensitivity scores ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 0.68$ and $M = 4.38$, $SD = 0.71$, respectively) compared with respondents from Riyadh ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 0.74$, $p < .05$). Similarly, Arabic Language Preference was significantly higher in the Southern Region ($M = 4.23$, $SD = 0.72$) than in Riyadh ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.83$, $p < .01$) and Jeddah ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 0.79$, $p < .05$). No significant regional differences were observed for Religious Compliance, Quality Perception, Brand Loyalty, or Purchase Intention.

Age Group Differences

ANOVA results further revealed a significant effect of age group on Religious Compliance, $F(4, 495) = 5.67, p < .001, \eta^2 = .044$, and Brand Loyalty, $F(4, 495) = 3.91, p = .004, \eta^2 = .031$. Tukey's HSD post hoc comparisons showed that respondents aged 45 and above rated Religious Compliance significantly higher ($M = 4.78, SD = 0.48$) than those in the 18–24 age group ($M = 4.39, SD = 0.68, p < .01$). Brand Loyalty was also highest among the 45–54 age group ($M = 3.91, SD = 0.79$) and lowest among the 18–24 group ($M = 3.42, SD = 0.93, p < .05$). These findings suggest that older Saudi consumers exhibit stronger religious adherence in their consumption patterns and greater attachment to brands they perceive as culturally appropriate.

Summary of Key Findings

The results collectively demonstrate that Saudi consumer preferences are strongly shaped by religious, cultural, and linguistic factors. Religious Compliance emerged as the most powerful predictor of purchase intention, followed by Cultural Sensitivity and Arabic Language Preference. Significant demographic variations were identified, with female consumers, older adults, and those residing in peripheral regions expressing the strongest preferences for culturally localised products. The measurement model demonstrated strong psychometric properties, and the regression model accounted for a substantial proportion of variance in purchase intention, underscoring the practical significance of these findings for localised product design strategies in the Saudi market.

Discussion

The order of variables according to response means is: religious compliance, cultural sensitivity, purchase intention, Arabic language preference, quality perception and brand loyalty. This ordering suggests that religious and cultural factors dominate consumer perceptions, while loyalty and quality are relatively less emphasised. It highlights the primacy of values and identity markers over purely transactional or performance-based attributes.

Purchase intention was correlated with all other (5) variables. This indicates that purchase intention acts as a nexus, influenced by both cultural/religious values and more conventional marketing factors (quality, loyalty, language preference).

The model explained 46.9% of the variations in purchase intention. The equation: Purchase intention = $0.312 + 0.247$ Cultural sensitivity + 0.318 Religious compliance + 0.189 Arabic language preference + 0.156 Quality perception + 0.112 Brand loyalty. This reinforces the idea that identity-driven variables outweigh conventional marketing drivers in shaping purchase decisions.

Gender differences were observed for cultural sensitivity, Arabic language preference and purchase intention. Females scored higher. Women may be more attuned to cultural and linguistic authenticity, translating into stronger purchase intentions. This could suggest gender-targeted marketing strategies emphasising cultural resonance.

Age group differences were noted for Religious compliance and Brand loyalty. Religious compliance and Brand loyalty are higher among older people. Age strengthens attachment to tradition and continuity. Older demographics may be more reliable long-term customers if brands align with religious values and loyalty programs.

Regional differences: Cultural sensitivity was higher in the Southern and Northern regions compared to Riyadh. Arabic language preference was higher in the Southern region compared to Riyadh and Jeddah. Regional identity plays a significant role. Southern consumers, in particular,

emphasise linguistic authenticity and cultural respect, suggesting that localised branding strategies are essential.

The reviewed papers support all the above findings. The domination of religious and cultural factors is endorsed by Muthuswamy and Basri (2023), Elshaer et al. (2021), Junaidi (2021), and Alsaad and Elrehail (2021). Cultural factors related to Islamic principles guide Saudi consumer behaviour. Conservative consumption, trust in the advice from family and friends, preference for luxury premium brands by the wealthy consumers and middle-class preference for affordable prices giving value for money are important aspects of Saudi consumer behaviour (Alnasser, 2025).

Saudi consumers buy different products for different purposes. Their behaviour will vary according to these factors. Availability, accessibility, price, value for money and environmental concerns are some of these factors. Online buying is determined by trust, the safety of transactions, and prompt delivery of the order. Peer influence plays a role in women's buying of fashion goods (Algumzi, 2022), green purchase and online buying (Almeshal & Almawash, 2023; Alanmi & Alharthi, 2023; Mohammed, Homaid, & Alaswadi, 2020).

High levels of religiosity, cultural sensitivity, preference for the Arabic language and national pride drive preference for local products over global brands (Alqurashi, 2025; Gomez et al., 2023; Toukabri & Chaouachi, 2025; Hasan & Sohail, 2021; Ben-Ali & Taghouti, 2022). Religiosity implies adherence to Sharia principles, with halal food being an important aspect. Consumption of only halal-certified products is a characteristic of the Islamic religion. Many papers reiterated this (Randeree, 2020; Windasari, Azhari & Putra, 2024; Shahabuddin, Sukor & Hashim, 2020). Preference for the Arabic language has a lower priority in determining purchase intention, as the findings above showed. It may be due to the high literacy rate among Saudi citizens (adult literacy rate 97.63% in early 2026). The literate consumers may not be concerned about the language. This is evident from the findings of Alotaibi (2025) and Al-Jarf (2022). Bilingual boards are a good compromise (Jeza Alotaibi & Alamri, 2022). Global firms tend to prefer English name boards, although some of them use bilingual boards (Al-Jarf, 2024).

Brand loyalty is related to purchase behaviour. Most consumers are highly loyal to their favourite brands (Faridi & Naushad, 2021). Brand loyalty arises from repeated positive experiences with the orders of products and services (service quality), leading to high levels of satisfaction (Soomro et al., 2022). Global brands exhibiting a local identity can enjoy brand loyalty (Elrayah & Piaralal, 2024). Brand loyalty in online business depends on trust (Liza et al., 2021).

The above findings have strategic implications. Brands aiming for higher purchase intention in this market must embed cultural and religious authenticity into their positioning, while tailoring approaches by gender, age, and region.

Research Questions Answered

The findings answer all research questions, as discussed below.

1. How does the use of the Arabic language in product packaging, branding, and communication influence Saudi consumers' preference for local products?

Although there is some preference for the Arabic language, the highly literate consumers are not concerned about the issue of whether the Arabic or English language is used. Some of the local brands tend to use the Arabic language, and global brands prefer to use English. However, these trends are not consistent.

2. To what extent do halal certification and adherence to Islamic Sharia principles (e.g., modest design, ethical sourcing) affect Saudi consumers' trust and purchase decisions for local products?

There is a strong attachment for Saudi consumers to Islamic principles, and hence, they consume only halal products.

3. How do Saudi consumers perceive the quality of localised products compared to non-localised (imported or global) offerings, and how does this perception shape their buying behaviour?

Although religiosity, cultural sensitivity and national pride drive the consumption of local products, Saudi citizens do not hesitate to purchase famous global brands.

4. What role do cultural alignment and religious compliance play in fostering brand loyalty among Saudi consumers toward local brands?

Brand loyalty does not depend on cultural alignment or religious compliance. Preference for a specific brand, price, value for money, availability and trust determine brand loyalty.

5. How do cultural sensitivity, religious compliance, Arabic language preference, and perceived quality collectively influence Saudi consumers' purchase intention for local products?

When all factors combine, Saudi customers may prefer local products over global ones. However, this is not always the case.

Since the findings answer all the research questions, the aim of the study is achieved.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study was undertaken to study the Saudi consumer behaviour for their preference for local products in terms of their cultural sensitivity, religious compliance, capturing preferences for products that adhere to Islamic Sharia principles, such as halal certification and modest design, Arabic language preference, quality perception of localised versus non-localised offerings, brand loyalty, and purchase intention.

The results of the survey of 500 Saudi consumers collectively showed that Saudi consumer preferences are strongly shaped by religious, cultural, and linguistic factors. Religious Compliance emerged as the most powerful predictor of purchase intention, followed by Cultural Sensitivity and Arabic Language Preference. Significant demographic variations were identified, with female consumers, older adults, and those residing in peripheral regions expressing the strongest preferences for culturally localised products. The measurement model demonstrated strong psychometric properties, and the regression model accounted for a substantial proportion of variance in purchase intention, underscoring the practical significance of these findings for localised product design strategies in the Saudi market.

Recommendations

Both local and global brands aiming for higher purchase intention in the Saudi market must embed cultural and religious authenticity into their positioning, while tailoring approaches by gender, age, and region.

Saudi consumers can test alternatives to global and local products for an evidence-based purchase decision. This will provide them with the best options.

The Saudi government should promote local production for import substitution. Global firms can be encouraged to open local subsidiaries. The government should support these steps with

suitable policies and strategies. Institutional support is an important aspect to consider.

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