

A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH ON DIGITAL CONSUMPTION BEHAVIORS OF SYRIANS LIVING IN TÜRKİYE¹

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the consumption habits and digital consumer behaviors of Syrians residing in Turkey on digital platforms. This research is designed as qualitative research. In this study, semi-structured interview form, which is the most preferred data collection tool in qualitative research, was implemented. Interviews were performed over the phone with the assistance of an interpreter. The “content analysis” technique, which is widely used in qualitative research, was used to analyze the research data. All data collected throughout the research were computerized (documented) and coding, categorization and thematization (thematic coding) were performed using the Maxqda program. In the analysis of the research data, Maxqda program was used to reach the frequency and percentage distributions of the thematic code list and to draw conclusions from these data. According to the findings of the research, it was concluded that the majority of Syrian migrants try to maintain their consumption habits from the past and try to establish businesses that will allow them to continue their old consumption habits in their new settlements. However, in terms of consumer behavior in digital platforms, it has been observed that the adaptation of Syrian consumers to digital platforms is moving forward as a process and their behavior towards digital consumption is developing. When the factors affecting the consumer behavior of Syrian migrants are examined, it is concluded that the price of the product is the most determining factor, followed by factors such as consumption habits, purchasing power, halal product and product quality.

Keywords: Digital marketing, Consumer behavior, Qualitative research, Syrians, Migration

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TÜRKİYE’DE YAŞAYAN SURIYELİLERİN DİJİTAL TÜKETİM DAVRANIŞLARI ÜZERİNE NİTEL BİR ARAŞTIRMA

ÖZ

Bu araştırmanın amacı, Türkiye’de ikamet etmekte olan Suriyelilerin dijital platformlardaki tüketim alışkanlıklarını ve tüketici davranışlarını incelemektir. Bu araştırma bir nitel araştırma olarak tasarlanmıştır. Bu çalışmada, nitel arařtırmalarda veri toplama aracı olarak en çok tercih edilen yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu uygulanmıştır. Görüşmeler bir tercüman eşliğinde telefon aracılığı ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Arařtırma verilerinin analizinde nitel arařtırmalarda yaygın bir şekilde kullanılan “içerik analizi” tekniğı kullanılmıştır. Arařtırma kapsamında elde edilen tüm veriler bilgisayar ortamına aktarılmış (dokümanite edilmiş) ve Maxqda programı kullanılarak kodlama, kategorileřtirme ve temalara ayırma işlemleri (tematik kodlama) yapılmıştır. Arařtırma verilerinin analizinde, tematik kod listesinin frekans ve yüzde dağılımlarına ulaşmak ve sonuçlar çıkarmak amacıyla Maxqda yazılımı kullanılmıştır. Arařtırmada elde edilen bulgulara göre Suriyeli göçmenlerin büyük çoğunluğu geçmişten gelen tüketim alışkanlıklarını sürdürmeye çalıştıkları ve yeni yerleşim yerlerinde eski tüketim alışkanlıklarını devam ettirmelerine imkan sağlayacak işletmeler kurmaya çalıştıkları sonucuna ulařılmıştır. Ancak dijital pazaryerlerindeki tüketici davranışları açısından, Suriyeli tüketicilerin dijital pazaryerlerine adaptasyonlarının bir süreç halinde ilerlemekte olduğı ve dijital tüketime yönelik davranışlarının gelişmekte olduğı görölmüştür. Türkiye’deki Suriyelilerin tüketici davranışını etkileyen faktörlere bakıldığında ise ürünün fiyatının en belirleyici faktör olduğı, bunu tüketim alışkanlıkları, alım gücü, helal ürün ve ürün kalitesi gibi faktörlerin izlediğı sonucuna varılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dijital pazarlama, Tüketici davranış, Nitel araştırma, Suriyeliler, Göç

1. Introduction

Migrations, as one of the most powerful dynamics of social change, have brought together communities with different physical characteristics, religions, cultures, and languages, creating a foundation for their coexistence and interaction. Migration, has the potential to change not only the region and country of origin but also the host country economically, culturally and politically. In addition to all these, migrants themselves are also subject of social change. They are as much the object as they are the subject of social change. Migration can be considered both the cause and the result of the social change (Karpas, 2010; Canatan, 2020). Migrants move to a social and physical environment which is different from their origin culture. Therefore, changes in their livelihoods and daily life habits may be a necessity. The multidimensional changes that occur in their lives affect the level of shopping and consumption habits (Goody, 2013). At this point, it is clear that migration can bring many changes in the perceptions, attitudes and behaviors of individuals regarding product purchasing and consumption in certain ways. In other words, needs, attitudes and behaviors related to consumption change to a great extent with the migration process. Individuals and entire households can open up to new and different products, and their personal preferences and choices can evolve over time (Rout & Senapati, 2009). As a result of the increasing immigrant population in the world, the shopping and consumption behavior of immigrant populations is a noteworthy issue.

Consumer behavior basically refers to the behaviors that consumers exhibit while purchasing and consuming products. In a broader perspective, consumer behavior covers the consumer's attitudes towards goods and services formed by the influence of internal and external factors, and all processes related to the purchase, use and consumption of products (Muter, 2002). Decisions on who, how, where and when to buy the needed product are also included in this process (Yüksekbilgili, 2016).

Migrant consumer behavior can be influenced by many factors. First of all, the economic purchasing power of migrants is an important factor. One of the most important challenges that prevent migrants from accessing products is their low income (Moffat et al., 2017). As Gürhan (2018) points out, the decline in the economic capacity of migrants who experience a loss of status with migration is one of the main reasons for the change in consumption and feeding habits. For example, those who had relatively good jobs, education and living standards before the Syrian civil war became poorer with the war and became poorer by consuming the savings they brought with them over time (Gültekin, 2014). These changes in living standards may also be reflected in consumption preferences. For example, product price has a significant impact on the shopping choices of migrants. It is even stated that price is the most important factor affecting the buying process (Ghazal, 2022). In addition to product prices, quality, sanitation and accessibility to materials consumed in the country of origin are also considered as important factors (Karaman & Vesek, 2021).

Cultural identity is one of the most important factors determining which products an individual prefers and how they consume (Duan, 2024). Immigrant consumers tend to make purchasing decisions based on the values and traditions of the country of origin. Dietary habits, food preparation style, flavor, and taste changes due to the use of spices also affect the product preferences of immigrants (Gürhan, 2018). Migrants' sense of identity based on ethnic identity and their feelings of identity and missing the country of origin may affect their consumption preferences in line with ethnic products and businesses (Guo & Özdiñ, 2021). In other words, immigrants may strengthen their sense of belonging to the culture of the origin country by adhering to their traditions and values by preferring traditional food cultures and products (Visser et al., 2014). At this point, for example, migrants can maintain their consumption habits towards the products of the country of origin. It is seen that the difficulties they experience in finding products that correspond to their old habits are easily solved thanks to the markets opened by people from the country of origin (Kara & Akdağ, 2022).

Another factor affecting migrants' consumption preferences may be their religious beliefs. Studies on the food and consumption preferences of Syrians living in both Germany and Brazil (Porreca et al., 2019; Sauter et al., 2021) show that religious and cultural norms influence Syrians' consumption behaviors. According to Duan (2024), religious rules and belief structures can influence consumers' product and service choices. For example, some religions prohibit the consumption of certain foods and beverages, while others allow the same products to be consumed freely. In Islam, pork is forbidden to be eaten, but in Christianity it is considered an important source of nutrition. Both traditional and digital consumption habits of Syrian migrants are closely related to religion and cultural factors, as highlighted by Gürhan (2018), Aljaroudi (2018) and Anderson (2020). According to Gürhan (2018), religion is one of the most important factors affecting individuals consumption preferences. Religion deeply affects the production, preparation and consumption processes due to the symbolic meanings it attributes to food, categorizes foods as eatable/halal and non-eatable/haram, and has power over the bodies and consumption patterns of believers with the changes and limitations it makes on existing dietary patterns. Especially in terms of access to halal food in Türkiye, the existence of such a market where the food sector is shaped according to dominant Islamic references provides a great relief for Syrian migrants. Migrants may prefer products with halal product labels in order to be sure of what they consume as a requirement of their religious beliefs. This halal factor can sometimes even override the health factor (Aljaroudi, 2018; Anderson, 2020). In addition to all these, the length of residence of migrants can affect their consumption behavior. Compared to short-term migrants, migrants who stay longer in the country of settlement may experience more changes in their consumption preferences and consumption habits to meet their needs such as food (Saseanu & Petrescu, 2011).

Past experiences influence the migrant consumer's future consumption preferences and purchasing decisions. The cultural norms and social values formed accordingly are decisive in consumption habits (Duan, 2024). Undoubtedly, when migrants move to a new country, they bring their consumption preferences from their country of origin with them (Atkin, 2016). Therefore, their past experiences can determine the products they prefer. However, it should be noted that migrants may tend to both maintain their traditional food consumption habits and adapt to the new, digital consumption process as a result of contacts with the target society. This study attempts to identify Syrians' consumption behaviors by examining their behavior on both physical and digital platforms.

Digital tools, especially mobile phones, and the internet are very important facilitators that transform migrants' new lives both in the migration process and in the country of settlement. For instance, migrants try to learn about the culture, history and food of the society they migrate to with the help of the internet and mobile phones. Through these digital tools, they can learn about employment and housing opportunities in the destination country. The internet and social media are key tools that connect local society and asylum seekers both technically and economically and culturally (AbuJarour, 2020; Çömlekçi, 2020; GSMA, 2017). Digital platforms such as social media, apps, instant messaging services, forum sites, blogs, corporate internet, and many other technologies are influencing consumption behaviors every day (Demirkaya & Koyuncu, 2021).

The widespread use of the Internet and digital technologies, as well as e-commerce, differentiate and change the consumption habits of consumers. Digital marketing, social media and online advertisements have a great influence on consumer decisions. With the increase in digital and online shopping, consumers prefer to shop online instead of going to physical markets. Opportunities such as security, convenience and easy price comparisons lead consumers to turn to digital platforms. Marketing activities through social media platforms (Instagram, X, Facebook, TikTok, etc.) shape consumers' brand perception and can be effective in their purchasing decisions. User comments and influencer marketing can guide consumers' opinions about products and their purchasing decisions. Digital mobile applications contribute to consumers' shopping experiences in a more enjoyable environment by offering faster and personalized products to consumers. Thanks to algorithms and data analytics, brands can offer special campaigns and individual opportunities to consumers (Duan, 2024).

The evolution of internet technology has also brought enormous changes in global trade, as Islam (2021) notes. Technological innovations have provided opportunities to connect buyers through the worldwide online network. The use of the internet has increased due to its tools to provide users with fast information and more search options in the shortest possible time. Today, online shopping is becoming increasingly popular and has risen to a level where it is a necessity for most consumers. Online-digital shopping platforms are now the first place people turn to when they want to shop to satisfy their needs or to find information about a product. Digital-Online shopping offers consumers the opportunity to shop remotely, at any time of the day, without having to stay connected to physical environments.

The Internet also creates a new type of consumer in terms of its scope and functioning. These consumers show different characteristics from the traditional types of consumers who are tied to physical locations, especially in terms of purchasing behavior. In traditional marketplaces, products are accessible/touchable. On online digital platforms, on the other hand, before purchasing a product, consumers can access the visuals of that product without physically examining it, access all the information about the product and access the perfect information to make the right decision (Purutoğlu & Çubukcu, 2022; Dinç, 2018). All these aspects have the potential to transform migrants' consumer behavior in destination countries. Syrian consumer behavior is considered significant and worth investigating from this perspective. Therefore, this is also a noteworthy issue in terms of revealing the originality of our study.

Syrians represent the largest immigrant consumer group in Türkiye (Refugees Association, 2025). The Syrian population living in Türkiye is trying to maintain their former habits, as well as adopting new habits in Türkiye, the country they migrated to, and trying to adapt to new situations that already exist or that have emerged as a result of technological developments. One of the important developments that have entered our lives as a result of technological progress and developments is digital platforms and digital marketing activities. In this context, understanding Syrians' interest in digital marketing platforms, their behavior in using these platforms, and the problems they face while using digital platforms, as well as their perceptions and attitudes towards them, is important for both individual consumers and service providers and marketing professionals. Understanding these and similar situations will also contribute positively to the development of digital methods and tools customized to the needs of the Syrian consumer. The questions addressed and answered in this study (as we explained in "Aim of the Study") are designed to better understand Syrian consumer behavior and to better contribute to uncovering and solving the problems faced by Syrians on digital platforms. In addition, this study will help digital marketing managers and planners to better understand the behavior of Syrian consumers in digital marketing and to fulfill the experiential knowledge gap in this area. Therefore, this study aims to examine and reveal the consumption habits of Syrians residing in Türkiye and their consumer behavior on digital platforms through an exploratory approach. This, as Guidotti et al., (2021) suggests, may provide an opportunity to look at migrants' digital marketing and adaptation processes from the perspective of their consumption practices. In addition, studies on the consumer behavior of Syrian migrants are quite limited. In this respect, the study is considered to have a unique content in filling the gap in the literature.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine the consumption habits and digital consumer behaviors of Syrians residing in Turkey on digital platforms. In this context, answers were sought to the questions formulated in the semi-structured interview form. Therefore, the study formulated to the scope of the questions presented below. The

questions formulated in this purpose and answered in the research are as follows:

1. Which factors effect on Syrians' consumer behavior?
2. How are Syrian consumers' behaviors formed in digital marketplaces?
3. What are the Syrian consumers purchase decision process in digital marketing?
4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of D-Marketing from perspectives of Syrian consumers?
5. What are the problems and the reasons Syrians confront in digital marketing?
6. Besides digital platforms, where do Syrians do their face-to-face (F2F) shopping?

The stages followed in this research are shown in detail in Figure 1. As can be seen in the figure, first, the statement summarizing the researc situation was presented (Stage 1). Then, the research questions were clearly formulated and tested through a pilot study (Stage 2). Based on the information obtained from the pilot study, required revisions were made on the questions (Stage 3). The sample to be asked the research questions was selected and interviews were conducted on the phone with people who met the specified criteria (Phases 4 and 5). The interviews were recorded after obtaining permission from the participants, thus preventing data loss (Stage 6). All recorded interviews were documented and transferred to the computer and analyzed in a qualitative data analysis program (Maxqda) (Stages 7 and 8). Based on the findings of the analysis, conclusions and recommendations were developed and the research report was finalized (Final Stage 9: Reporting).

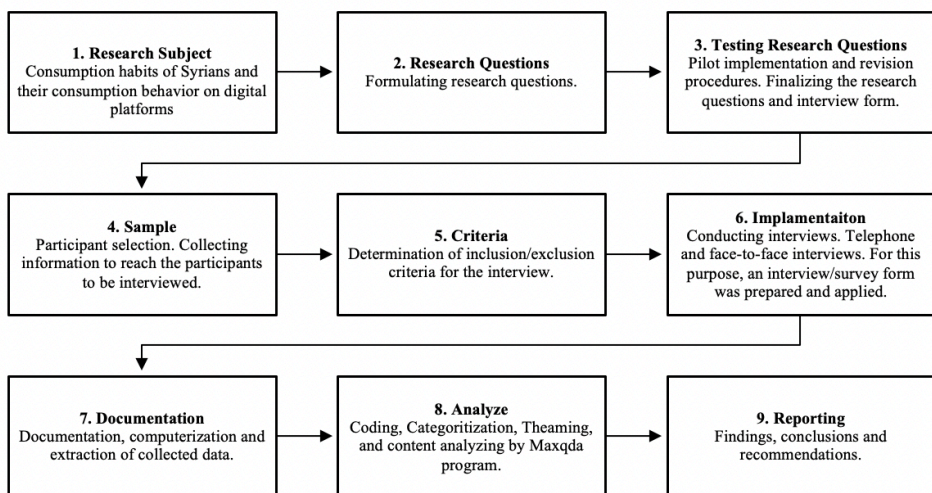


Figure 1. Phases of the Research

Source. Created by the Authors Based on Research Data

2.2. Research Group, Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

This research was ethically approved by Bingöl University, Health Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee (Document Date and Number: 03.03.2023-E.99821).

In line with the aim of this study, purposive sampling was preferred in the selection of the interviewees. In the selection of the interviewees, the following criteria (inclusion/exclusion criteria), which were determined before the implementation of the research, were taken into consideration and interviews were conducted with the interviewees who met the inclusion criteria.

Inclusion Criteria

- Voluntarily giving explicit consent to answer the questions asked over the phone.
- Being a Syrian citizen and living in Türkiye.
- Living in Türkiye at the time of the telephone interview for research purposes.

Exclusion Criteria

- Leaving 3 or more questions unanswered out of 6 questions (excluding probe and alternative questions) under the heading “General Questions” in the interview form.
- Ending any interview in less than 25 minutes.
- Declaration of will not to participate in the research by the participant at any stage of the interview and research.

In qualitative research, the researcher can decide to end the research when he/she realizes that the collected data is becoming repetitive (Jane et al., 2003; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). Therefore, keeping the sample limited to 14 people is related to the saturation of the data. The sample of 14 respondents is considered to provide sufficient diversity to understand migrant experiences and views. Therefore, this research was conducted by interviewing 14 Syrians who met the inclusion criteria and voluntarily agreed to participate. Although we basically used the snowball (chain) sampling technique to reach the participants to be interviewed, in essence, we interviewed the participants by applying two sampling techniques together. The first one is the snowball or chain sampling technique. Using this sampling technique, participants were selected by reference (chaining). This method was applied by asking the first interviewee who met the inclusion criteria to recommend another participant who met the criteria to be included in the study, and in this way the other participants were reached. The second is criterion sampling, which is based on the fact that the interviewees meet predefined criteria, which are predetermined as inclusion and exclusion criteria in this research (Creswell, 2016: 158; Patton, 2015: 425; Patton,

2002: 237, 238). Accordingly, interviews were conducted with people who met the predetermined inclusion criteria. Participants were selected from the cities of Gaziantep (7 people) and Izmir (7 people), where the Syrian migrant population is densely hosted (Presidency of Migration Management, 2025). The fact that the Syrian population is densely hosted in Gaziantep and Izmir has influenced the selection of these two cities as the research areas. In both cities, Syrians have the facilities to produce their own traditional and ethnic products. Gaziantep is geographically close to Syria and has cultural similarities with Syrian migrants (Vesek & Suğur, 2021). On the other hand, one of the important reasons for including Izmir in the study is to increase diversity in the sample. Syrians may find a more familiar environment in terms of food consumption, shopping habits, consumption preferences and social life. This may lead to consumption tendencies in line with their own cultural norms.

In selecting the participants to be interviewed, the purpose and scope of the research were considered and it was ensured that the participants had different demographic indicators such as occupation, age, education and gender. When Table 1 showing the demographic characteristics of the participants is examined, it is seen that the lowest age is 20, the highest age is 56 and the average age is 34,5. The interviewees were 9 men and 5 women. The details of the educational level of the participants are as follows: 6 of them are university graduates, 7 are high school graduates and 1 is a primary school graduate. When the work and income status of the interviewed participants are analyzed, it is seen that the participants work in various jobs and have different income levels (Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic Data

Interview ID	Age	Gender (Male/Female)	Education	Marital Status	Occupation	Income (₺)	Interview Time (Minute)
INT 1	24	Male	University	Bachelor	Officer	8,500	30
INT 2	53	Female	University	Married	Not Work	6,000	28
INT 3	43	Female	University	Bachelor	Teacher	12,600	35
INT 4	34	Male	High	Married	Businessman	9,000	33
INT 5	43	Male	Primary	Married	Businessman	8,000	32
INT 6	22	Male	High	Married	Officer	9,000	40
INT 7	56	Female	University	Bachelor	Interpreter	9,000	40
INT 8	56	Female	High	Bachelor	Tailor	8,100	35
INT 9	20	Female	High	Bachelor	Student	2,000	27
INT 10	21	Male	High	Married	Interpreter	8,000	38
INT 11	23	Male	High	Bachelor	Marketing	10,000	32
INT 12	31	Male	University	Married	Worker	9,000	30
INT 13	26	Male	University	Bachelor	Interpreter	9,000	46
INT 14	32	Male	High	Married	Not Work	6,000	28

2.3. Data Collection

In this study, qualitative research method was preferred and a semi-structured interview form was used. The interview form consists of two parts. The first part includes demographic questions aimed at determining the gender, age, education, occupation and income status of the participants. In the second part, there are open-ended questions to explore the views on the main and sub-problems of the research. In the process of preparing the interview form, firstly the purpose of the research was taken into consideration and a literature review on the research topic was conducted. As a result of the literature review (Purutoğlu & Çubukcu, 2022; Anderson, 2020; Aljaroudi, 2018; Gürhan, 2018), a potential pool of questions that could be used within the scope of the research was formed. Then, a semi-structured interview form was prepared from this question pool, which included questions appropriate to the scope and purpose of the research. Both researchers reached a consensus on the questions in the interview form. Open-ended and probing questions were included in the interview form. Then open-ended and probing questions (10 research questions) were applied to two Syrian participants as a pilot study in order to be evaluated in terms of comprehensibility, scope, time adaptability, remote applicability, etc. In the context of the information obtained from the pilot study, the number of questions was reduced to 6 basic research questions by applying the necessary revisions to the questions in the interview form (taking into account the time to answer the questions, suitability for the purpose of the research, clarity, comprehensibility, applicability over the phone, etc.) and the interview form was finalized and applied. Before the participants were interviewed, the purpose of the research and how the data would be used were explained to the participants and their consent was obtained. The interviews were conducted over the phone between March and May 2023 and recorded after obtaining permission from the participants. Interviews lasting at least 27 minutes were conducted with each of the 14 Syrian migrants who accepted the interview with their explicit consent.

2.4. Data Analysis

This qualitative study was conducted as an exploratory case study. This is one of Yin (2003; 2009) case study classifications. Yin categorizes case studies as explanatory, exploratory or descriptive (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The data obtained from the interviews, which included exploratory questions about the research topic, were analyzed by content analysis method (Berg & Lune, 2017; Creswell, 2016). In this context, all audio recordings of the interviews were converted into written documents in order to analyze the audio recordings of the interviews (Alkan et al., 2024; MAXQDA, 2023; Karaman & Vesek, 2021; Karaman, 2017). In the content analysis technique, similar data are brought together within the framework of certain concepts and themes and interpreted by organizing them in a way that can be understood. The content analysis technique consists of a) coding the data, b) finding themes, c) organizing the codes and themes, d) defining and interpreting the findings (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). In this context, the data obtained from the interviews were read and coded repeatedly

by both researchers (Figure 3, 4), and then similar codes were grouped together to form categories and themes. In determining the code names, the words created by the researchers as a result of detailed reading of the data obtained from the participants were used as codes, and in some cases, in vivo coding (such as “Halal product”) was also performed (Creswell, 2016: 184,185). To put it briefly; firstly, codes that can best represent the relevant parts of the interview texts were determined, categories were created by combining the relevant codes, and finally themes were determined in a way that can best express similar categories (Karaman & Durmaz, 2018; Karaman, 2017; 2018; Creswell, 2016). As a result, the above systematic order was followed in determining codes, categories and themes, and a thematic code list (Figure 2) was created by taking into account the conceptual framework.

In determining the codes used in the analysis, attention was paid to ensure that the relevant code represents a paragraph, sentence or sentences in the best way and that the code is meaningful and comprehensive. In the thematic code list created in this context (Figure 2), 4 categories were determined under the theme of “Syrian Consumer Behavior” and subcategories and related codes were included under each category (Figure 2).

1 SYRIANS’ CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

- 1.1 Searching and Establishing the Past
- 1.2 Factors on Syrians’ Consumer Behavior
 - 1.2.1 Halal Product
 - 1.2.2 Price
 - 1.2.3 Product Quality
 - 1.2.4 Purchasing Power
 - 1.2.5 Consumer Habits
- 1.3 Surfing on Marketspace
 - 1.3.1 Changing Roles in Consume
 - 1.3.2 Adapting to the Digital Marketing
 - 1.3.3 Purchase in Digital Platforms
 - 1.3.3.1 Purchase Decision Process in Digital Marketing
 - 1.3.3.1.1 Emergence of Desire/Need
 - 1.3.3.1.2 Dealer Search-Finding
 - 1.3.3.1.3 Price Comparison
 - 1.3.3.1.4 Considering Experiences
 - 1.3.3.1.5 Purchase Decision
 - 1.3.3.1.6 Post-Purchase Evaluation
 - 1.3.3.2 Disadvantages of D-Marketing
 - 1.3.3.2.1 Excessive Purchase
 - 1.3.3.2.2 Uncontrolled Purchase
 - 1.3.3.2.3 Waste of Time

- 1.3.3.3 Advantages of D-Marketing
 - 1.3.3.3.1 Comparison
 - 1.3.3.3.2 Evaluation
 - 1.3.3.3.3 Installment
 - 1.3.3.3.4 Home Delivery
- 1.3.3.4 Problems and Reasons Confront in Digital Marketing
 - 1.3.3.4.1 Insecurity
 - 1.3.3.4.2 Similar Product Sends
 - 1.3.3.4.3 Language Problems
 - 1.3.3.4.4 Other Problems
- 1.4 F2F Shopping
 - 1.4.1 Chain Markets
 - 1.4.1.1 Essential Food Items
 - 1.4.1.2 Cleaning Agent
 - 1.4.2 Local Markets
 - 1.4.2.1 Custom Products

Figure 2. Thematic Code List

Source. Created by the Authors Based on Research Data

In the analysis of the interview documents obtained in the study, each word written in all documents was included in a relevant code. Examples of the analysis conducted on the documents related to the research are presented in Figures 3 and 4. Each of the colored sections in the figures represents a different code.

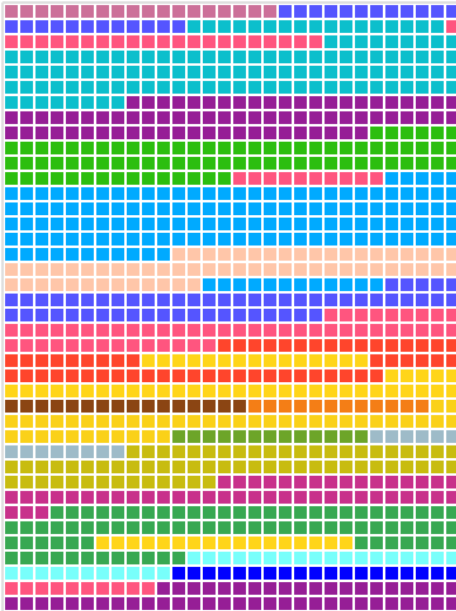


Figure 3. Document Portrait (Int-1)



Figure 4. Document Portrait (Int-6)

In the study, the codes created by both independent researchers were compared to ensure the reliability of the codes obtained, and inter-coder reliability calculation was applied according to the formula “Reliability= Number of Consensus / Total Number of Consensus + Number of Disagreement,” which is the method suggested by Miles and Huberman (2105). In the calculation made according to this formula, if the ratio is above 80%, it is concluded that the coding is reliable (Miles & Huberman, 2015). As a result, the inter-coder code agreement rate in this study was calculated as 98%. However, the codes that differed were reconsidered, discussed and negotiated by both researchers, and as a result, a complete consensus was reached on the coding. Therefore, the code agreement rate was increased to 100%. The tests used to ensure the validity of the research are; participant confirmation, extensive data, triangulation and quantifications (Maxwell, 2018: 125-129).

In this study, for the confidentiality of personal data, the names of the interviewees were concealed and the participant views were coded as “Interview 1 (INT1), Interview 2 (INT2), and Interview 3 (INT3)”. While presenting the findings obtained from the analysis of the data, direct quotations were made from the participant views in order to support the reliability of the data and the findings.

3. Findings

As a result of the analysis, four main categories (Searching and Establishing the Past, Factors on Syrians’ Consumer Behavior, Surfing on Marketspace, F2F Shopping) were identified under the theme of Syrian Consumer Behavior and sub-categories related to these categories were listed (Figure 2,5).

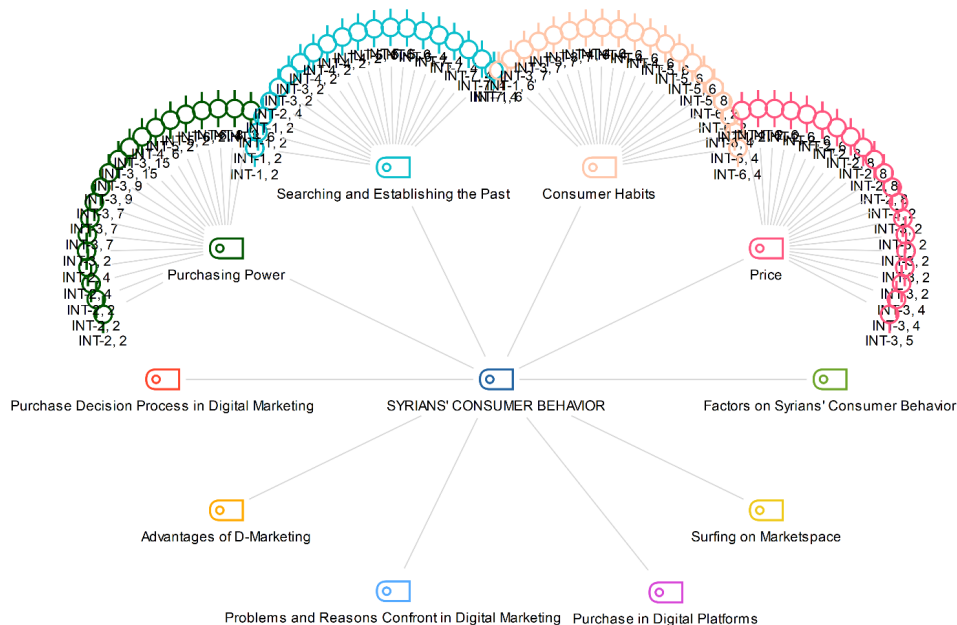


Figure 5. Code-Subcodes Segments Model

In the Code-Subcodes Segments Model, which shows Syrian consumer behavior on digital online platforms (Figure 5), there are codes and subcodes related to these codes regarding the consumer behavior of Syrian consumers interviewed within the scope of the research on digital platforms.

3.1. Factors on Syrians' Consumer Behavior

In the study, five factors that affect the behavior of Syrian consumers in digital marketplaces were identified (Figure 6). These factors are “Price, Consumer Habits, Purchasing Power, Halal Product and Product Quality” respectively. Figure 6 shows the percentage of each of these factors and the total number of coding. For example, the “Price” code, which ranks first among the factors determining Syrian consumer behavior, has a rate of 32% with 59 codes. The following code, “Consumer Habits”, ranked second with 52 codes and a rate of 28%. The rates and frequencies of the other codes are as shown in Figure 6. In the following paragraphs, each of these factors (Price, Consumer Habits, Purchasing Power, Halal Product, and Product Quality) that affect the purchasing behavior of Syrian consumers in digital platforms and briefly mentioned above are discussed and defined in detail. In addition, it has been tried to support the description by quoting some of the participant comments that are the source of the determination of these factors.

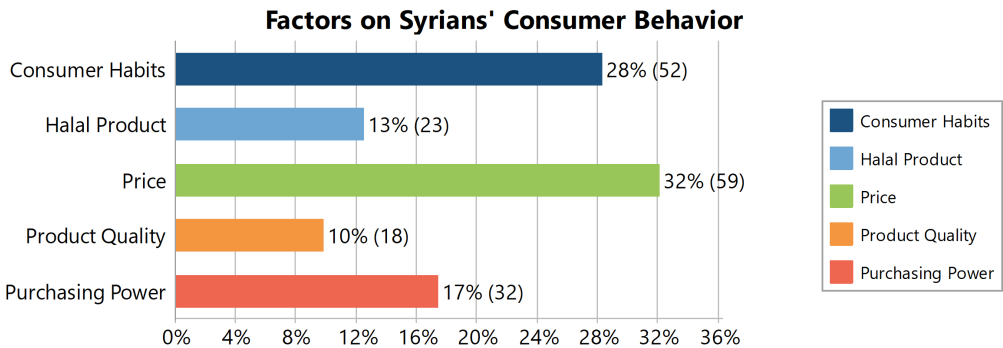


Figure 6. Factors on Syrians' Consumer Behavior

Consumer Habits: In this research, the code determined as “Consumer Habits” is defined and coded as the continuation of consumption habits that have been going on routinely since the past or to cover similar consumer behaviors and searches.

Among the Syrian consumers who participated in the research, 28% stated that they tend to maintain some of their habits from their past lives while looking for products to meet their needs and wants. They stated that they are more sensitive especially in the consumption of basic foodstuffs such as bread, spices, etc. and that they are looking for the basic consumption products that they are used to consuming in their previous lives (in Syria) and are making great efforts to find them.

"We only buy products from Syrian shops that are not available in local shops owned by local people. For example, we buy spices, frika, bulgur-like products from Syrians because you can't find them in Turkish markets." [INT-1; 6 - 6]

"But let me tell you that my children love Syrian bread very much. They cannot eat Turkish loaf bread. They will not eat without Syrian bread. I must go and buy Syrian bread from the Syrian grocery store. Also, we cannot drink tea and coffee produced in Türkiye. We consume tea and coffee sold by Syrian shops." [INT-3; 7 - 7]

"Eight years ago, I brought three or five packets of coffee with me. I ran out of coffee. I also bought the coffee my relatives brought with them from Syria and consumed it. If I don't drink coffee, I get a headache. Türkiye has a local coffee brand called Mehmet Efendi. It was approximately the same as the coffee in Syria. I calmed myself with it for a while. Otherwise, I get headaches again." [INT-5; 6 - 6]

"We never consume Türkiye's local bread. Even if the products I buy from Syrian grocery stores run out at home, we do not go and buy them from Turkish grocery stores. Because we cannot consume their local equivalents. We must buy Syrian products sold in Syrian grocery stores." [INT-4; 6 - 6]

Based on the situation described here, it is emphasized that old habits have a decisive role in the preferences of Syrian consumers, old habits do not change easily, it is a time-consuming factor for replacement products to gain a place in consumer behavior, and it is important to understand that individuals who migrate are not only physically displaced but also with all their habits and pasts that they have accumulated throughout their lives. In addition, it is important to consider the past lives of consumers in terms of marketing strategies to be implemented by businesses. Knowing consumers' past experiences and old habits can be a better reference for fully understanding and meeting consumer needs. Therefore, we think that this (past experiences and old habits) should be considered as a factor shaping consumer behavior.

Halal Product: The code identified as "Halal Product" was defined and coded to cover individual consumption products that are produced according to Islamic principles, which are the religious beliefs of Syrian migrants, and which are not contraindicated to be consumed in religious perspective.

Syrian migrant participants emphasized that they pay close attention to the concepts of halal and haram in the consumption of basic foodstuffs. Syrian migrants specifically stated that they perform research to access halal products and that the information about where halal products are available is spread through word of mouth. Syrian migrants stated that they do not have any problems in understanding whether the products sold in Türkiye are halal or not, as their contents are written on the products sold in Türkiye, and so they can easily make a choice. Syrians emphasized that they are sensitive about not consuming food and beverages containing alcohol, etc. and that they do not shop in places where alcohol is sold and stated that they do not want to shop in places where alcohol is sold even if they are forced to do so.

“In Türkiye, first of all, of course, we want to be sure that the product is halal. Especially when we first arrived, this was a big topic of conversation among Syrians. Is the meat from so-and-so market halal or not?” “...We buy from certain places now. We came to this decision because of our research.” [INT-1; 6 - 6].

“Syrians are very careful about halal and haram. They also pay attention to this in food or clothes. For example, Syrian grocery stores do not sell alcohol-containing products and similar things as far as I can see.” [INT-6; 4 - 4].

“Türkiye is a Muslim country, so I have no problem with halal and haram. Also, the content of the product is written on the packages. I pay attention to that. Muslims have a way of life. I can shop in Türkiye with peace of mind. For example, I know that the meat sold is prepared with halal methods. I don’t want to shop in places where alcohol is sold, even if I have to. I don’t even enter those shops. Even if I need water to drink, I don’t go and buy it there. This is my principle.” [INT-7; 4 - 4]

Syrian consumers stated that they pay attention to halal products in their individual consumption preferences, that the halal criterion shapes their purchasing decisions for consumption and noted that they do not encounter many problems in accessing halal products in Türkiye.

“For me, the issue of haram and halal is above everything else. On the Day of Judgment, this will be the most questioned issue.” [INT-8; 4 - 4]

“First of all, we need to pay attention to whether the product is halal or not. Fortunately, Türkiye does not have many problems in this regard.” [INT-10; 6 - 6]

Price: “Price” is defined and coded as an amount that corresponds to the value that the products offered for sale offer to the consumer and is demanded from the consumer in money in exchange for products that will satisfy their needs and desires.

Among the Syrian respondents, 32% specifically stated that they prefer cheaper similar or equivalent products. For example, they stated that they buy cheaper broken rice for rice for personal consumption and white meat instead of red meat. In fact, the price is so decisive in the preference of basic food products that they stated that they shop from the company/place where the lowest price is offered, regardless of the company or company owner.

“...For example, when I buy rice now, I prefer broken rice because it is cheaper. For example, I can’t buy red meat, it’s expensive. I buy white meat and sometimes I use it for cooking.” [INT-2; 6 - 6]

“For me, Turkish or Syrian grocery store makes no difference, I prefer the cheapest one.” [INT-2; 8 - 8]

“In Syria, we used to buy quality products, whether it was clothing or food. We don’t have that luxury here. Here, we only buy the worst and the lowest priced products, let alone the cheapest ones.” [INT-3; 2 - 2]

“...I can’t even buy them from the market, they are more expensive. I buy the cheap ones even if they are in the farthest neighborhood.” [INT-3; 4 - 4]

Product Quality: “Product Quality” is defined and coded as product-specific qualities or differences that distinguish one product from others. For example, the value offered to the consumer, ease of use, convenience, etc. all the features and differences.

When it comes to quality, 10% of Syrian respondents stated that they prefer better quality at a slightly higher price, indicating that quality is an important factor in preference. From this point of view, it is thought that individual income level may create a behavioral difference in this direction (paying more for better quality) in consumer preference.

“For me, quality is important. For example, if I am going to buy something for five liras and the quality one costs seven liras, I prefer the quality one. It would be more convenient to buy and consume the quality one for a little more expensive than buying poor quality.” [INT-5; 6 - 6]

Purchasing Power: “Purchasing Power” is defined and coded as the purchasing power associated with income or the ability of an individual consumer to easily meet their wants and needs with their income.

17% of the Syrians who participated to the research specifically stated that they were able to buy the products they wanted in their past lives (in Syria), but after they migrated to Türkiye, their income decreased four times, their purchasing power decreased significantly and they could only buy second class essential products.

“There is a huge difference between our income in Syria and our income now. We had a four-floor villa in Syria. Our income was very good. Our life in Syria and this life cannot even be compared. Before the war, the area where we lived in Aleppo had luxury residences. A shopping mall with world-famous brands was opened near our house. I used to shop there all the time, I could buy whatever I wanted, but here I don’t have the same situation. Here we can only buy very important and necessary things. We also prefer second class products.” [INT-2; 2 - 2]

Code System	Searchin...	Halal Pro...	Price	Product Q...	Purchas...	Consumer ...
▼ SYRIANS' CONSUMER BEHAVIOR						
🔍 Searching and Establishing the Past		■	■	■	■	■
▼ Factors on Syrians' Consumer Behavior						
🌱 Halal Product	■		■	■	■	■
💰 Price	■	■	■	■	■	■
🔍 Product Quality	■	■	■	■	■	■
🌱 Purchasing Power	■	■	■	■	■	■
👤 Consumer Habits	■	■	■	■	■	■

Figure 7. Code Relations Browser

When the “Code Relation Browser” shown in Figure 7 is examined, it is seen that all factors affecting Syrian consumer behavior are related to the code “Searching and Establishing the Past”. This situation is interpreted as Syrian participants are in search of alternatives to catch up with the standards of their former lives and to continue their individual consumption habits in the past.

3.2. Syrians’ Consumer Behavior

When examining the behavior of Syrian consumers on digital platforms, it was found that the Syrians who participated in the research exhibited three different behavioral styles (Figure 8). These are that some Syrians make efforts to maintain their individual consumption habits that they have acquired in their past lives (Searching and Establishing the past, 55%), some try to adapt to digital marketing environments by trying to benefit from the opportunities and conveniences of digital shopping over the internet (Adapting to the Digital Marketing, 27%), and others show some behaviors (such as women shopping) that they do not or cannot do in Syria (Changing Role in Consume, 18%). In the following paragraphs, definitions are given for each of these situations and the participant opinions on the subject are given in the following parts.

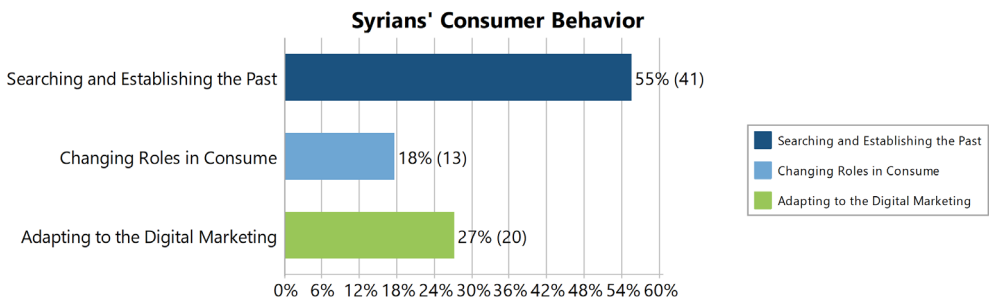


Figure 8. Syrians’ Consumer Behavior

Searching and Establishing the Past: “Searching and Establishing the Past” was coded to describe the participants’ efforts to maintain the individual consumption habits they had acquired in their past lives and their efforts to find or establish an environment for this.

55% of the Syrians who participated in the research stated that they could not get used to the products in Türkiye and that they were looking for the products they consumed in their own country (Syria) and when they found and consumed them, they felt like they were in their own country.

“Syrians here have mostly not gotten used to Turkish products. Many of them continue to consume Syrian products. The tendency is more in this direction now. When we buy Syrian products, we feel like we are living in Syria.” [INT-6; 4 - 4]

“When we first came to Türkiye, we had difficulties with coffee. The coffee available in Syria was not produced here. So much so that we used to order people coming from Syria to Türkiye to bring Syrian coffee. We eat the same breakfast foods here as we did in Syria. We continue our breakfast habits in Syria. We still buy foods like hummus completely.” [INT-7; 4 - 4]

Some participants stated that they cannot find some of the products they have been consuming for a long time everywhere, but they can find them in Syrian-owned grocery stores or online sites, and therefore they shop there. It should also be noted that Syrian consumers prefer vendors who speak the same language as them and welcome them warmly.

“First of all, let me say this. Sometimes I cannot find the products I used to consume in Syria in the markets in Türkiye. Therefore, I shop from Syrian grocers.” [INT-14; 2 - 2]

“There are two shopkeepers under my house. One is Syrian and the other is Turkish. The products I want are sometimes available at both. But I prefer the Syrian shopkeeper because his behavior towards me is more appropriate, warmer. For example, when I say hello, I get a warmer response. For this reason, I go to Syrian shopkeepers who welcome me more warmly.” [INT-14; 14 - 14]

Changing Roles in Consume: “Changing Roles in Consume” is a code used to express the role change in Syrian female and male consumers. This role change explains the fact that women have a role in shopping and do the shopping themselves. It was stated that men in Syria, who both work and do daily shopping, do not have time to shop in Türkiye due to long working hours, and therefore women take on new responsibilities in the family and fulfill the shopping role.

“Since men usually work here, women usually go shopping. In Syria, men would definitely go shopping. Women did not go to the bazaar much.” [INT-6; 2 - 2]

“...Apart from this, Syrian women did not normally go shopping. This situation was rare. Because working men had time for both working and shopping. Here, men work for 12 hours. Everything closes after work. You cannot do anything. You are very tired after work. At this point, the role of women has changed. Syrian women are now also shopping in Türkiye.” [INT-11; 2 - 2]

Adapting to the Digital Marketing: “Adapting to Digital Marketing” describes that Syrian participants utilize online digital marketing activities and try to move towards meeting their individual needs through digital platforms.

27% of Syrian respondents stated that they procure many of their personal needs, including clothing, as well as food and other similar needs from online sites. It was emphasized that the online digital shopping habit, which was acquired especially during the Covid-19 pandemic and accelerated afterwards, is continuing.

“Many people are slowly trying to keep up with internet shopping. They started shopping there.” [INT-10; 4 - 4].

“Our Syrian neighbors also shop online. Women mostly buy clothes. They prefer to shop online during this period.” [INT-4; 10 - 10].

“I shop a lot online, especially at virtual Migros. I buy many things from there, such as meat, soap, vegetables, fruits, legumes, etc.” [INT-7; 10 - 10]

“Türkiye has developed a lot of things. For example, there are “İstegelsin”, “Getir” or similar applications. People can have whatever they want delivered to their homes. People started ordering online so that I would not be covid, so that my health would not be exposed to risk, so that I would not get involved with people and be at risk, and this situation continues in this way.” [INT-10; 8 - 8]

“During and after the covid 19 pandemic, online shopping worked very well. People did their shopping online without going out too much.” [INT-10; 10 - 10]

3.3. Syrians' Purchase Decision Process in Digital Marketing

One of the situations examined in this research is how the Syrian consumer purchase decision process develops and takes shape in the online digital market platforms. For this reason, this part of the research focuses on how and in which way Syrian participants act when making purchasing decisions in online digital marketing platforms. The analysis of the data obtained from the interviews conducted with Syrian participants for this purpose revealed that the Syrian consumer purchase decision process in online digital marketing platforms consists of a six-step process (Figure 9). These steps are “Emergence of a Desire and Need, Dealer Searching-Finding, Price Comparison, Considering Experiences, Purchase Decision and Post-Purchase Evaluation.” In the following paragraphs, detailed explanations are given for each of the steps in Figure 9 and quotations from participant opinions supporting these steps are presented.

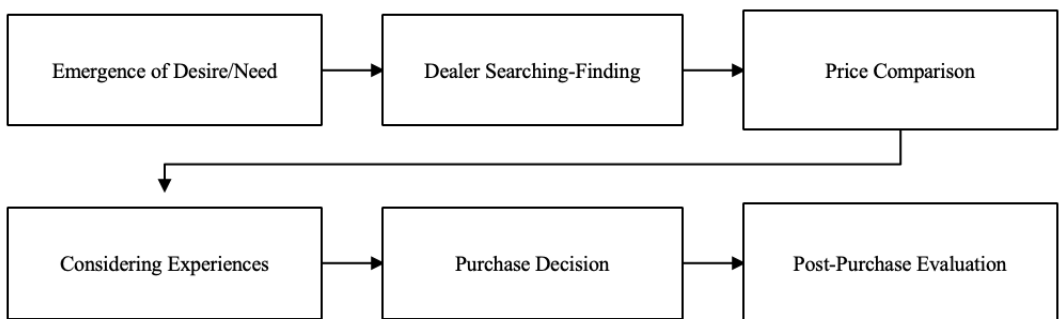


Figure 9. Syrians' Purchase Decision Process in Digital Marketing

Source. Created by the Authors Based on Research Data

Emergence of Desire and Need: The first stage of the individual consumer purchase decision process is the emergence of a desire and need that requires to be satisfied. After the emergence of a need that should be fulfilled, the issue of where this need will be addressed presents itself.

Dealer Searching-Finding: “Dealer Searching-Finding” defined as Syrian respondents’ efforts to search and find sellers in online digital marketing platforms.

At this stage, the individual consumer searches for a place or platform where he/she can satisfy his/her need. If the situation to be fulfilled is in the dimension of need, the consumer will be guided by a stronger motive to satisfy this need. At this stage, Syrian participants stated that they tend to conduct online research in order to meet their wants and needs through digital market platforms, and that they seek to find online sellers or vendors where they can satisfy their needs and wants.

“We can research a product more when it is online...” [INT-1; 12 - 12]

“Some of my friends search for sellers on the internet. They find digital websites that sell the products they want.” [INT-10; 10 - 10]

Price Comparison: Based on the information obtained from the interviews with Syrian participants, this code was defined to refer to price comparisons for similar or equivalent products.

After finding online sellers to meet their needs, Syrian participants stated that at this stage, they conduct price research and compare the prices of the same products from different sellers and choose the most economical one from reliable websites.

“...we are looking at different prices from many different sellers.” [INT-1; 12 - 12]

“I look at the price of the product I need on the internet. There are several reliable sites. I look for the online site that sells it at the best price and place my order.” [INT-10; 10 - 10]

“You can do price research from many sites on online digital platforms.” [INT-11; 16 - 16]

“We can compare prices on online digital platforms.” [INT-12; 12 - 12]

Considering Experiences: “Considering Experiences” code was defined to describe the Syrians participating in the research as considering the evaluations and experiences of other buyers and users before deciding to purchase products that meet their needs and desires.

The Syrians who participated in the research stated that while shopping online, they look at the evaluations and comments of other customers and users about the products that will meet their needs, the rating given to the product by the users on the website where the product is offered for sale and acting according to mouth to mouth marketing (M2M).

“When shopping online, I look at user assessments of the product, the quality of the product, whether other customers’ orders are delivered on time, and the performance scores of the products sold.” [INT-1; 12 - 12]

“Women are sitting at home. During the conversation they inform each other about the products...” [INT-14; 10 - 10]

Purchase Decision: “Purchase Decision” code refers to making the purchase decision.

The Syrian participants interviewed stated that they decided to purchase based on the information they obtained because of the online research they conducted.

“After research and information gathering, I buy or decide not to buy the product.” [INT-1; 12 - 12]

Post-Purchase Evaluation: “Post-Purchase Evaluation” refers to all post-purchase evaluations of the consumer (satisfaction, repurchase, return-guarantee conditions, etc.).

Some of the Syrians who participated in the interviews stated that they were dissatisfied with some of the products they purchased from online websites and wanted to return them, but their requests were rejected by the sellers. However, in general evaluation, they expressed that they were satisfied with shopping on online digital market platforms.

“A friend of mine shopped online. Then she wanted to return it, but they refused to accept the return. She was very angry and did not shop again. I hear about such cases from many people. Other than that, I can say that we are generally satisfied with shopping online.” [INT-8; 14 - 14]

3.4. Advantages of D-Marketing

“Advantages of D-Marketing” covers the advantages that online digital marketing offers to individual consumers (especially the interview participants).

The Syrians who participated in the study stated that shopping at online digital marketplaces offered them some advantages. According to the findings obtained from the analysis of the participant statements, the advantages of online digital marketplaces were grouped under various headings and the participant statements related to them were coded. Accordingly, the advantages of online digital marketplaces in order from the highest frequency and rate to the lowest are as follows (Figure 10): Home delivery (63%), Comparison (13%), Installment (13%) and Evaluation (10%).

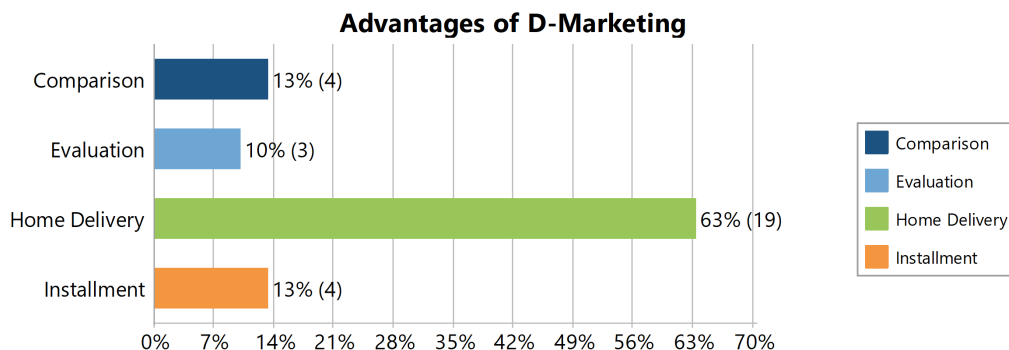


Figure 10. Advantages of D-Marketing

Comparison: One of the advantages of digital marketing reflected on consumers is comparison. The advantage, coded as “Comparison,” involves making a more satisfactory choice by making comparisons between many alternatives in decisions regarding the purchase of products subject to individual consumption.

13% of the Syrians who participated in the interview stated that they are faced with more varieties and options when purchasing the products that meet their needs online, so they have the opportunity to make comparisons easily and therefore prefer online digital platforms for a more satisfying shopping experience.

“...For example, I use Letgo, I’ve bought phones and tablets on Letgo before, Hepsiburada is the cheapest, and we’ve shopped from this and a few other online companies. Here are clothes, shoes, etc., children buy things online that they can’t find in stores here. It is also very convenient for them. Therefore, they shop online. When there was a lockdown due to the pandemic, they shopped online. In our neighborhood, LC Waikiki has three or five various products. Children do not prefer these. But they go on the internet and social media and look for what they want there. Since there is a lot of variety on the internet, they can choose from there.” [INT-5; 10 - 10]

“There is a lot of choice on online digital websites, and you can choose what you want.” [INT-7; 12 - 12]

Evaluation: The advantage, coded as “Evaluation,” involves making comparisons between physical and digital marketplaces and choosing the alternative that offers more convenience.

10% of the Syrians interviewed stated that they can order products more easily through online digital marketplaces and make evaluations by reading product specifications and user reviews without having to physically visit and exhaust themselves.

“Türkiye has everything you need in both food and clothes. There is even more variety and shopping is easier.” [INT-6; 2 - 2]

“My Syrian friends say it’s better to order online than to go to the bazaar and get tired.” [INT-6; 12 - 12]

“On the internet we can read product comments or product specifications, so that we can evaluate and decide about the products.” [INT-13; 14 - 14]

Home Delivery: The advantage coded as “Home Delivery” expresses that products purchased from digital marketplaces are delivered effortlessly to the home without wasting time.

In the interviews, 63% of the Syrian participants stated that they were able to buy products more economically from online sites, that they were able to buy products that could meet their needs without going out and going to a physical store, without getting tired, and that they were very pleased that the products they bought were delivered to their homes.

“My children mostly shop online. They meet all their needs there. They say it is an easier method and they buy products cheaper.” [INT-2; 10 - 10]

“In fact, it is nice to shop on digital platforms over the internet. Because you sit at home and the product comes to your door without any effort. The children liked this thing very much. They liked it.” [INT-3; 13 - 13]

“We ordered cosmetics for my wife. The products came home. We did our shopping without going out. We didn’t bother at all. We are happy for her and for the work we have done.” [INT-4; 10 - 10]

“When we were in Syria, for example, when we went to a store for a refrigerator, we used to pay for the transportation of the refrigerator we bought. When we bought furniture, we used to pay for the transportation until we got it home. Here, no matter how expensive it is, they bring it to your doorstep, and they don’t charge extra for transportation. I am very satisfied with this.” [INT-13; 12 - 12]

Installment: “Installment” includes the possibility for participants to pay for their purchases in installments and late payment opportunities provided to consumers by online sales platforms.

13% of the Syrian consumers interviewed stated that they use credit cards to benefit from the installment opportunities of digital platforms and that it is an important advantage to benefit from installment transactions.

“We do the shopping using the credit card. I use the credit card because there are many installments. I buy many things I want to buy in installments. The credit card has advantages at this point.” [INT-1; 12 - 12]

3.5. Disadvantages of D-Marketing

“Disadvantages of D-Marketing” covers the disadvantages of online digital marketing that are reflected on the individual consumer (especially the interviewed participants).

The Syrians who participated in the research stated that shopping at online digital marketplaces has some disadvantages for them. According to the findings obtained from the analysis of the participant statements, the disadvantages of online digital marketplaces were categorized under various headings and the participant statements related to them were coded. Accordingly, the disadvantages of online digital marketplaces in order from the highest frequency and rate to the lowest are as follows (Figure 11): Excessive Purchase (38%), Uncontrolled Purchase (38%) and Waste of Time (25%).

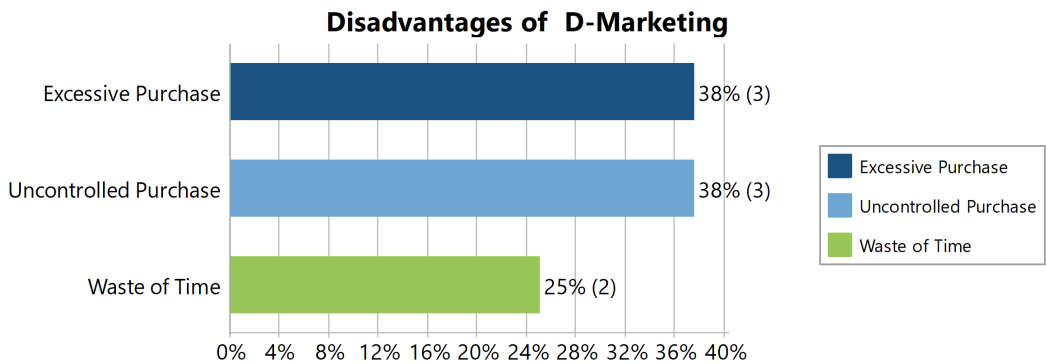


Figure 11. Disadvantages of D-Marketing

Excessive Purchase: 38% of the Syrians who participated in the research stated that they even bought products they did not need, but when they wanted to return them, they faced problems, and in some cases, they did not even want to deal with the return process, but they realized that they had made a harmful purchase for themselves.

“...For example, let’s say we want to return the products we don’t like, but we don’t want to deal with the return process because it is exhausting. Therefore, we are adversely affected by this kind of online digital shopping.” [INT-4; 14 - 14]

Uncontrolled Purchase: 38% of the Syrian respondents stated that they make extra purchases on online digital market platforms because they do not feel a tangible outflow of money and do not calculate the amount; that they tend to buy similar or equivalent products offered to their likes in digital platforms and that they do not get tired because they do all these procedures online; and that these situations lead to uncontrolled purchases.

“We sit at home, we buy a few things, but we don’t know how much money it costs, probably because we don’t feel it in physical sense. When we shop online, there are times when we wish we could buy this extra product. But it’s nice because we shop without getting bored.” [INT-1; 12 - 12]

Waste of Time: 25% of the Syrian respondents stated that the internet is a time-consuming factor; they do not have time to spend on online digital shopping after a busy work shift outside the home and the necessary work to be done at home.

“I go to work, take care of the kids, do housework, and then I don’t have time to sit down and shop online.” [INT-3; 15 - 15]

3.6. Problems and Reasons Confront in D-Marketing

Under this heading, the problems that the interviewed participants encountered during or after their purchases in online digital marketplaces and the problems identified and coded as problems from the analysis of the research data and their reasons are given.

According to the research findings, the problems faced by the participants on online digital market platforms are as follows (Figure 12): Other problems (32%), Similar Product Sends (31%), Insecurity (22%) and Language Problems (15%).

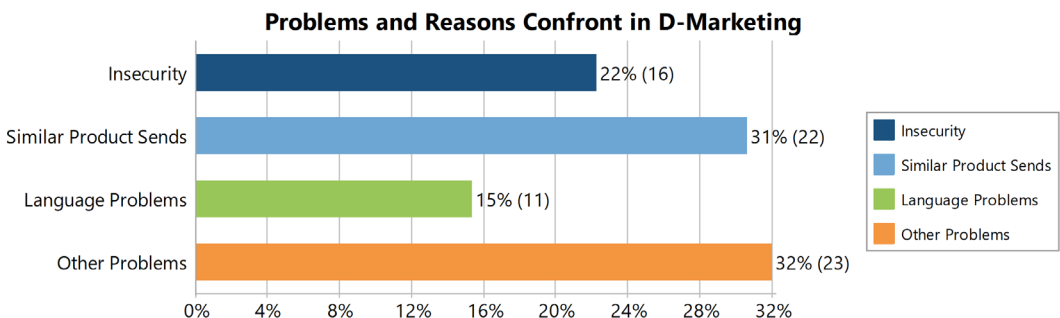


Figure 12. Problems and Reasons Confront in D-Marketing

Insecurity: This problem coded as “Insecurity,” covers the personal information privacy problems that the participants have shared for shopping in digital platforms and the problems related to the reliability of online shopping websites.

22% of the Syrian participants interviewed stated that they experienced problems such as confidentiality, reliability, fraud, etc. when shopping from online digital marketplaces.

“There is a trust problem in shopping on digital platforms over the internet.” [INT-9; 14 - 14]

“Sadece güvenilir alışveriş sitelerinin bilinmesi gerekiyor.” [INT-10; 12 - 12]

“In general, we shop from digital online websites that we know and trust better.” [INT-1; 10 - 10]

“We don’t know whether the products we buy from online websites are really what we ordered or whether they will be the same or not. We can be suspicious about the products we buy on digital platforms because we can’t touch them and physically pick them up at the time of purchase.” [INT-1; 14 - 14]

“For example, I want to see, check and be sure about the product I buy. Unfortunately, digital platforms cannot give this opportunity to people. That’s why I don’t trust digital platforms. I am also afraid of online fraud.” [INT-3; 15 - 15]

“There are many Syrian refugees around me who are afraid and hesitant to make online digital purchases over the internet.” [INT-14; 12 - 12]

Similar Product Sends: This problem coded as “Similar Product Sends,” describes the situation where the seller sends similar products that can replace the ordered product in response to the product ordered in digital platforms.

31% of the Syrian participants interviewed stated that they did not receive the same products they ordered when shopping from online digital marketplaces, that what appeared on the seller’s screen was not the same as what they received (differences in color, size, pattern, etc.), and that sometimes sellers sent similar products.

“Sometimes they do not send the same product that we order from digital platforms, they send similar products. For example, my brother placed an order online. Instead of the product we ordered, a completely different product came. There was a product shared on Instagram. My brother said let’s buy it. We bought the product, but after a different product arrived, we never ordered from that website again.” [INT-1; 10 - 10]

“I don’t like shopping online because the product I see on the screen and the product I receive are usually not the same.” [INT-2; 10 - 10]

“I have heard that most of the products ordered do not come from the selected ones. I often hear this kind of issues around me.” [INT-3; 15 - 15]

“They do not send the same product that I like and ordered on digital platforms. The seller sends a product that is paler or in a different color than what I ordered.” [INT-7; 14 - 14]

Language Problems: This problem, which is expressed as “Language Problems,” covers the problems arising from the fact that Syrian participants do not fully understand Turkish and therefore do not have full knowledge of online shopping laws and consumer rights in distance sales.

15% of the Syrian participants interviewed stated that they experienced various problems in their online digital marketplace shopping because they could not fully communicate in Turkish.

“Due to the fact that we cannot fully speak Turkish, and our Turkish is not strong enough, we cannot pay attention to everything during shopping. Sometimes this can cause difficulties. Sometimes orders may be wrong because of this. Even at this point, it is very important to be knowledgeable. You can fall into a garbage situation when you don’t have language qualifications.” [INT-8; 14 - 14]

“For us, one of the biggest barriers to online shopping is language.” [INT-10; 14 - 14]

“Not all Syrians are proficient in Turkish. This is a significant barrier to them making purchases on digital platforms as they wish.” [INT-11; 18 - 18]

Other Problems: This situation coded as “Other Problems,” includes problems such as not being able to touch the products that appear on digital platforms, not being able to return the product, the product being ripped, torn or defective in different ways.

32% of the interviewed Syrian participants stated that they experienced problems such as not being able to touch and feel the fabric of the product, not being able to return the product, the product not being robust, the product being torn or ripped, and sewing defects in the products when shopping from online digital marketplaces.

“Normally I want to touch what I buy, I want to see it. After the migration, we don’t have this opportunity now.” [INT-2; 10 - 10]

“You are in a difficult situation when there is no return of purchased products.” [INT-3; 15 - 15]

“...Because when I take the material in my hand, I see the material, is it strong, how is the fabric, for example, when I buy shoes, are the stitches, is the material strong or not? You can control this. When you shop online, you don’t have the chance to check all these things.” [INT-5; 12 - 12]

“Actually, when I shop, I want to touch the material, the fabric of the product. I want to buy with confidence. I want what I am going to buy to be in front of my eyes.” [INT-6; 12 - 12]

“...Another challenge is that some Syrians do not have bank cards, so they cannot make digital online purchases.” [INT-11; 18 - 18]

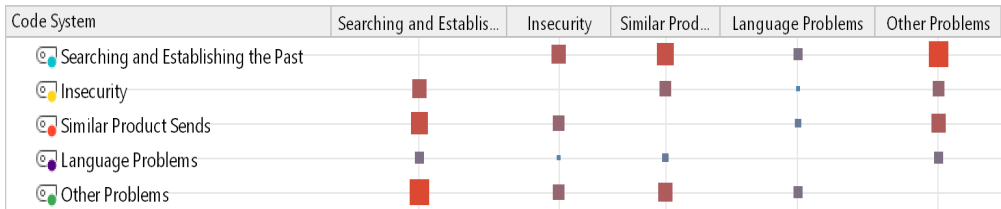


Figure 13. Code Relations Browser

According to the code relation browser in Figure 13, there is a strong relationship (except the Language problems) between the problems faced by consumers in digital marketing and the code “searching and establishing the past”. This is interpreted as Syrian respondents who face a lot of problems in digital platforms try to return to their past lives and search for an environment where they can consume the products they are accustomed to.

It is also seen that the problems experienced by Syrian participants in digital market platforms are also related to each other, but this relationship is not strong. This situation is interpreted as that the situations expressed as various and different problems are common and shared by most participants.

3.7. Face to Face (F2F) Shopping

This study also examines how and where Syrians meet their needs in face-to-face (F2F) shopping. Research findings made clear that Syrian respondents mostly made their F2F purchases from chain markets (Bim, A101, Şok, Migros, etc.) and local markets. Participants stated that they prefer chain markets especially for basic food and hygiene products and local markets for some other individual consumption products.

“I shop at places like Bim or A-101, but I can’t find some of the products I want in these markets. But I search for where rice or other grains are cheaper and go to the places that sell them at the cheapest prices and buy them there.” [INT-14; 6 - 6]

“...I buy daily essential foods from Bim or similar places.” [INT-1; 8 - 8]

“For example, I buy bulgur, lentils, rice, chicken and red meat from Turkish markets.” [INT-5; 6 - 6]

“There are some chain dress stores in the textile sector. I shop from them as they are more price competitive than others. As for groceries, I don’t have much brand loyalty.” [INT-7; 6 - 6]

As can be understood from these statements of different participants (INT-14; INT-1; INT-7), Syrians see price as an important factor in F2F shopping and prefer places where they can find basic food items at cheaper prices. In this case, the most suitable option for them may be either the local markets in their neighborhoods

or the chain markets mentioned above. As a result of their research, they stated that they shop from whichever of these vendors has the cheapest priced product. In addition, some participants stated that they are not brand dependent in the consumption of basic food products, but the cheapest option in terms of price is worth buying. The fact that the cheapest priced products are preferred by Syrian immigrant consumers in basic foodstuffs is possible to say that price is more dominant than the brand factor in purchasing behavior. To summarize, based on the situations explained here, it is more likely to state that the price of the product is a significant factor in the purchasing decisions of Syrian migrant consumers.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

In general terms, consumer behavior is the study of the processes of how individuals, groups or businesses select, purchase, use or consume goods, services, experiences or ideas to meet their needs and wants (Solomon, 2020). The consumer purchase decision process is a process that includes all decisions about tending, selecting, buying and using goods, services and ideas that meet these wants and needs of individuals, groups or businesses. Individual consumer behavior and the purchase decision process develop and take shape according to the characteristics of the market (digital-physical) environment.

Although the behavior of the individual consumer on online digital marketing platforms is similar to consumer behavior in physical environments, it is possible to say that there are some differences between the two situations. These differences appear both in the stages of consumption and in the consumer decision process. Solomon (2020) discussed the stages of the consumption process in three steps. These are “pre-purchase,” “moment of purchase” and “post-purchase.” While the processes that take place in each of these steps (need identification, product comparison, purchase decision, and post-purchase evaluation) are similar (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018; Perreault, Cannon & McCarthy, 2013; Peter & Donnelly, 2016), there are different components that affect the consumer purchase decision in terms of the place (online digital or physical marketplaces) where wants and needs are satisfied. When we evaluate the purchase decision process of Syrians in digital marketing with physical-traditional consumer behavior, it can be said that both are similar but digital may be more convenient and faster. For example, if an individual consumer is going to make a purchase in the traditional sense they need to go to a store where the product they need is offered for sale physically examine the product if it is available in the quality (quality, color, size, etc.) and quantity to meet their needs then go to other stores where comparable products are offered for sale make price comparisons with similar products and finally make a decision. However, in digital purchasing and marketing all that is needed for these steps is a digital device and an internet connection. In digital marketing, it is much more effortless and faster to search for and find the right product to make comparisons and make a purchase decision. Because for this you do not need to go out physically and spend effort and time. For this reason, digital marketing can be

done both faster and with less time spent than traditional marketing. Moreover, it is possible to place orders from any digital platform you want without any distance limitations from anywhere and anytime you are.

For Syrian consumers, the use of Arabic language in shopping can be a guiding reason for preference. The Syrians who participated in this study stated that they prefer sellers who speak the same language as them and welcome them warmly, especially in physical shopping. Sauter et al. (2021), who found similar results with a study conducted in Germany, stated that Syrian consumers with little knowledge of German feel comfortable in stores where their native language is spoken, and even prefer stores and brands where Arabic-speaking staffs are employed for shopping. Another study by Kizgin et al. (2018) suggests that businesses and brands offering services both on digital (online) platforms and in physical stores should be sensitive to the language preferences of ethnic communities because having a behavioral attitude in this direction is seen as a key factor in enabling businesses to create stronger and more competitive commercial opportunities.

Participants' prior consumption habits in their country of origin have a strong influence in determining some of their consumption habits in the host country. The businesses and procurement methods established by migrants make it possible to sustain these consumption habits. Participants stated that they procure especially grains and some foodstuffs from businesses established by Syrians. As Göker (2015) points out, migrants have the opportunity to sustain their lives in the way they want thanks to the internal dynamics they create. As mentioned earlier, participants tended to maintain consumption habits in line with their traditional pre-war lifestyles, but they also developed behaviors suitable for the new, digital consumption process as a result of contacts with the local community. In this context, it can be said that immigrant consumer behavior is shaped by both loyalty to their cultural roots and efforts to adapt to the new society. While immigrants try to keep their cultural heritage alive, especially in areas such as clothing, food and personal care products, they are also influenced by the norms and consumption preferences of the society they live in and can adapt to new situations (Ger & Østergaard, 1998). For example, Sauter et al. (2021) stated that Syrians living in Germany tend to gravitate towards brands they recognize and are familiar with from their home country, but as time passes, they are able to adapt and accept local German brands as well.

In recent years, consumption and purchasing decisions have been reshaped thanks to technological developments, especially the advantages associated with digitalization. Digital shopping has become more and more popular among consumers over the years. In the case of some products, it has been reported that online shopping has overtaken physical in-store purchases. Studies (Islam, 2021; Dinç, 2018; Demir, 2014) show that online consumer behavior is influenced by many factors. Factors that can be considered positive are delivery time, security, description of goods, confidentiality of information, price of the product, product

variety, product information, convenience, short delivery time and payment security. Factors such as fast delivery, short delivery time, easy shopping, product variety, etc., which are expressed as the conveniences provided by online digital marketing platforms to consumers, were similar situations expressed by Syrian participants as a result of our research. Similar results obtained in this research we conducted with Syrian participants confirm the results of previous studies. However, in our research different results were found regarding payment security and privacy of personal information. For example, the factors of information privacy and payment security (Islam, 2021), which were expressed as advantages above, were included in a category expressing the opposite and negativity as a result of our research, and were moved to the disadvantage section and concluded as disadvantages of online digital marketing platforms. On the other hand, problems such as dissatisfaction due to the inability to return the product, problems such as the product being ripped, torn or defective in different ways, which are among the negative situations reflected by online digital marketing platforms on Syrian consumers and which express the important results of our research, are also in line with the results of some other previous studies (Pervaiz & Sudha, 2010; Hua et al., 2017; Chang & Chou, 2012).

Consumers do not make decisions randomly when they make purchases to meet their needs. The purchase decision is shaped by a series of research and evaluations prior to the act of purchase. Therefore, consumers' purchasing decisions are greatly influenced by economic, cultural, social, personal and psychological factors (Rout & Senapati, 2009; Yağcı & İlarslan, 2010). For example, it can be argued that some participants demonstrate a survival strategy by showing the behavior of procuring consumer products at the lowest cost. This is because high wages are a barrier for the participants to purchase the food products they want. Some participants who had a stable life in Syria experienced a decline in their income after the migration process which directly affected their purchasing power. The Syrian migrants who participated in our research search for sellers that will meet their needs in the most optimal way, compare product characteristics and prices, evaluate other previous comments on products, make decisions based on their online research, and take advantage of all the opportunities that the digital world provides to the individual consumer. As a result in our research some of the criteria that Syrian consumers consider when making purchasing decisions on digital platforms are as follows: A more economical price, user assessments about the product, the quality of the product, whether other customers' orders are delivered on time, and the performance scores of the products sold.

Income level is one of the important factors determining the purchasing power of individual migrant consumers. According to Porreca et al. (2019), economic conditions and food prices can directly affect the product and food preferences of Syrian migrants living in Brazil. Migrants' economic situation directly affects their purchasing preferences and decisions. In this respect, price sensitivity may cause migrants to turn to platforms/stores that offer lower prices. Similar to the results of the above study, Syrians who participated in this research stated that

when they move to meet their needs from online digital platforms, they first search for one or more sellers on the internet, after finding online sellers to meet their needs they do price research and after comparing the prices of the same products in different sellers they choose and buy the most economical one from reliable websites. In the same way, in the selection of physical shopping places, it is stated that the stores where cheaper priced products are sold are preferred.

One of the important findings of this research is that religious sensitivities are determinant in consumer behavior and decision-making process (for product selection). At this point, the religious values and cultural environment of the participants affect their preferences in consumption. As a result of the research, it was seen that some participants do not prefer certain products under the influence of religious restrictions (haram-halal) and even do not shop from businesses that sell haram products due to their beliefs. Duan (2024), who presents similar results with his research on immigrant consumption behavior (ICB), religious beliefs and traditions can directly affect the consumption behavior and preferences of immigrant consumers about products and services. According to Gürhan (2018) religion and beliefs shaped accordingly are one of the important factors affecting individuals' consumption preferences. The symbolic meanings that religious beliefs attach to consumption products deeply affect production, marketing and consumption processes, categorize foods as edible/halal and inedible/haram, and have power over the behavior and consumption patterns of consumers with this sensitivity with the changes and limitations they make to existing consumption habits. In addition, religious sensitivities such as halal food consumption and cultural consumption habits coming from the past also play a decisive role in consumers' shopping preferences. The need for halal food leads migrants to stick to certain markets and butchers and can shape their daily routine consumption tendencies. This is not only related to nutritional habits, but also to religious identity and culture. In other words, the need for traditional products and foods in particular means the maintenance of cultural belonging and the reconstruction of identity (Porreca et al., 2019; Sauter et al., 2021). Especially in Türkiye, the existence of a market where the food sector is shaped according to dominant Islamic references in terms of access to halal food provides a great relief for Syrian migrants. Syrian migrants pay attention to the halal status of the products they prefer according to their religious beliefs, check whether the product has a halal certificate to be sure, and make their purchasing decisions in that direction. Sometimes, the "halal" factor can even override the health factor (Aljaroudi, 2018; Anderson, 2020). As a result of this research, we have come across the result that Syrian immigrants pay particular attention to the halal status of the products in their purchasing preferences to meet their needs and desires and that this is an important reason for purchasing. This research provides results in line with Gürhan (2018), who considers religion as one of the most important factors affecting individuals' nutrition and consumption preferences. As a result of this research, we found that Syrian migrants pay particular attention to whether the

products are halal or not in their purchasing preferences and that this is an important reason for purchasing. The results we have reached in this research regarding the halal-haram nature of the product confirm the findings of previous studies (Moffat et al., 2017; Aljaroudi, 2018; Anderson, 2020; Ghazal, 2022; Duan, 2024). As a result, halal food consumption is an important factor for Muslim societies. In this respect, the fact that the products subject to consumption are halal and “Halal Certified” products are preferred is a requirement of Syrians’ religious beliefs and this should be considered as an important factor shaping the consumption preferences of Syrian immigrants.

People who leave their own country and migrate to a different country due to war and similar compulsory reasons find their new place unfamiliar and want to feel in safe. They often seek this confidence in establishing their old lives where they are and continuing their old habits. These expressions of Syrian participants, who stated that they look for the products they are used to consuming in their home countries and feel like they are in their country of origin when they find and consume them, can be evaluated as an effort to feel safe. In addition, these feelings of Syrian migrants also carry an important message for marketing managers. This message can be summarized as follows; producing, marketing and offering products appropriate to the new demographic structure shaped in places with high migrant populations will be able to meet consumer demands and needs at a higher rate. In this way, bilateral (consumer-seller) satisfaction can be achieved. Kotler’s (2001, p. 5) statement “The ability to change requires an ability to learn.” It is an obligation for companies and for consumers’ too.” summarizes this situation.

Based on the findings of the research, it is possible to conclude the following. The population migrating to a different country is displaced with their own experiences, cultures, habits, favorites, tastes, experiences and all their preferences. Therefore, understanding the consumption habits, preferences and individual consumer behavior of migrant Syrians can provide significant benefits to both manufacturers and policy makers interested in international human mobility and migration in terms of pricing, production, marketing and all other similar issues.

5. Practical Recommendations for the Market and Stakeholders

The findings and research conclusions of this study have important implications for marketing managers and immigration policy makers to develop interventions, platforms and programs that can support immigrant populations in building appropriate consumption networks and adapting to new cultural environments.

Religious beliefs can directly affect purchasing decisions regarding the products and services consumed. Based on this, we believe that the halal certification system should be integrated into production and marketing systems while the product is still in the early idea stage.

Since language is an important factor in immigrant consumer behavior and decision-making processes, planning and conducting marketing activities for immigrants in their native languages can make significant contributions to meeting the needs of consumers with higher satisfaction and achieving marketing goals. In this context, it is recommended that businesses take into account the language preferences of the target customers when planning their marketing and promotional activities. Especially in digital marketing channels and social media platforms, advertisements with Arabic content might have a great impact.

Today, the widespread use of digital tools such as smartphones has taken consumers' shopping habits to the next level, allowing them to shop anytime and anywhere. In this context, offering personalized products for migrants on mobile digital platforms may increase customer satisfaction, expand the loyal customer portfolio and increase the success of marketing activities.

Based on the impact of product price on the purchasing behavior of Syrian migrant consumers, it is recommended to offer more competitive price offers, especially in areas with dense migrant populations. These and similar pricing strategies can support the realization of marketing goals and better competition management.

6. Limitations and Future Research

This study was planned and conducted as a qualitative research. In qualitative research, it is not appropriate to make drawings that would lead to over-generalizations. Therefore, the fact that the results of the research cannot be generalized is seen as one of the important limitations of this research. Another important limitation is that the research was planned and conducted only on Syrian immigrants. For this reason, the findings and conclusions presented here are limited to the data obtained from the Syrian participants who participated in the interview and evaluated within this scope. So it is not so possible to say whether the study will reach similar conclusions in other migrant groups with different experiences, religious belief and cultural characteristics. In this context, it is important for future researchers to conduct more research with other immigrant groups in addition to Syrian immigrants. The issues identified as a result of this research and considered as worthy topics for further researchers are as follows. Determining whether the effect of immigrant ethnic identity on consumer preferences is a temporary trend, and conducting research to determine the continuity and change in immigrant consumer behavior by investigating qualitative and quantitative methods.

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