

Islamic symbols in food packaging and purchase intention of Muslim consumers

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Abstract

Purpose – Purchase intention of consumers depends on their perception of the extent to which his expectations will be met through the product. This issue, in the context of the products that are immediately purchased by consumer, depends on the extent of relationship in the point of sale. Packaging is one of the most significant factors influencing purchase decision in the point of sale. In this research, the purpose is evaluating the impact of using Islamic symbols in food packaging on the purchase intention of Muslim consumers.

Design/methodology/approach – The authors surveyed Muslim consumers through a questionnaire and analyzed the gathered data through partial least squares (PLS).

Findings – The findings reveal the positive impact of Islamic symbols in food packaging on purchase intention of Muslim consumers. However, this effect was confirmed regarding people with high religiosity. The findings show that religious symbol in packaging increases perceived religious symbolic-value of the product among the customers with high religiosity.

Originality/value – Findings of this paper help marketers that are seeking to promote their products in Islamic markets identify the importance of religious symbols and understand when and how to use these symbols in packaging.

Keywords Islamic market segmentation, Islamic marketing, Islamic marketing mix, The Muslim consumer, Religiously labeled dates, Religiously labeled packed foods, Symbolic value of labels

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Understanding consumer behavior is one of the issues that manufacturers, specifically food manufacturers, are struggling with. Consumer's propensity to a special brand among variety of brands while purchasing in a shopping center or food shop divulges the importance of this issue. Therefore, recognizing factors affecting consumer behavior assist manufacturers and marketers to produce and market products consistently with consumers' demands. Product packaging plays a crucial role in consumer purchase behavior, and most scholars argue that packaging is composed of two elements: visual elements and informational elements. Visual elements include dimensions such as color, size and pictures on the packaging and mostly affect the sentimental and emotional dimensions of decision-making. Informational elements include information regarding product and technology used in packaging and mostly affect cognitive dimension of decision-making (Underwood, 2003). Consumers pay more attention to the packaging of products in the point of sale (POS) than the advertisements that they face in different place (like TV, radio, billboards, Internet, streets, etc.), researchers argue about visual symbols in packaging, because consumers are under time pressure and have limited attention during purchasing among different brands



(Pieters and Warlop, 1999). Also, other studies show that appearance of the product packaging plays a vital role in consumers' decisions (Bottomley and Doyle, 2006; Creusen and Schoormans, 2005). This increasing focus on product packaging motivates practitioners to study effectiveness of packaging, so that companies can lead between competitor brands (Young, 2002). Inside and outside of Muslim countries across the world are demanding more overt labels and messages and expectations as to what halal is and should be (Wilson, 2014). As our country (Iran) is an Islamic country with 98 per cent Muslim population and considering the effects of Islam in all aspects of Muslim people, we can firmly claim that religious beliefs have an impact on their behavior (e.g. consuming behavior). Meanwhile, many products and services with religious meaning, like halal products, have resisted economic recessions. (Wilson and Liu, 2010).

To examine the role of religion on consumer behavior, some researchers used religious symbols to gain a model for their marketing activities. Thus, this paper tries to investigate the impact of adding an Islamic symbol in food packages on the purchase intention of Muslim consumers.

Literature review

By definition, marketing is a process that determines the need of consumers. Whatever satisfies this need is found and created and presented to the consumers in a way that leads to long-term and bilateral beneficial relationship between consumers and the company. In each step of this process, the company endeavors to surpass its competitors and gain more market share. Therefore, the need to more understanding of consumers is obvious. Many researchers such as Weza (2002) state that consumer behavior in this age is not only based on product characteristics, but also on social-cultural variables. The field of research (major) that studies. This major is created to analyze how people can perceive the meanings of signs. Signs include words, images, products and abbreviations that an individual uses to transfer information to another individual. Semiotic was studied by Socrates in variety of ways (Mick, 1986). In fact, some scholars believe that the thing that differentiates human from other creatures is the ability of using these symbols (Boulding, 1956). The Semiotic major is engaged with the context of promotion strategy in marketing. By using too many symbols or signs, a company can transfer information to consumers' mind. Studying Semiotic is an important face in the experimental approach of consumer behavior. Therefore, to understand how people react to symbols emotionally in an environment, we should have a perception of shared meanings related to different symbols. Semiotic related to some contexts of consumer behavior includes Freudian symbolism in advertising, i.e. using symbols to express self-image and intercultural relations.

On the other side, culture is an important religious facet to the study. It is one of the most pervasive and effective social institutions that have significant effects on attitudes, values and behaviors of people on both individual and social level. To examine the impact of religion on marketing, researchers expanded the studies to the context of sociology. For instance, Mittelstaedt (2002) created a conceptual framework to show that religion can have an impact on markets and competitive systems through influencing political, organizational, social and competitive factors. In this regard, Kale (2004) integrated literature related to religion and marketing and stated that religion has an impact on technological inventions and consequently on marketing.

Taylor *et al.* (2010) explore consumer reactions to the use of a Christian religious symbol in advertising. Based on their study, religious symbol enhanced consumer evaluations, and the effects were stronger as religiosity increased. Also, consumers' perceptions of the

marketers in terms of attitude similarity, trustworthiness, expertise and skepticism mediated these interaction effects.

[Bakar et al. \(2013\)](#) used religious notations and with a study showed that the existence of religious symbols on packaging has a positive impact on the purchase intention of consumers. Thus, in this research, the impact of adding an Islamic symbol in packaging of products on intention to purchase of Muslim consumers is firstly studied:

H1. Adding an Islamic symbol in food packaging has an impact on intention to purchase of Muslim consumers.

The world of consumer is a network of concepts between consumers and marketers that is formed from signs and symbols existing in their cultural atmosphere. Several studies have concentrated on cultural notation in the context of consumer behavior ([Mick, 1986](#)). For example, [Kubat and Swaminathan \(2014\)](#) investigate the role of brand cultural symbolism. Brand cultural symbolism refers to the degree to which an abstract image of a specific cultural group is symbolized by a brand ([Torelli et al., 2010](#)). [Qi and Tang \(2011\)](#) investigated the relationship between perceived brand internationalism, product involvement and the symbolic value of international brand which consists of prestige value, self-expressive value and social expressive value. Based on their foundations, product involvement moderates the effect of perceived brand internationalism on the brand's symbolic value in an international branding context.

In consumer research, [Tucker \(1957\)](#) argued that consumers' personalities can be defined through product use. [Levy \(1959\)](#) argued that consumers are not functionally oriented and that their behaviors are significantly affected by the symbols encountered in the identification of goods in the marketplace. [Sirgy \(1981, 1982a, 1982b\)](#) developed a self-image/product-image congruity theory. This theory belongs to a broader class of cognitive-consistency theories, which suggest that consistency in beliefs and behaviors is an obsession of people through which they alleviate the feelings of unpleasantness and tension. Product cues involving images usually activate a self-schema involving the same images. As [Sirgy](#) argued, self-image/product-image congruity states will influence purchase motivation so that positive self-congruity will determine the strongest level of purchase motivation. There are some different results from this theory in food purchase behavior, for example, [Allen et al. \(2008\)](#), while using this theory in addition to the symbolic interactionism theory, found that consumers experience a better aroma and taste and have more favorable attitude and behavior intentions when there is congruence between value and symbol, whereas incongruence has the opposite effect. [Paasovaara et al. \(2011\)](#) used [Sirgy's](#) self-congruity theory to investigate the congruity between consumers' personal values and brand symbolism. They found that consumers' taste perception is more enhanced by brand familiarity rather than congruity. In contrast, the brand familiarity effect can be neutralized by incongruity. In this research, symbolic interactionism is used to support the researchers' claim that religious symbols in product packaging can affect intention to purchase through perceived religious symbolic-value. Based on this theory, people are social creatures that scan their environment from their own perspective ([Burbank and Martins, 2010](#)). Adherents of symbolic interactionism school consider consumer living in a symbolic environment. The way people perceive these symbols determines derived meanings ([Mead, 1934](#)). By crafting relationship between themselves and these symbols, consumers can picture their self-image for others. This self-concept-product-concept can be found in some products and food is one of them ([Belk et al., 1982](#)). [Leigh and Gabel \(1992\)](#) have expanded the symbolic interactionism theory to the context of marketing. They stated that consumers link the symbolic concepts with the consuming product. Therefore, it can be

perceived from symbolic interactionism theory that Muslim consumers prefer the products that reflect their religion through symbols. People create interpretations regarding the meanings of symbols. By crafting relationship between themselves and these symbols, consumers can picture their self-image for others. In fact, managers seek to put potent personality on their products. Therefore, consumers can assign product characteristics to themselves, and in this way, marketers take part in making self-image for consumers (Ligas and Cotte, 1999).

Thus, diversity of perceptions relative to symbolic association of the product with its symbol can have a noticeable impact on intention to purchase. Therefore, with respect to the adherent of symbolic interactionism, the relationship between a product and religious symbol probably affects attitudes and behavior of consumer, and consequently, it affects intention to purchase. Thus, in the second step of this research, we investigate whether adding an Islamic symbol in packaging of food has an impact on perceived religious symbolic-value of consumer:

- H2. Adding an Islamic symbol in packaging has an impact on perceived religious symbolic-value of Muslim consumers.
- H3. Increase in perceived religious symbolic-value of consumers leads to increase in intention to purchase of consumers.

Religiosity indicates the extent to which individuals are engaged with religious affairs. A person, who has religiosity, is loyal and faithful to his or her values, beliefs and tasks and exploits them in his or her daily life. The person that submits both in actions and beliefs is a Muslim (Wilson and Liu, 2011). In other words, religiosity reflects the time that an individual dedicates to religious activities and participating in religious ceremonies (Worthington *et al.*, 2003).

Therefore, this difference of religiosity of Muslim people in our country, as an effective factor, can influence the results of this research study. Because of this, the subject under investigation in the next step is titled “the impact of a religious Islamic symbol in food packaging on intention to purchase of Muslim consumers with different religiosity levels”. In other words, this research examines whether the impact of using religious symbols on intention to purchase is the same in all followers of Islam? With respect to the differences in religiosity of individuals, are there not any differences between people with different levels of religiosity?

- H4. Religiosity of consumers moderates the effect of religious symbols on intention to purchase of Muslim consumers.

Conceptual model and hypotheses of the research

Based on the literature review, the conceptual model is proposed in [Figure A1](#).

Research methodology

Sample

Due to the time limitation, we have conducted the research in a university in the north of Iran. This university consists of students in all majors of medical, humanities, engineering, art, agricultural, science and physical science. We selected the members of sample with accessible sampling method. This university has about 17000 students, out of which 702 students are surveyed through a questionnaire to test our hypotheses. The sample includes 40 per cent male students and 60 per cent female students, ranging in the age group of 18 to

30; 100 per cent of the students were Muslim that could be categorized in two groups of Muslims with high religiosity and Muslims with low religiosity, using the questions of measuring religious commitment. The questionnaire includes four parts: demographic questions (i.e. gender, religion and education level), religiosity questions [adopted from [Allport and Ross \(1967\)](#)], religious symbolic-value questions [adopted from [Sweeney and Soutar \(2001\)](#)] and purchase intention questions (adopted from [Dodds et al., 1991](#)) for each studied product (packed food and date). The current research would adopt the intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity scales developed by [Allport and Ross \(1967\)](#). The intrinsically motivated person lives his religion, whereas the extrinsically motivated person uses his religion ([Allport and Ross, 1967](#)). We modified this measure to be consistent with Islam. There was a total of 14 items in this scale, with 8 items measuring intrinsic religiosity and 4 items measuring extrinsic religiosity. We used eight items in this scale with five items measuring intrinsic religiosity and three items measuring extrinsic religiosity.

We used [Sweeney and Soutar \(2001\)](#) measures. Because we aimed to evaluate symbolic religious value (not symbolic quality value of the product), we modified statements in a way that measure perceived symbolic religious value (Measures are consuming packed food with this symbol meets the religious requirements; Consuming packed food with this symbol gives me a positive feeling; I religiously feel respected with purchasing this product; consuming this product strengthens my religious beliefs; when seeing this symbol on the packaging of the packed food, I can be sure about the health of the food).

Methodology

As the goal of this research is investigating the impact of Islamic symbols on the intention of consumers to purchase two different product categories (a product with low religious value and a product with high religious value), an elicitation survey was used to select two desired products and a symbol that can be used in their packaging. The elicitation survey is a method in which a researcher asks about a thing or a behavior from a sample of society to know their beliefs ([Lee and Murphy, 2005](#)). With this goal, the elicitation survey was conducted in two levels. The first level was for selecting two product categories, and the second level was for determining an appropriate symbol to use in packaging. Therefore, 40 students of the University of Guilan were surveyed. Respondents should have ranked seven groups of packed foods based on their relationship with Islam from their own viewpoint. These seven packed food groups include honey, mushroom, olive, date, milk, olive oil and packed food (e.g. packed sausages, hamburger, baloney) that are set in a questionnaire and presented to the students. With packed food we mean ready to use foods such as sausages, hamburger and baloney that are presented in the stores. Findings of this survey led to the selection of two products of date and packed food (such as sausages, hamburger and baloney) that was used in this research. In the next level, an interview was arranged and done with religious experts, and seven symbols were identified as Islamic symbols. These seven symbols that are presented in the questionnaire include Kaaba, GUMBAD-E-KHAZRA, the sword of Imam Ali, Octagonal, Crescent and the hand of Aboulfazl ([Table I](#)). Afterward, 40 students were requested to choose the extent to which they agree to use Islamic symbols in packaging. As a result, Rosary that obtained the highest score for both date and packed food in package designing was used for the final questionnaire. Due to the lack of diversity in the packaging of date and packed foods in our country, it was concluded that control is not required. We selected common existing packages in the market and designed the religious symbols for them. Also, these packaging were distributed without any particular brand.

Result and discussion

Structural equation modeling (SEM) is used in this paper to test hypotheses and determine latent variables. SEM is a potent multivariable technique from multivariable regression family that allows researchers to test a set of regression equations simultaneously. Unlike regression analysis, this method is proper for analyzing structural equations, because it allows researchers to evaluate the relationships between latent variables and examine relationships affiliated to several factors (Audretsch *et al.*, 2008). So far, this technique has been introduced with two generations of data analysis methods. The main advantage of the second-generation software is elimination of the first generation's constraints. One of the second generation's software is Smart PLS that is popular among researchers due to mentioned advantages. This research also analyzes structural equations using Smart PLS2 that is developed by the University of Hamburg research team.

Analyzing models in SEM method with PLS-SEM approach consists of two levels: "evaluating the fitness of model" and afterward "testing research hypotheses". Evaluating the fitness of model is done in three sections:

- (1) the fitness of measuring model;
- (2) the fitness of structural model; and
- (3) the fitness of overall model.

Researchers, who use the PLS method and related software such as Smart PLS must pass these three steps in their research. A measurement model determines the relationship between indices (observed variables) of a construct (latent variable) and that construct, whereas a structural model indicates the relationships between several constructs. It has to be said that structural relationships are significant and interpretable if the relationships and values of measurement model section are in acceptable tolerance. If researcher encounters with values under the acceptable tolerance in measurement models section, he/she should modify the measurement models section and then examine the relationships of the structural model section. Below we present each part separately.

The fit of measuring model

Results gained from investigating the fit of measuring model are shown in [Table II](#) and [Figure 1](#).

Cross-loading factors are calculated through correlation of a structure's indices with that structure. The correlation of 0.4 or higher shows that variance between structures is more than measuring error (Hulland, 1999), and the reliability of the measuring model is acceptable. As it can be seen in [Table I](#), cross-loading coefficients for all measures are more than 0.4 that shows the acceptable reliability of the model.

Symbol	Rank	Food product
Octagonal	1	Date
Crescent	2	Olive
Rosary	3	Honey
The sword of Imam Ali	4	Milk
The hand of Aboulfazl	5	Olive oil
GUMBAD-E-KHAZRA	6	Mushroom
Kaaba	7	Packed food

Table I.
Symbols and food
products

The second criterion of the fitness of measuring model is divergent validity that compares the correlation between indices of a scale with that scale against correlation of those indices with other scales (Figure 1).

As it can be observed, in both products, all the questions related to the scale of purchase intention (e.g. PI1 to PI5) have more correlation relative to the scale of purchase intention than the scales of perceived religious symbolic-value and religious symbol. This holds true regarding measures related to the scales of perceived religious symbolic-value and religious symbol. Therefore, convergent validity of the model is supported as shown in Figure 1.

The fitness of structural model

According to the data analysis algorithm in the PLS method, after evaluating the fitness of measurement models, it is turn for the fitness of structural model in research to be examined. The fitness of structural model can be examined through three criterions of Z significance coefficient (*t-values*), R^2 and Q^2 .

Z-value. The earliest criterion to measure the relationship between constructs in the model (structural section) is *t-values*. *t-values* more than 1.96 indicate the accuracy between constructs, and the result is the confirmation of the research hypothesis in certainty level of 95 per cent. Note that *t-values* only indicate the accuracy of the relationships and not the intensity between constructs. As it can be observed in Figures 2 and 3, *z-values* for three directions of religious symbol to purchase intention, religious symbol to perceived religious symbolic-value and perceived religious symbolic-value to purchase intention are more than 1.96. This shows that these three directions are significant, and the structural model is appropriate.

R^2 and Q^2 . R^2 is a criterion to show the impact of indigenous variable on exogenous variable, and Q^2 is a criterion to determine the predictability power of the model. Values obtained for R^2 and Q^2 are presented in Table III. Results for R^2 in Chin's(1998) study (values of 0.19, 0.33 and 0.67 are criterion values for weak, medium and strong, respectively) show that in both the products, the construct of intention to purchase has a strong structural fit. In

Items	Religious symbols		Perceived religious symbolic-value					Purchase intention				
Measures	RS1	RS2	PRV1	PRV2	PRV3	PRV4	PRV5	PI1	PI2	PI3	PI4	PI5
Packed food	0.94	0.94	0.84	0.88	0.88	0.84	0.82	0.88	0.91	0.85	0.86	0.83
Date	0.94	0.92	0.87	0.89	0.89	0.80	0.86	0.87	0.91	0.89	0.89	0.61

Table II.
Cross loading

Measures	RS		PRV		PI	
	Date	Packed Food	Date	Packed Food	Date	Packed Food
PI1	0.21	0.31	0.59	0.62	0.87	0.88
PI2	0.25	0.32	0.65	0.66	0.91	0.91
PI3	0.21	0.30	0.66	0.65	0.89	0.85
PI4	0.24	0.33	0.65	0.65	0.89	0.86
PI5	0.22	0.37	0.38	0.66	0.61	0.83
PRV1	0.17	0.28	0.87	0.84	0.58	0.55
PRV2	0.16	0.33	0.89	0.88	0.65	0.65
PRV3	0.19	0.36	0.89	0.88	0.66	0.67
PRV4	0.15	0.25	0.80	0.84	0.50	0.57
PRV5	0.25	0.36	0.86	0.82	0.65	0.73
RS1	0.94	0.94	0.21	0.35	0.27	0.36
RS2	0.92	0.94	0.19	0.35	0.23	0.35

Figure 1.
Cross-loading factors of research structures for evaluating divergent validity

Figure 2.
Z-value for packed
food

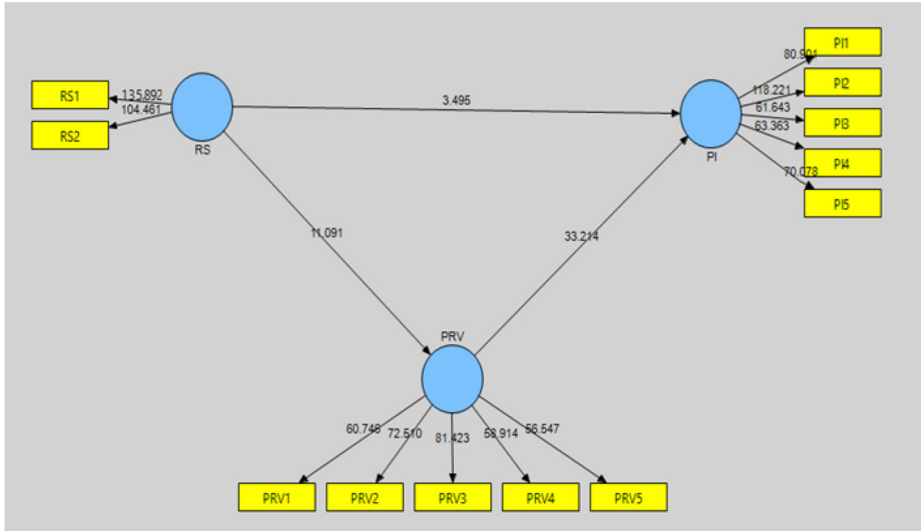
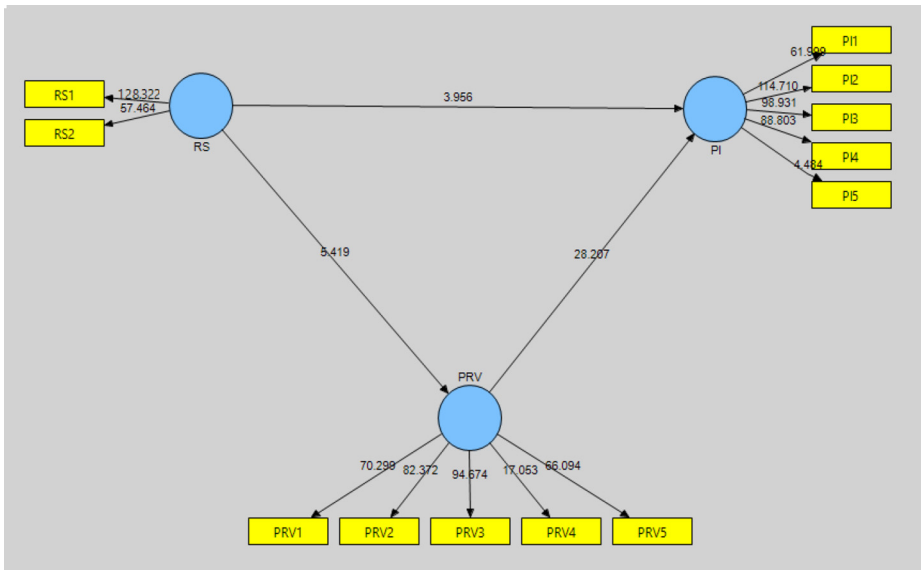


Figure 3.
Z-value for date



general, these two criteria indicate the appropriate structural fit of the research. Obtained values for R^2 and Q^2 are shown in Table III. According to Chin (1998), results of R^2 reveal that for both products, the scale of purchase intention has strong structural fitness. According to Henseler *et al.* (2009), results of Q^2 show that the scales of religious symbol and perceived religious symbolic-value have strong predictability power toward the scale of

purchase intention. Generally, these two criteria represent appropriateness of the fitness of research structural model.

Goodness-of-fit

The criterion of goodness-of-fit is developed by *Tenenhaus et al. (2004)*. With respect to three values of 0.01, 0.25 and 0.36 that are presented as weak, medium and strong values, respectively, for goodness-of-fit (*Wetzels et al., 2009*) and obtained values of 0.52 for packed food and 0.46 for date, appropriateness of the fit of model is confirmed.

Hypotheses verification

According to data analysis algorithm in the PLS method, after evaluating the fitness of measuring model, structural model and overall model, the researcher is allowed to examine and test research hypotheses. Findings obtained from the hypotheses test are represented in *Table IV*.

Acceptance and rejection of hypotheses are based on the confidence level of 95 per cent. As it can be seen, *t*-values for all three hypotheses related to both products are more than 1.96. Therefore, research hypotheses are supported for both products.

The first hypothesis

Regarding *H1* that examines the impact of religious symbol on intention to purchase, results obtained from correlation analysis for both products confirm the hypothesis. In fact, the path coefficient of religious symbol variable on intention to purchase in packed food is 0.11 with *t*-values of 3.495. And for date, it is 0.12 with *t*-values of 3.846. Considered statistic is significance in the error level of 0.05 per cent. As a result, the hypothesis of research is confirmed for both products. This is consistent with studies of *Bakar et al.* The results of their study showed that the existence of religious symbols on the packaging of cosmetic products have positive and significant impact on Muslim consumers.

Fitness criterion	Intention to purchase		
	Date	Packed food	
R^2	0.4	0.578	Table III. R^2 and Q^2
Q^2	0.35	0.42	

Hypothesis	Dependent variable	Effect	Independent variable	<i>t</i> -value		Path coefficient		Result
				Packed food	Date	Packed Food	Date	
<i>H1</i>	Religious Symbols	→	Purchase Intention	3.495	3.846	0.11	0.12	Supported
<i>H2</i>	Religious Symbols	→	Perceived religious symbolic-value	11.09	5.257	0.38	0.22	Supported
<i>H3</i>	Perceived religious symbolic-value	→	Purchase Intention	33.21	28.049	0.71	0.68	Supported

Table IV.
Hypotheses test

The second hypothesis

Regarding *H2* that examines the impact of religious symbol on perceived religious symbolic-value, results obtained from correlation analysis for both products confirm hypothesis. The path coefficient of religious symbol variable on perceived religious symbolic-value in packed food is 0.38 with *t*-values of 11.09. And for date, it is 0.22 with *t*-values of 5.257. Considered statistic is significant in the error level of 0.05 per cent. As a result, the research hypothesis is confirmed for both products. This is consistent with Wang's (2012) study. He proposed that visual symbols on packaging have a positive and significant impact on perceived value and perceived quality in food products. Also, it is consistent with the study of Taylor *et al.* (2010) that proved the impact of religious symbol in advertisement on consumers' perception through attitude similarity and trustworthiness of marketer.

The third hypothesis

Regarding *H3* that examines the impact of perceived religious symbolic-value on intention to purchase, results obtained from correlation analysis confirm the hypothesis. The path coefficient of perceived religious symbolic-value on intention to purchase in packed food is 0.71 with *t*-values of 33.21, and for date, it is 0.68 with *t*-values of 28.049. Considered statistic is significant in the error level of 0.05 per cent. As a result, the research hypothesis for both products is confirmed.

The standardized coefficient analysis of packed foods

The standardized coefficient of the effect of religious symbol and purchase intention (0.11) demonstrates that religious symbol shows 11 per cent of purchase intention fluctuations. On the other hand, two coefficients of 0.38 and 0.71 also show that variable of religious symbol, indirectly and through the mediator variable of perceived religious value, has 27 per cent (0.38×0.71) effect on the variable of purchase intention. This is the impact of religious symbol on packaging of packed food on increasing intention to purchase of consumer is more done through enhancing perceived religious symbolic-value of consumers.

The standardized coefficient analysis of date

The standardized coefficient of the effect of religious symbol and purchase intention (0.12) demonstrates that religious symbol shows 12 per cent of purchase intention fluctuations directly. On the other hand, two coefficients of 0.22 and 0.68 also show that the variable of religious symbol, indirectly and through the mediator variable of perceived religious symbolic-value, has 15 per cent (0.22×0.68) effect on the variable of purchase intention. Therefore, unlike observed in packed food, there are no important differences between direct and indirect impact of religious symbol on increasing intention to purchase of consumers for date.

Sobel test

To test the mediating variable, the most applicable test called Sobel test is used. This test is applied to verify the significance of mediating effect of a variable in relationship of two other variables. As the *Z*-value for packed food is more than 1.96, it can be stated that in the confidence level of 95 per cent, the effect of mediating variable of perceived religious symbolic-value regarding packed food is significant. As the *Z*-value for date is lower than 1.96, it can be stated that the effect of mediating variable of perceived religious symbolic-value regarding date is not significant.

Determining the intensity of mediator variable's impact

In addition to the Sobel test, the variance accounted for (VAF) statistic (Iacobucci and Duhanckek, 2003) is used to determine the intensity of mediating variable's indirect impact.

Values of 0.71 and 0.55 were obtained for packed food and date, respectively. This shows that 71 per cent of the impact of religious symbol on purchase intention for packed food and 50 per cent of the impact of religious symbol on purchase intention for date are elucidated through the mediator variable of perceived religious symbolic-value.

The significance test for the moderating effect of religiosity

As stated before, one of the goals in this paper is to examine the moderating role of religiosity in the relationship between religious symbol and purchase intention. As our sample, in terms of religiosity, is in two categories of people with high religiosity and people with low religiosity, the moderating variable of this research is quantitative. The method that is used in PLS to evaluate the impact of quantitative moderator variable is “group analysis”.

Table V illustrates research hypotheses for two groups of people with high religiosity and low religiosity.

With respect to the result presented in Table V, H1 (religious symbol on packed food packages has impact on purchase intention) regarding people with high religiosity is supported and regarding people with low religiosity is not supported. Thus, it can be concluded that the impact of religious symbol on purchase intention varies among people with different levels of religiosity. Therefore, the moderating role of religiosity in the relationship between religious symbol and purchase intention is supported. Also, as it is observed, results for both products are similar, and the only difference is in the standardized coefficient of direct and indirect directions of two products. Therefore, it can be stated that the impact of religious symbol on purchase intention in products related to Islam is more for people with high religiosity (0.18 > 0.16).

This is consistent with the study of Bakar et al. (2013) that used a crescent symbol as an Islamic symbol for cosmetic product packaging, so that they can investigate the impact on intention to purchase of Muslim consumers of Pakistan. The results obtained from that study indicated that existence of religious symbol has no impact on people with low religiosity, and in contrast, people with high religiosity prefer to purchase cosmetic products with religious symbol on their packaging.

Conclusion and recommendations

Both academics and practitioners have paid attention to Islamic marketing and branding phenomenon as a separate and new discipline (Wilson and Liu, 2011). As consumers’ attention to product packaging mostly occurs in the point of sale and typically in shopping centers, visual symbols on packaging plays a vital role in attracting customers. Thus, one of

Religiosity	Hypotheses	Independent variable	Dependent Effect	Dependent variable	t-value	Path coefficient	Result
High	H1	Religious symbol	→	Purchase intention	4.138	0.16	Supported
	H2	Religious symbol	→	Perceived religious symbolic-value	14.312	0.51	Supported
	H3	Perceived religious symbolic-value	→	Purchase intention	20.504	0.68	Supported
Low	H1	Religious symbol	→	Purchase intention	0.874	0.043	Not supported
	H2	Religious symbol	→	Perceived religious symbolic-value	1.355	0.082	Not supported
	H3	Perceived religious symbolic-value	→	Purchase intention	15.585	15.585	supported

Table V. Group analysis for the moderating variable

the goals of this research is to demonstrate that the impact of religious symbol in the context of packaging is something more than advertisement.

The conceptual model proposed in this study is for assessing the impact of using religious symbols in packaging of food products on the purchase intention of Muslim consumers. Also, this impact is evaluated for people with different levels of religiosity. The other goal of this research is to examine the impact of religious symbol on the consumer's perception of the level of religiousness of a food and the impact of using religious symbols for two product groups (related to Islam and unrelated to Islam) separately. The most obvious feature of this research is that it integrates religiosity with consumer behavior. As it was shown in data analysis, existence of religious symbol in food packaging has a positive and significant impact on consumers with high religiosity, whereas consumers with low religiosity do not have the tendency to purchase that product. This is consistent with [Bakar et al. \(2013\)](#) that used crescent as an Islamic symbol for cosmetic products packaging to assess its impact on purchase intention of Pakistani Muslim consumers. Their findings show that religious symbols have no impact on purchase intention of people with low religiosity, whereas people with high religiosity prefer packaging with religious symbols.

It can be concluded from structural equation that in the model related to packed food, the coefficient of determination in dependent variable of purchase intention is 0.578. This means that variables affecting purchase intention can explain 58 per cent changes in purchase intention. Also, in the model related to date, the coefficient of determination in the dependent variable of purchase intention is 0.521. This means that variables affecting purchase intention can explain 52 per cent of changes in purchase intention. Examining and comparing the coefficient of determination for the variable of perceived religious symbolic-value for packed food and date, we can draw a conclusion that religious symbol on packed food packaging explains 14.5 per cent of changes in perceived religious symbolic-value, and religious symbol on date packaging explains 4 per cent of changes in perceived religious symbolic-value. In the other words, existence of religious symbol on packaging of products unrelated to Islam has more effect on increasing perceived religious symbolic-value of consumer. This issue is consistent with the mentioned theory by adherents of symbolic interactionism. From their viewpoint, symbols encompass concepts that can be transferred to the product. Results obtained from VAF and the standardized coefficient analysis in indirect directions of the impact of religious symbol on purchase intention confirms this claim. As the coefficients of indirect direction for packed food and date are 0.27 and 0.15, respectively, it can be concluded that marketers can create religious value for the product that are unrelated to religion through religious packaging.

With respect to the findings in this research, follow recommendations are presented:

Marketer should prioritize the labels they use for different market segments based on their symbolic value for the customers. Although all Islamic labels are valuable among Muslims, some of them have higher values, in this regard marketers should be aware of their value. Also, marketers should use labels consistent with the products, i.e. they cannot use every symbol for every product. The basic practical implication of this research is that marketers can segment Muslim markets within the faith, based on the adherence of the followers to their faith, which can lead to different packaging for each segment. With respect to the findings of this research, groups with different levels of religiosity respond differently to the packaging with religious symbols. Thus, it can be recommended that beside demographic variables that are the basic form for most market segmentations, religiosity can be considered as a distinguishing element for individuals' preferences. Although using Islamic symbols must be based on the customers' perception of the values, as [Wilson and Liu \(2010\)](#) warns, in serving grateful Muslim audiences, major corporations have faced with

different receptions, whereas serving Muslim consumers, with some concerned ethical issues like risk of over-exploitation (Wilson and Liu, 2010). Muslims represent a quarter of the world's population and it is considered the fastest growing religion, through births and conversions (Wilson, 2014). Based on the findings of this research, marketers can not only design labels for food products congruent with Muslim markets but also design labels for foods that are consumed in special occasions and ceremonies in Islam, like labels for foods in holey Ramadan, labels for foods in Hajj pilgrimage, etc.

In this research, one symbol is used for packaging. Different symbols might have different results. Also, this study investigated the impact of religious symbol in packaging in food industry. Other industries might have different results. Also, different products in food industry might have different results. Considering other variables except religiosity (i.e. time pressure, product involvement, etc.), in the context of moderating factors in relationship between religious symbol and purchase intention, is recommended. Findings obtained from this research might be different in various religions. Studying this issue in other countries and other religions is recommended for international marketers.

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Further reading

- Wilson, J.A.J. and Hollensen, S. (2013), "Assessing the implications on performance when aligning customer lifetime value calculations with religious faith groups and afterlifetime values – a socratic elenchus approach", *International Journal of Business Performance Management*, Vol. 14 No. 1, pp. 67-94.

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Appendix

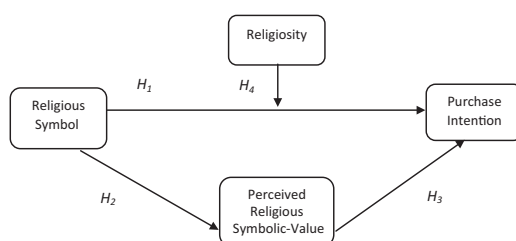


Figure A1.
Conceptual model

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