BETWEEN TACOS AND ḤALĀL: EXPLORING ḤALĀL FOOD ACCESS AND CONSUMPTION AMONG MUSLIM IMMIGRANTS IN MEXICO CITY

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Abstract

Despite increasing Muslim migration to Mexico, little is known about how these immigrants navigate ḥalāl food practices in a predominantly non-Muslim setting. This study applies the theory of planned behavior (TPB) to explore how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control influence dietary choices. Based on ethnographic fieldwork and interviews with 43 Muslim immigrants in Mexico City, the study reveals that most participants adopt a positively inclined yet contextually flexible stance – motivated by religious belief but shaped by access issues, *fiqh*-based allowances (e.g., meat of the animals slaughtered by the "People of the Book"), and a desire to engage with local food culture. A smaller group strictly adheres to ḥalāl consumption, driven by strong religious commitment and parental responsibility. Social pressure to conform is generally low but is

Ilahiyat Studies
Volume 16 Number 1 Winter/Spring 2025
Article Type: Research Article

p-ISSN: 1309-1786 / e-ISSN: 1309-1719
DOI: 10.12730/is.1431775

Received: February 5, 2025 | *Accepted*: May 26, 2025 | *Published*: June 30, 2025

To cite this article: Hasif, Nik. "Between Tacos and Ḥalāl: Exploring Ḥalāl Food Access and Consumption among Muslim Immigrants in Mexico City". *Ilahiyat Studies* 16/1 (2025), 29-75. https://doi.org/ 10.12730/is.1431775

influenced by internalized family expectations, intercultural household negotiations, and transnational monitoring through digital platforms. Barriers such as high costs, the limited availability of ḥalāl products, and persistent food cravings further affect behavioral control. These findings highlight how Muslim immigrants balance religious commitments with the practical and cultural realities of life within a numerically negligible Muslim minority setting such as Mexico.

Key Words: Islam, Mexico, ḥalāl industry, food, Muslims, food consumption behavior

Introduction

Muslim populations in Mexico have gradually increased over the years,[1] reflecting the participation of Muslims in Mexico's diversity. Despite this rising presence, Muslims in Mexico remain a minority, and they navigate the complexities of maintaining their cultural and religious practices in a predominantly non-Muslim environment. One of the key aspects of this experience is the consumption of ḥalāl food, which is integral to their spirituality. Ḥalāl, an Arabic term meaning "permissible" or "lawful", refers to what is allowed under Islamic law in various aspects of life, including finance, clothing, conduct, and consumption. In the context of food, ḥalāl refers not only to the types of food that may be consumed but also to how food is sourced, slaughtered, prepared, and handled. Conversely, food that is explicitly prohibited is termed *ḥarām*, such as pork, alcohol, and improperly slaughtered animals. Among these two categories lies *mashbūh*, which refers to items that are doubtful or ambiguous in their permissibility due to unclear ingredients, processing methods, or lack of proper certification. For many Muslims, avoiding both *ḥarām* and *mashbūh* is an essential part of maintaining religious observance. In non-Muslim majority contexts, however, the scarcity of ḥalāl-certified products and establishments often complicates adherence to these dietary principles, leading to ethical, practical, and spiritual challenges for Muslim communities.[2]

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1 INEGI, "Censo de Población y Vivienda 2010", *INEGI* (Accessed August 2, 2021); INEGI, "Censo de Población y Vivienda 2020", *INEGI* (Accessed August 5, 2021).

2 Alhassan G. Mumuni et al., "Religious Identity, Community and Religious Minorities' Search Efforts for Religiously Sanctioned Food: The Case of Halal Food

In Mexico, pork has a significant role in Mexican gastronomy and is a staple in many traditional dishes and cultural celebrations. From tacos al pastor to carnitas, pork also exists in different versions based on various cured cuts (e.g., *lomo*, *spallacia*, *bacon*, and *coppa*) and disparate forms (e.g., cooking oil, ham, ham salami, and gelatin). Beyond its culinary prominence, the centrality of pork in Mexican cuisine is deeply rooted in colonial history. Prior to the Spanish conquest, indigenous civilizations such as the Mexica (Aztecs) and the Maya did not consume pork. Historian Jeffrey M. Pilcher,[3] in *¡Que vivan los tamales! Food and the Making of Mexican Identity*, explains that the Spanish introduced pigs to the Americas in the 16th century not merely as a new source of food but also as part of a broader effort to impose European dietary habits and Christian norms. Pork thus became a symbol of colonial assimilation, with its consumption closely linked to the adoption of Christian identity and loyalty to colonial authority. Similar dynamics have been observed in other parts of Latin America, such as Puerto Rico, where Chitwood[4] discusses how pork consumption became emblematic of cultural belonging in the colonial context.

As the Mexican food landscape offers limited access to ḥalāl markets and accentuates pork-based and other non-ḥalāl ingredients, this can create a complex environment for maintaining dietary practices aligned with Islamic dietary laws. This scenario necessitates a closer examination of how Muslim immigrants adapt their food practices in a setting where their dietary needs are often overlooked, highlighting their strategies for navigating new life in Catholic-majority countries.

This article focuses specifically on Muslim immigrants rather than converts or a combined analysis because of the distinct challenges that immigrants face in preserving traditional ḥalāl observances. Many

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in non-Muslim Majority Markets", *International Journal of Consumer Studies* 42/6 (January 2018), 586-598; Mohd Fauzi Abu-Hussin et al., "Halal Purchase Intention Among the Singaporean Muslim Minority", *Journal of Food Products Marketing* 23/7 (October 2017), 769-782.

3 Jeffrey M. Pilcher, *¡Que Vivan Los Tamales!: Food and the Making of Mexican Identity* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998).

4 Ken Chitwood, "Halāl Habichuelas: Food, Belonging, and the Conundrums of Being a Puerto Rican Muslim", *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 90/4 (December 2022), 916-936.

immigrants come from Muslim-majority countries where ḥalāl is embedded in everyday life, which makes the dietary transition in Mexico particularly complex. Converts, in contrast, often adopt ḥalāl practices more gradually and may not have the same depth of cultural attachment or access to community support structures.[5] By focusing on the immigrant experience, this study explores how ḥalāl consumption becomes a means of identity preservation and cultural continuity in a setting of limited accommodation. It also reveals how food practices intersect with broader issues of religious observance, belonging, and adaptation in a non-Muslim society. Moreover, compared with Latin American countries such as Brazil or Argentina, which have more robust ḥalāl industries, Mexico's smaller Muslim population and limited ḥalāl infrastructure amplify the challenges faced by Muslim immigrants, making their experiences uniquely revealing.

Prior to discussing how these Muslims consume food, it is important to consider the fundamental aspect of ḥalāl-ness, the characteristic that distinguishes Muslims with regard to food consumption. The connections between the Islamic faith and food consumption among practitioners, which is also known as a "ḥalāl consciousness",[6] can be divided into two categories: spirituality and obligatory acts. Spirituality, which supposedly provides benefits for one's body as a whole, is rooted in Islamic teaching and emphasizes that ḥalāl encompasses the way of life to which Muslims must adhere[7] and that the food and drink that Muslims consume affect the level of cleanliness of the body, mind, and soul. Therefore, eating ḥalāl means taking care of the body, and failing to do so can lead to bad behavior and damage the soul. According to one ḥadīth narrated by al-Nuʿmān ibn Bashīr,

> I heard Allah's Messenger saying, "Beware! There is a piece of flesh in the body; if it becomes good (reformed), the

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5 Harfiyah Abdel Haleem, "*Women Embracing Islam: Gender and Conversion in the West* Edited by Karen van Nieuwkerk", *Journal of Islamic Studies* 19/1 (February 2007), 151-154; Ali Köse, *Conversion to Islam: A Study of Native British Converts* (New York: Kegan Paul International, 1996).

6 Md Nor Othman - Azura Hashim, "Halal Food Consumption: A Comparative Study between Arab Muslims and Non Arab Muslims Consumers in Malaysia' (Australian and New Zealand Marketing Academy Conference, Perth, 2011).

7 Nader Al Jallad, "The Concepts of al-Halal and al-Haram in the Arab-Muslim Culture: A Translational and Lexicographical Study", *Language Design: Journal of Theoretical and Experimental Linguistics* 10 (2008), 77-86.

whole body becomes good, but if it gets spoilt, the whole body gets spoilt, and that is the heart".[8]

The other category, obligatory acts, is evidence of another link between the Islamic faith and food consumption that can be observed through the level of obedience demonstrated in certain practices. That is, eating ḥalāl is not intended to transgress the rules of Allah. Muslims who abide by ḥalāl laws can be observed in many ways through their actions, including declining food, checking ḥalāl certificates or logos, asking for clarifications and reviewing the ingredients.[9]

Although Islam provides clear guidelines on food restrictions and laws, each faith adherent varies in how they interpret and practice these guidelines. This study treats ordinary individuals not as idealized adherents of religious doctrine but as religious subjects who negotiate their beliefs and practices in the context of everyday life. Their identities are shaped through imperfect, and at times contested, engagements with religious norms. This approach draws on the concept of *lived religion*, which emphasizes how faith is embodied, improvised, and interpreted in diverse and personal ways beyond formal theology or belief. [10]

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[8] Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī, *al-Jāmiʿ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, ed. Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb et al. (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿah al-Salafiyyah, 1400 AH), "al-Īmān", 39 (No. 52)

[9] Qurroh Ayuniyyah et al., "Factors Affecting Consumers' Decision in Purchasing MUI Halal-Certified Food Products", *Tazkia Islamic Finance and Business Review* 10 (August 2017); Karijn Bonne et al., "Impact of Religion on Halal Meat Consumption Decision Making in Belgium", *Journal of International Food & Agribusiness Marketing* 21/1 (December 2008), 5-26.

[10] Kim Knibbe - Helena Kupari, "Theorizing Lived Religion: Introduction", *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 35/2 (May 2020), 157-176; David D. Hall (ed.), *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1997); Mohammad Talib, "Lived Islam: Colloquial Religion in a Cosmopolitan Tradition", *Journal of Islamic Studies* 33/1 (December 2021), 147-148; Nadia Jeldtoft, "Lived Islam: Religious Identity with 'non-Organized' Muslim Minorities", *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34/7 (2011), 1134-1151; Meredith B. McGuire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life* (Cary: Oxford University Press, 2008); Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

1. The Growing Need for Ḥalāl Accommodation in Mexico's Small Markets

The study of ḥalāl practices among Muslims has gained significant attention in recent years,[11] with dominant clusters focusing on consumer behavior, the ḥalāl supply chain and marketing, ḥalāl certification, and ḥalāl tourism. With respect to consumer behavior, most work focuses on the navigation of choosing ḥalāl food and nonfood products in both the Muslim majority and minority. Although consumption patterns of ḥalāl food vary depending on individual experiences and levels of religiosity, the effort to identify and access ḥalāl food remains consistently significant. This finding indicates that despite differences in personal practices, the pursuit of ḥalāl dietary options continues to be a priority for many Muslims.[12] Moreover, decision-making regarding ḥalāl consumption extends to ḥalāl tourism, with research exploring how countries strive to become Muslim-friendly destinations.[13] In addition, ḥalāl research explores non-Muslim perceptions of ḥalāl food, particularly their awareness and understanding of it.[14] Another core cluster includes ḥalāl certification

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[11] Rishikesan Parthiban et al., "Empowering Rural Micro-Entrepreneurs through Technoficing: A Process Model for Mobilizing and Developing Indigenous Knowledge", *The Journal of Strategic Information Systems* 33/2 (June 2024), 101836.

[12] Yukari Sai - Johan Fischer, "Muslim Food Consumption in China: Between Qingzhen and Halal" *Halal Matters*, ed. Florence Bergeaud-Blackler et al. (Oxon, NY: Routledge, 2016); Mumuni et al., "Religious Identity, Community and Religious Minorities' Search Efforts for Religiously Sanctioned Food"; Mohd Fuaad Said et al., "Exploring Halal Tourism in Muslim-Minority Countries: Muslim Travellers' Needs and Concerns", *Journal of Islamic Marketing* 13/4 (March 2022), 824-842; Abu-Hussin et al., "Halal Purchase Intention Among the Singaporean Muslim Minority"; Nimit Soonsan - Zulfiqar Ali Jumani, "Perceptions of Halal-Friendly Attributes: A Quantitative Study of Tourists' Intention to Travel Non-Islamic Destination", *Journal of Islamic Marketing* 15/6 (May 2024), 1441-1460.

[13] Said et al., "Exploring *Halal* Tourism in Muslim-Minority Countries"; Serrin Razzaq et al., "The Capacity of New Zealand to Accommodate the Halal Tourism Market — Or Not", *Tourism Management Perspectives* 18 (April 2016), 92-97.

[14] Nur Syazwani Abdul Jalil et al., "Attitudes of the Public Towards Halal Food and Associated Animal Welfare Issues in Two Countries with Predominantly Muslim and Non-Muslim Population", *PLOS ONE* 13/10 (October 2018), e0204094; Yukichika Kawata et al., "Non-Muslims' Acceptance of Imported Products with Halal Logo: A Case Study of Malaysia and Japan", *Journal of Islamic Marketing* 9/1 (2018); Vloreen Nity Mathew et al., "Acceptance on Halal Food Among Non-Muslim Consumers", *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 121 (March 2014), 262-271; Sasiwemon Sukhabot - Zulfiqar Ali Jumani, "Islamic Brands Attitudes and

issues, such as the authenticity of the ḥalāl certification and packaging.[15]

Numerous case studies investigate the complexities of ḥalāl consumption in various social, cultural, and economic contexts. Research has focused predominantly on multicultural urban environments, where diverse communities, including Muslim minorities, navigate the challenges of maintaining religious dietary practices. These studies often examine how Muslims balance their religious obligations with the realities of living in non-Muslim-majority societies, particularly in urban settings where multiculturalism plays a crucial role. The dynamics of ḥalāl consumption in such multicultural contexts are key in understanding how Muslim communities maintain their food practices while engaging with diverse populations.

For example, in London, a city known for its ethnic diversity, the study of ḥalāl food consumption highlights the intersection between religious identity and multiculturalism. Noah Allison's *Food and Multiculture: A Sensory Ethnography of East London*[16] explores how ḥalāl food practices shape identity in a city where Muslims constitute a significant minority. The research reveals the ways in which food choices act as markers of identity for people navigating the boundaries between religious tradition and the broader multicultural fabric of society. This ethnographic approach emphasizes the role of food not only as a means of sustenance but also as a cultural and religious symbol that connects Muslims to their faith and heritage while adapting to their new surroundings. Similarly, the study of ḥalāl food practices in the U.S. offers further insight into how Muslims in multicultural environments negotiate their religious identity. Jacqueline Fewkes'

Its Consumption Behaviour Among Non-Muslim Residents of Thailand", *Journal of Islamic Marketing* 14/1 (2023), 196-214; Ethan Ding et al., "Religion versus Social Relationships: How Chinese Muslims Deal with Halal Taboos in Social Eating", *Food, Culture & Society* 26/3 (May 2023), 725-741; Rana Muhammad Ayyub, "Exploring Perceptions of Non-Muslims Towards Halal Foods in UK", *British Food Journal* 117/9 (September 2015), 2328-2343; Mohamed Battour et al., "The Perception of Non-Muslim Tourists Towards Halal Tourism: Evidence from Turkey and Malaysia", *Journal of Islamic Marketing* 9/4 (October 2018), 823-840.

15 Silvia Serrano, "Bacon or Beef? 'Fake' Halal Scandals in the Russian Federation: Consolidating Halal Norms Through Secular Courts", *Sociology of Islam* 8/3-4 (December 2020), 387-408.

16 Noah Allison, "Food and Multiculture: A Sensory Ethnography of East London, by Alex Rhys-Taylor, London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017. 173 pp.", *Food and Foodways* 27/4 (October 2019), 356-358.

"Siri is Alligator Halal?": Mobile Apps, Food Practices, and Religious Authority Among American Muslims"[17] examines how American Muslims utilize mobile apps to navigate ḥalāl food consumption, reflecting how technology intersects with religious practices in a highly diverse, technologically advanced society.

In the context of Latin America, there is a noticeable gap in research focusing on ḥalāl consumption practices. This can be attributed to the relatively small Muslim populations in the region[18] and the limited research efforts that focus on these communities. Most studies instead concentrate on the ḥalāl market, particularly in terms of ḥalāl food production, certification, and trade. Among the few studies that address ḥalāl consumption, "Halāl Habichuelas: Food, Belonging, and the Conundrums of Being a Puerto Rican Muslim"[19] stands out. This article delves into the challenges faced by Puerto Rican Muslims in maintaining ḥalāl dietary practices and identifies the complexities of navigating religious food requirements in a predominantly non-Muslim society. The study emphasizes how ḥalāl food consumption in Puerto Rico is intricately tied not only to personal and communal identity but also to the struggle to access ḥalāl food in a limited-supply environment.

However, much of the other literature on ḥalāl in Latin America centers primarily around the ḥalāl market, particularly the global ḥalāl meat trade.[20] This market focus is exemplified by Brazil, which despite having a relatively small Muslim population, has become a key player in the global ḥalāl meat export industry. As Ken Chitwood notes, "while most of the general public would assume that a Muslim-majority country would be the largest exporter of ḥalāl meat in the world, it is Brazil that holds the title"[21]. This insight underscores Brazil's

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17 Jacqueline H. Fewkes, "'Siri is Alligator Halal?': Mobile Apps, Food Practices, and Religious Authority Among American Muslims", *Anthropological Perspectives on the Religious Uses of Mobile Apps*, ed. Jacqueline H. Fewkes (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 107-129.

18 This is according to the most recent data presented by the International Religious Freedom Reports in 2023.

19 Chitwood, "Halāl Habichuelas".

20 Hugo Jesús Salas-Canales, "Marketing Islámico y las Oportunidades del Mercado Halal: Una Revisión Sistemática de la Literatura", *Revista San Gregorio* 1/50 (2022), 116-132.

21 Ken Chitwood, *The Muslims of Latin America and the Caribbean* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2021), 127.

importance as a major supplier of ḥalāl-certified products, particularly meat, which is driven by its robust agricultural sector and strategic trade agreements with Muslim-majority countries.

Studies on Brazil's ḥalāl market[22] explore how the country capitalized on its ḥalāl certification infrastructure to tap into the global demand for ḥalāl products. This research focuses on ḥalāl industry dynamics, such as the complexities of ḥalāl certification, logistics, and international trade, but it tends to overlook the consumption practices of Muslims within Brazil.

With respect to Mexico, a country with a growing Muslim population, there is a noticeable gap in research concerning ḥalāl consumption and industry development. Most of the existing work on Islam focuses heavily on the history of Islam,[23] Muslim migration into the country,[24] and the conversion of the indigenous Maya to Islam.[25]

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[22] Flavio Romero Macau et al., "Food Value Chains: Social Networks and Knowledge Transfer in a Brazilian Halal Poultry Network", *International Food and Agribusiness Management Review* 19/3 (2016), 211-224; Salaam Gateway, "Brazilian Halal Beef: Humble at Home, Huge across the World", *Salaam Gateway - Global Islamic Economy Gateway* (20 November 2016); Shadia Husseini de Araújo, "Assembling Halal Meat and Poultry Production in Brazil: Agents, Practices, Power and Sites", *Geoforum* 100 (2019), 220-228; Chitwood, "Halal in Brazil and the Global Muslim Economy"; Shadia Husseini de Araújo et al., "Urban Food Environments and Cultural Adequacy: The (Dis)Assemblage of Urban Halal Food Environments in Muslim Minority Contexts", *Food, Culture & Society* 25/5 (October 2022), 899-916.

[23] Arely Medina, "El islam en México. Revisión histórica de su inserción al escenario religioso Mexicano", *Vuelo Libre* 5 (2014), 13; Mark Lindley-Highfield of Ballumbie Castle, "Islam in Mexico and Central America", *Routledge Handbook of Islam in the West*, ed. Roberto Tottoli (London - New York: Routledge, 2nd edition, 2022), 167-183; Jonathan Benzion, *Embracing Muslims in a Catholic Land: Rethinking the Genesis of Islām in Mexico* (Leiden - Boston: Brill, 2022).

[24] Zidane Zeraoui, "Los árabes en méxico: entre la integración y el arabismo", *Revista Estudios* 12-13 (1995), 13-39; Zidane Zeraoui, "La comunidad musulmana en México: diversidad e integración", *Relaciones Internacionales* 20/40 (2011); Zidane Zeraoui, "Arabs and Muslims in Mexico: Paradiplomacy or Informal Lobby?", *Migration and New International Actors: An Old Phenomenon Seen with New Eyes*, ed. Maria Eugenia Cruset (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 51-89; Nik Mohammad Hasif Mat, *Being Muslim, Performing Mexicanness: Religious Identity Negotiations Among Muslim Immigrants in Mexico* (Det Humanistiske Fakultet, Københavns Universitet, Ph.D. Dissertation, 2022); Nik Hasif, "Muslim Immigrant Identifications in Mexico's YouTube Sphere", *International Journal of Latin American Religions* 7 (May 2023), 480-520.

[25] Marco Lara Klahr, "¿El Islam en Chiapas?: El EZLN y el Movimiento Mundial Murabitun". *Revista Académica para el Estudio de las Religiones* 4 (2002), 79-91; Der Spiegel, "Islam is Gaining a Foothold in Chiapas" (2005); Glüsing, "Praying to

There is a notable absence of studies on the ḥalāl market in Mexico, particularly concerning the preferences and behaviors of individual Muslim consumers.

Perhaps the only work that specifically focuses on ḥalāl food consumption behavior is from Arely Medina[26] titled "El camino hacia lo *Halal*: Ética y sacralización de los alimentos en la vida del musulmán en Guadalajara (The Road to Ḥalāl: Ethics and Sacralization of Food in the Life of the Muslim in Guadalajara)". Her research is based on a decade-long ethnographic observation of Islam in Guadalajara that involves interviews with converts, migrants, and community leaders. It also draws from observations of community practices and religious festivities, particularly their interpretation of ḥalāl practices in daily life. The objective is to examine the transition and adaptation process of these Muslims after conversion. Her findings demonstrate that conversion to Islam had a profound effect on a person's dietary habits, with ḥalāl food becoming a prominent identity marker through which local culinary traditions are blended with Islamic dietary laws. Ḥalāl dietary practices also foster a sense of belonging and solidarity among converts and migrants, a bond that is further reinforced through social gatherings and religious ceremonies.

This article presents a novel approach in three significant ways. First, it places a specific emphasis on the locational context of Mexico

Allah in Mexico" (2005); Sandra Cañas Cuevas, *Koliyal Allah Tsotsunkotik: 'Gracias a Allah Que Somos Mas Fuertes' Identidades Étnicas y Relaciones de Género Entre Los Indígenas Sunníes en San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas* (El Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social [CIESAS], 2006); Medina, "El islam en México"; Arely Medina, *Islam En Guadalajara. Identidad y Relocalización, Zapopan, Jalisco* (Mexico: El Colegio de Jalisco, 2014); Arely Medina, "Conversions to the Islam in Mexico", *Encyclopedia of Latin American Religions*, ed. Henri Gooren (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2016), 1-3; Arely Medina - Michelle Vyoleta Romero Gallardo, "Islam en Chiapas: Uso de Internet en la Proyección de la Identidad Musulmana por Parte de Indígenas Tzotziles en San Cristóbal de Las Casas", *Apropiación y Uso de Tecnologías Digitales en Grupos Étnicos Minorizados en Chiapas* (Guadalajara: Universidad de Guadalajara, 2018), 71-82; Sandra Cañas Cuevas, "The Politics of Conversion to Islam in Southern Mexico", *Islam and the Americas*, ed. Aisha Khan (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2015), 163-185; Chitwood, *The Muslims of Latin America and the Caribbean*, 181-202; Silvia González Calderón et al., "El Espacio del Islam 'Vivo' en los Altos de Chiapas", *Academia XXII* 12/24 (2021), 85.

[26] Arely Medina, "El Camino Hacia lo *Halal*: Ética y Sacralización de los Alimentos en la Vida del Musulmán en Guadalajara", *Religião & Sociedade* 42/2 (2022), 155-175.

City,[27] recognizing it as the primary hub where a majority of Muslims reside in the country and where the growing market is located. By focusing on this particular area, I shed light on the unique challenges and opportunities that Muslim communities encounter in a diverse and vibrant locality. Second, my research examines Muslim immigrants as the primary subjects of inquiry. This scope allows for an examination of the dynamic nature of Muslims' ḥalāl practices in a non-Muslim majority environment, including the diversity of their practices, cultural adaptations and modifications, challenges of integration, and cultural exchange as they settle in.

Based on ethnographic fieldwork, this study finds that Muslim immigrants who choose to move to Mexico adopt a flexible approach to ḥalāl dietary practices. Their intention to adhere to religious dietary laws is shaped by several factors, including their perceived control over available resources, the inherent flexibility within Islamic law, convenience, local unfamiliarity with Islam, and their own attitudes toward practical adaptation. As a result, their voluntary migration triggers a pragmatic adjustment to ḥalāl practices that balances personal beliefs with external constraints and the need for survival and social cohesion in a new environment.

Compared with other similar studies, such as Medina's work on Muslim converts in Guadalajara and Chitwood's research on Puerto Rican Muslims, distinct patterns emerge. Medina highlights how Mexican converts navigate ḥalāl dietary practices amidst social anxieties by often concealing their faith to avoid judgment from family and peers. This concealment complicates adherence to ḥalāl, particularly with staple dishes containing pork, leading converts to reorganize their social lives around Muslim communities. A significant point in Medina's findings is the reclassification of local foods, such as corn and beans, prompted by critiques from foreign Islamic leaders promoting Arabization. These foods that are deeply embedded in Mexican identity are questioned as *makrūh* or doubtful, compelling converts to use analogy to reaffirm their permissibility. This reflects not only dietary adaptation but also broader negotiations between cultural heritage and external religious authority.

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[27] INEGI, *Panorama de Las Religiones en México 2010*. The 2010 census is the only source that provides the Muslim population by state in the country.

Similarly, Chitwood reports that for Puerto Rican Muslims (converts), food is central to their sense of belonging and cultural negotiation. While facing both loss and creative recombination, Puerto Rican Muslims use food as a medium to integrate their Islamic practices into their diverse heritage; one shaped by Taíno, African, Spanish, and other influences. Their adaptation is not only about substituting ingredients but also about reimagining traditions. Like Mexican converts, they experience tension between maintaining a Muslim identity and honoring local foodways, but they often respond with artistic and cultural innovation that affirms both.

In contrast, the experiences of Muslim immigrants in Mexico, as examined in this study, reveal a more flexible and pragmatic approach. Unlike converts, immigrants are less concerned with reconciling past and present identities. Their ḥalāl practices are shaped more by necessity, such as resource availability, convenience, and limited public understanding of Islam, than by theological reflection. Dietary adjustments among immigrants are typically practical and are aimed at maintaining religious observance without major cultural reinterpretation or conflict.

Although both groups engage in self-reflection, their motivations diverge. Converts confront deeper questions of identity, morality, and belonging, with food becoming a site of cultural and spiritual negotiation. In contrast, immigrants prioritize adaptability and survival, treating ḥalāl as a guideline that is navigated amid constraints rather than as a marker of identity transformation. This comparison underscores how religious observance can reflect different modes of integration, specifically, culturally embedded negotiation for converts and pragmatic adjustment for migrants.

Therefore, this study offers a unique contribution by examining how Muslim migrants in Mexico adjust their ḥalāl practices through a balance of personal faith, the flexibility inherent in Islamic law, and their interaction with the local environment; this marks a distinct shift from the experiences of Muslim converts in Puerto Rico and Mexico's long-established Muslim populations. The main research questions are how do Muslim immigrants in Mexico negotiate the challenges presented by adhering to ḥalāl dietary practices within a predominantly Catholic cultural and culinary environment and how do these negotiations relate to their integration into the host society's

culinary landscape? Studying observations at the consumer level means exploring ḥalāl consumption as a way of Muslim life from the bottom up. Understanding the intricacies of ḥalāl consumption within the framework of Muslim life can offer valuable perspectives for scholars, NGOs, businesses, and policy-makers seeking to engage with and support diverse Muslim populations outside of Muslim-majority countries, particularly in countries in Latin America such as Mexico.

2. Making Sense in Motion: Methodology and Framework

2.1. Profile of the Informants

All of the informants originated from Muslim-majority countries, including Pakistan, Afghanistan, Türkiye, Malaysia, Indonesia, Morocco, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Lebanon, Sudan, Somalia, and Albania. This diverse background provides a broad perspective of the experiences of Muslims from various cultural contexts. They are diverse in age, ranging from 18 to 54 years, with an average age of approximately 35 years. Their length of stay in the country varies widely, from 8 months to 21 years, with an average duration of approximately three years. In terms of gender distribution, 86% of the informants are male, while 14% are female. This disparity reflects both a sampling limitation and broader migration trends. First, male immigrants are generally more visible and accessible in public spaces such as mosques, restaurants, and community gatherings where much of the fieldwork was conducted. Second, this gender ratio mirrors the reality of Muslim immigration patterns to Mexico, where male-led migration is more common particularly among those who arrive first to establish economic or legal stability before bringing family members. Socioeconomically, the majority of informants are self-entrepreneurs, with a significant number also working in informal sectors such as language teaching, street vending, and tech fixes. Other categories include professionals, religious preachers, and students. This varied socioeconomic profile reflects the range of experiences and perspectives within the Muslim community in the country.

2.2. Interviews, Recruitment, and Participant Observations

I conducted semistructured in-depth interviews and informal conversations with the informants. Data saturation was determined when no new themes, patterns, or insights emerged from subsequent

interviews and this point was reached after engaging with 43 individuals. The primary requirement for recruitment for this study was that participants identify as foreign-born Muslims (not local Mexican Muslims), regardless of their level of religiosity. To maximize the reach, a nonprobability of snowball sampling was deployed because of the difficulty in accessing members of the communities in Mexico City. The interviews were conducted in locations chosen by the participants, including cafés, libraries, their homes, parks, and other preferred settings. All of the informants involved in this study provided signed consent forms. To ensure privacy, all real names were coded in the written report.

In addition to interviews, I conducted participant observations as part of my ethnographic fieldwork in Mexico. This included an initial period of observation from 2015 to 2016 and from February 2021 to January 2022. During both periods, I was based in Mexico City, where I resided and carried out the majority of my observations. My approach was overt-participant observation, drawing on "shadowing"[28] and "walking interview"[29] techniques. By physically following my informants in their routines and engaging in real-time conversations while moving through various environments, I was able to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences and cultural practices. For example, I frequently spent time with my informants in informal settings, such as by having meals together, attending social gatherings, participating in both religious and nonreligious festivals and visiting their workspace. Although it was quite time-consuming, this method of observation enabled me to gather rich, contextualized data and produce "thick descriptions"[30] of the social dynamics and experiences within the community.

Ensuring transparency and confidentiality while maintaining a nonjudgmental stance were critical aspects of my data collection process. These considerations were essential for building trust with the

[28] Barbara Czarniawska, *Shadowing, and Other Techniques for Doing Fieldwork in Modern Societies* (Ljubljana: Korotan Ljubljana & Malmö: Liber , 2007).

[29] Margarethe Kusenbach, "Street Phenomenology: The Go-Along as Ethnographic Research Tool", *Ethnography* 4/3 (September 2003), 455-485.

[30] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

informants and encouraging them to provide honest, unscripted responses, thereby minimizing the risk of the "Hawthorne effect".[31]

3. The Theory of Planned Behavior

The theory of planned behavior (TPB)[32] offers a comprehensive framework for comprehending the intricacies of food consumption behavior, which can be applied to Muslim ḥalāl consumption. According to TPB, the success of a behavior relies on three factors: attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Attitudes toward a behavior reflect a person's positive or negative evaluation of performing this behavior, which, within the context of religious individuals, can be closely tied to the role of religion. Subjective norms refer to social pressures, particularly within Muslim communities or the environment. Attitudes and subjective norms are thus pivotal in influencing individuals' intentions before engaging in behavior. Moreover, the third element of TPB, perceived behavior control, is the ease or difficulty of performing a behavior and can directly influence behavior performance. Thus, by examining attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, researchers and practitioners can gain insights into the factors that shape Muslim individuals' choices (i.e., behavior intentions). This understanding can contribute to the development of interventions that promote informed and culturally sensitive decision-making in ḥalāl food consumption in a non-Muslim country where there is no assistance or certification present.

Although TPB is predominantly used in quantitative research focused on prediction, it has also been applied, albeit less frequently, in qualitative studies.[33] The limited use in qualitative research may be

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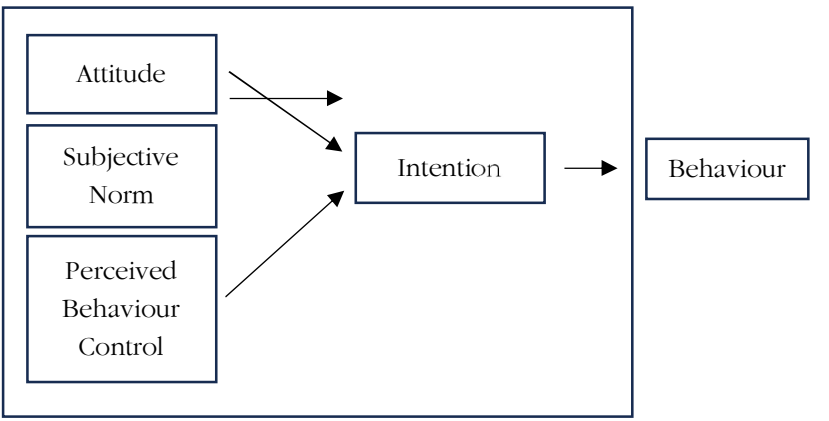
[31] Rob McCarney et al., "The Hawthorne Effect: A Randomised, Controlled Trial", *BMC Medical Research Methodology* 7/1 (December 2007), 30.

[32] Icek Ajzen, "From Intentions to Actions: A Theory of Planned Behavior", *Action Control*, ed. Julius Kuhl - Jürgen Beckmann (Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 1985), 11-39; Icek Ajzen, "The Theory of Planned Behavior", *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 50/2 (December 1991), 179-211.

[33] Seán Kelleher et al., "Factors That Influence Nursing and Midwifery Students' Intentions to Study Abroad: A Qualitative Study Using the Theory of Planned Behaviour", *Nurse Education Today* 44 (September 2016), 157-164.

attributed to the greater effort required to demonstrate the rigor and credibility of the findings.

Figure 1: Theory of Planned Behaviour



Source: Ajzen (1985)

This study employed inductive thematic analysis (TA) to examine the qualitative data collected from the informants. TA is a widely used method in qualitative research that involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (or themes) within data.[34] Once the data were coded by using NVivo 12, they were organized and interpreted using TPB as an analytical framework, enabling a deeper understanding of how individual beliefs, social influences, and perceived control shaped the informants' experiences.

4. Setting the Scene: Mexico and Ḥalāl

Islam has been present in Mexico in historical accounts of Spanish colonization, slavery, migration, and missionaries' missions. Currently, Muslims make up 0.003% of the population, which is approximately 7,982,[35] and the majority reside in the capital, Mexico City. This city has become a hub for Islamic activities and institutions, including embassies of Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member

[34] Virginia Braun - Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology", *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3/2 (January 2006), 77-101.

[35] INEGI, "Censo de Población y Vivienda 2020".

countries, Muslim associations, and ḥalāl certification offices.[36] These entities have the potential to play a significant role in fostering cultural exchange and supporting Muslim communities.

Globally, the ḥalāl industry was valued at USD 5.73 trillion in 2016 and is projected to reach USD 9.71 trillion by 2025. The market is driven by both Muslims and non-Muslim consumers seeking ethical products.[37] Non-Muslim-majority countries such as Australia and Brazil have recognized the economic benefits of and become key players in this market, with Mexico also showing growing interest. To participate, manufacturers must adhere to stringent ḥalāl certification standards and undergo recognition processes, especially in countries with national ḥalāl authorities.

Mexico began actively pursuing opportunities in the ḥalāl market in the 21st century. The country's initial efforts in ḥalāl certification started in 2016 under then-President Enrique Peña Nieto, who aimed to diversify the national economy by reducing dependence on the U.S. and expanding into Middle Eastern and Southeast Asian markets. This initiative led to the certification of ḥalāl products, particularly in the agri-food sector, with a focus on exporting ḥalāl meat to Gulf countries.

Seminars and workshops organized by Islamic embassies in collaboration with global ḥalāl bodies have been crucial in promoting the ḥalāl industry in Mexico. For example, in 2016, the Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE) organized a seminar in Mexico to increase cooperation between Malaysian and Mexican businesses. Although this event focused primarily on various sectors, the discussion of ḥalāl certification sparked significant interest among Mexican attendees.

By 2018, the Mexican government took further steps to promote the ḥalāl industry by organizing a seminar called "Oportunidades de

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36 Mat Hasif, *Being Muslim, Performing Mexicanness: Religious Identity Negotiations Among Muslim Immigrants in Mexico*; Hasif, "Muslim Immigrant Identifications in Mexico's YouTube Sphere".

37 See Arif Billah et al., "Factors Influencing Muslim and Non-Muslim Consumers' Consumption Behavior: A Case Study on Halal Food", *Journal of Foodservice Business Research* 23/4 (July 2020), 324-349; Mathew et al., "Acceptance on Halal Food Among Non-Muslim Consumers"; Rezai Golnaz et al., "Non-Muslim Consumers' Understanding of Halal Principles in Malaysia", *Journal of Islamic Marketing* 3/1 (January 2012), 35-46.

Negocio en el Mercado Halāl" (Business Opportunities in the Ḥalāl Market) (see Figure 2). This seminar aimed to attract local businesses, especially in agriculture, to tap into the ḥalāl market. The targeted markets included Gulf countries and other Muslim-majority nations, such as Malaysia, Turkey, and Indonesia.[38] Another seminar in 2020, in collaboration with Halal Quality México S.A. de C.V., focused on ḥalāl certifications and market opportunities in Malaysia.

Figure 2: Poster for the Mexican Government's seminar on 'Business Opportunities in the Halal Market' held in Mexico City in 2018

[38] PROMEXICO, "Exporta Halal", *Gob.Mx* (18 November 2018).

4.1. Local Ḥalāl Certifiers

Despite the Mexican government's unsuccessful attempt to establish a top-down ḥalāl certification body, private companies have gradually filled this gap. The first ḥalāl certification body in Mexico, "Halal Consultants", was established in 1994 by Omar Weston, a British Muslim, under the auspices of Centro Cultural Islámico de México A.C. (CCIM). This certification service later evolved into Viva Halal A.C. and moved to the state of Morelos. Since then, more private ḥalāl certification bodies have emerged, many of which are led by immigrants. By 2023, three local-based and six international ḥalāl certification bodies were operating in Mexico (see Table 1). These organizations differ in coverage and fees based on their affiliations with global ḥalāl accreditations, which act as a passport to enter specific ḥalāl markets.

Table 1: The list of Ḥalāl Certifiers in Mexico City

N	Name	Type	Year of Establishment	Location
1	The Centro Cultural Islámico de México (CCIM) / (Viva Halal A.C.)	*Local*	1994	CDMX
2	Global Consulting & Business Halal Mexico	*Local*	2015	Polanco, CDMX
3	Regulatory Affairs Conformity Services (RACS)	*Headquartered in UAE*	2016	Cuauhtémoc, CDMX
4	Estándar Global de Certificación Halal S.L[39]	*Headquartered in Spain*	2017	Reforma, CDMX
5	Federação das Associações Muçulmanas do Brasil (FAMBRAS)	*Headquartered in Brazil*		CDMX

[39] The Mexico branch does not have a registered office other than a reception of call service and an address in Reforma, Mexico City.

6	Center for the Dissemination of Islam for Latin America (CDIAL)	*Headquartered in Brazil*	Unknown	CDMX
7	The Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America (IFRANCA)	*Headquartered in Chicago, United States*	Unknown	CDMX
8	Halal Quality México S.A. de C.V	*Local*	2019	Reforma, CDMX

The main goal of these ḥalāl certifiers has been to export products, which target Muslim consumers outside of Latin America. However, the local Muslim community has also begun to benefit from these efforts, as ḥalāl-certified products are gradually becoming available domestically. As of 2021, only a few products with ḥalāl logos were available in Mexican supermarkets, including tostadas from the Mexican brand "Charras" and a few Nestlé products. Some of these products were primarily intended for the U.S. market but were also sold in Mexico. Interestingly, some products that once had the ḥalāl logo no longer do, such as packed meat from the "Sukarne" brand.

Figure 3: Crispy toast tortillas brand Charras is widely available in Mexican hypermarkets

Figure 4: Lechera (Condensed Milk) from Nestle that has the ḥalāl logo

4.2. Informal Sectors

Because of the limited availability of ḥalāl products in the formal market, some Muslims in Mexico rely on informal sectors to obtain ḥalāl meat. For example, unprocessed ḥalāl meat is often sold from the back of a van in front of the Centro Cultural Educativo Musulmán (CCEM), in Polanco, Mexico City, during Friday prayers, as shown in Figure 5. Customers can place orders in advance or purchase stock available that day. This informal sector, operated by individuals such as Mr. Hamzah, demonstrates how the ḥalāl food chain in Mexico has cultivated loyalty and extended purchasing power through networking.

In addition to individual vendors, Islamic associations also play a role in the informal ḥalāl sector. People can search online for these associations or use keywords such as "ḥalāl en Mexico" or "Islam en Mexico" to find sources for ḥalāl products. These associations may provide contact information for inquiries about ḥalāl products, prices, and orders. This informal network not only helps maintain ḥalāl dietary adherence but also fosters a sense of community connection and cultural continuity among Muslims living in Mexico, which compensates for the limited formal ḥalāl infrastructure in the country.

Accordingly, although Mexico's ḥalāl industry is still in its early stages, there has been steady progress in developing both local and international ḥalāl certification bodies and improving market access for

ḥalāl products in supermarkets and related outlets. The focus has largely been on export markets, which makes ḥalāl products increasingly available for international consumers. However, given this export-oriented approach, it would be valuable to explore how local Muslims navigate their ḥalāl dietary needs despite the limited domestic market.

Figure 5: Selling Ḥalāl Meat outside the Mosque

5. Attitudes Toward Ḥalāl Food Consumption

The attitudes toward ḥalāl consumption among Muslim immigrants in Mexico vary along a spectrum. These attitudes mark the initial stage of the behavioral process and reflect how beliefs and contextual factors shape subsequent ḥalāl consumption practices.

5.1. A Positively Inclined but Contextually Flexible Stance

Most of the Muslim informants began their stay in Mexico with positive intentions to adhere strictly to ḥalāl dietary laws, which were driven by deeply held religious convictions, a need to express their Muslim identity, and perceptions of cleanliness and purity. However, they also shared that, over time, their initial intentions evolved toward a more flexible approach. This gradual shift was influenced by practical challenges in daily life to “survive”, exposure to diverse

scholarly opinions within Islamic thought that permit personal interpretation, and a desire to adapt to the local gastronomic culture.

One Pakistani informant who moved to Mexico five years ago to join his Mexican wife and has since established a Pakistani clothing business shared the following:

> [After a few years,] I consulted many local [Mexican] imams and also imams in my home country [Pakistan] about my difficulty here. Many of them suggested that I opt for exemption, just eat normally [chicken or beef] with *bismillāh*. (Informant M27)

Given the limited presence of the Muslim community in the local context, the majority of the informants narrated a similar justification. They presented two main points of argument. First, there is a *Fiqh* concept that is always brought by Muslim scholars and practitioners in difficult situations called *rukhṣah* (the exemption). Based on their interpretation of Islamic texts, they argue that they should consider an exemption from the obligation in Islamic teaching to abide by ḥalāl slaughtering requirements, especially for their special situation of living in a country where it is difficult to find Muslim communities. When eating such food, one only needs to recite "Bismillāh" (in Allah's name).

Despite their flexibility in terms of slaughtering practices, these Muslims are still strict about avoiding pork. This avoidance is highly preferred not only by practicing Muslims but also by the majority of "cultural Muslims" in Mexico. According to Ruthven,[40] "cultural Muslims" or "nominal Muslims" are individuals who identify with Islamic culture, history, or civilization but may not actively practice religious rituals or adhere strictly to Islamic beliefs. Their connection to Islam is primarily ethnic, social, or cultural rather than theological or devotional. They may celebrate Muslim festivals, observe certain traditions, or uphold Muslim identity markers (such as a ḥalāl food preference or modest dress) but may not necessarily pray, fast, or engage deeply with religious doctrines. An example of this can be seen in a Lebanese informant who has lived in Mexico for over five years, is married to a local, and runs his own business. Despite admitting that

[40] Malise Ruthven, *Islam: A Very Short Introduction* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012).

he drinks alcohol frequently, he emphasized that he still avoids eating pork. He shared the following:

> I eat anything here except pork and try to avoid it at all costs… but it's difficult. It does not pique my interest to try, though I can't deny that sometimes I'm curious about *tacos árabe* in Mexico, like how does it taste … particularly the one in Puebla because its origin is from Lebanon. (Informant M01)

This discussion illustrates the nuanced negotiation between cultural identity and environmental influence. Despite not identifying as highly devout, the informant draws a clear boundary around pork consumption, reflecting how pork avoidance persists as a powerful cultural and symbolic marker of Muslim identity. This aversion is particularly tested in Mexico, where pork is prevalent in national cuisine. Notably, *tacos árabes* ("Arab-style tacos") are a popular Mexican dish that originated in Puebla in the early 20th century and were introduced by immigrants from the Middle East, especially Lebanese and Syrian migrants. This style later evolved into the distinctly local creation of *tacos al pastor,* which incorporated Mexican flavors and ingredients. Both versions of these tacos are widely popular and deeply connected to Mexican identity.[41]

The overemphasis on avoiding pork may be explained by several factors, mostly due to Qurʾānic guidance. For example, the Qurʾān explicitly prohibits the consumption of pork in multiple verses (e.g., Q 2:173, 5:3, 6:145, 16:115), which makes it one of the clearest dietary restrictions in Islam. The repetition across various chapters reinforces its significance in Muslim consciousness. As Riaz and Chaudry report, "the most noted exclusion of common meat sources is pork".[42] However, in the case of cultural Muslims, pork avoidance is often less about doctrinal adherence and more about cultural inheritance (embedded in culinary history and food habits), socialization, and identity maintenance. Even when religious observance is minimal or flexible, the taboo around pork tends to persist because of its strong

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[41] Domingo García-Garza, "Prácticas Alimenticias y Clasificación Social ¿Los Tacos Son Un Alimento 'Popular'?", *Civitas - Revista de Ciências Sociais* 10/3 (February 2011).

[42] Mian Nadeem Riaz - Muhammad Munir Chaudry, *Halal Food Production* (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2003), 182.

symbolic role in defining group boundaries. Additionally, many Muslims associate pork with impurity and health concerns. The fatty acid composition of pork fat is biochemically incompatible with that of human fat and metabolic systems.[43]

The second dominant argument is that the majority of Muslims believe that it is permissible in their situation to consume all meats other than pork "slaughtered" by locals. This is because Mexico is a majority Catholic country, and locals are classified as "People of the Book" (e.g., Christians and Jews). The permissibility of consuming in this way is mentioned in the Qurʾān:

> This day all the good things are allowed to you; and the food [slaughtered cattle, permissible animals] of those who have been given the Book is lawful for you and your food is lawful for them. (Q 5:5)

The word "slaughtered" is the main issue for consideration because it is the only permissible way of killing animals for meat, which in Islam, is called *dhabīḥah*. Other alternatives to slaughtering are considered non-*dhabīḥah*.[44] In practice, Islamic scholars generally agree that Muslims are not required to investigate in detail or to ask whether the animal was slaughtered or killed in a non-*dhabīḥah* manner, but if the latter is discovered, it becomes *ḥarām* to eat. Many informants align with these principles and acknowledge allowances such as consuming meat from People of the Book while navigating the challenges of maintaining ḥalāl dietary practices within their lived contexts. This reflects the dynamic interplay between religious doctrine and the practical realities faced by Muslim immigrants.

5.2. Religious Commitments and Parental Responsibility

A key dimension that shapes attitudes toward ḥalāl food consumption among Muslim immigrants is the strong sense of religious commitment coupled with parental responsibility. A smaller group of informants maintained strict adherence to ḥalāl diets, viewing this as a nonnegotiable aspect of their faith. Individuals in this category are often characterized by greater financial capacity, strong religious knowledge of slaughtering practices, or adherence to a more

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[43] J. A. Awan, "Islamic Food Laws-I: Philosophy of the Prohibition of Unlawful Foods'" *Science and Technology in the Islamic World* 6/3 (1988), 151-165.

[44] Animals that were killed, stoned, electrified, strangled, or drawn to death are examples of *ḥarām* meat that cannot be eaten.

conservative Islamic school of thought. Individuals in this category typically prepare their own meals at home or when eating out, choose seafood or kosher options. Although Islamic schools of thought (*madhhabs)* differ in their views on seafood, many consider it the safest alternative in the absence of readily available ḥalāl meat. For example, the previous Pakistani informant shared the following:

> I am particular about ḥalāl, and I cannot find any real ḥalāl restaurants here. [...] I have found a few Arab or Syrian restaurants around my area… and I thought they would sell ḥalāl food, but unfortunately, they don't. They also serve alcohol, which is quite upsetting. So, I normally cook at home and slaughter the animals by myself. [...] If I eat outside, I always go for fish and seafood options… but sometimes I am still worried and suspicious of the way the food is prepared, like maybe using alcohol … or using the same frying pan that they used to prepare the pork. [...] So to avoid doubt and asking so many questions of the waiters, that is why I barely eat outside. (Informant M27)

Strict ḥalāl adherents commonly choose the seafood option, usually by mentioning that they are vegetarian to ensure the quality of the food. Because of global understanding and a common moral obligation among food vendors or providers to ensure that their food is suitable for vegetarians, these Muslims are more confident that the food is free from any meat. However, as the informant stated, this option may still not be free from alcohol or other substances, so individuals still need to ask for confirmation.

Within the family, parental leadership, especially that of the husband, plays a crucial role in upholding strict ḥalāl dietary adherence. Parents often feel a strong responsibility to safeguard their children's religious identity and well-being by ensuring that all food consumed at home meets ḥalāl standards. This sense of duty drives a careful and intentional decision-making around dietary practices and reinforces a positive attitude toward maintaining ḥalāl despite the challenges of living in a minority context.

While living in Mexico City as an expatriate, a Malaysian informant described how his commitment to ḥalāl is largely shaped by his role as the family's religious guide and decision-maker regarding food consumption. He rarely dines out, preferring to maintain ḥalāl

standards at home, and attributes his consistency not only to personal conviction but also to his active leadership in shaping family practices. He explainned that

> We always eat at home because my wife can cook. She prepares a lunch pack for me and for my children, and we have our dinner together at home to ensure everything is ḥalāl […] I normally buy the ḥalāl meat at the mosque … yeah, it is more expensive but that is the only option we have. [...] For the chickens, we have our friend [Muslim colleague] who knows how to slaughter them, and we pay him twice a month for that. (Informant M19)

This narrative illustrates how, within Islam, some husbands take a proactive leadership role in creating a structured environment where religious dietary requirements are clearly prioritized and upheld. Their role not only is essential in ensuring ḥalāl consumption but also serves as a powerful symbol of the family's commitment to religious values. This form of leadership aligns with broader research in migration and religious studies that highlights the significance of family heads as cultural and religious custodians who actively preserve faith practices in diaspora communities.[45] Through their guidance, ḥalāl dietary observance becomes a conscious and nonnegotiable expression of both religious identity and family cohesion.

Notably, this informant's extensive cosmopolitan experience of having lived and worked in countries such as Vietnam and Germany prior to Mexico did not diminish his strict adherence to ḥalāl dietary practices. This suggests that cosmopolitanism and global mobility do not necessarily lead to cultural assimilation or a dilution of religious identity. Instead, for many migrants, these experiences may strengthen their resolve to maintain certain nonnegotiable aspects of their faith and underscore how migration can reaffirm rather than erode deeply held religious commitments.

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[45] Jonathan Scourfield et al., "Religious Nurture in British Muslim Families: Implications for Social Work", *International Social Work* 56/3 (May 2013), 326-342; Trees Pels, "Muslim Families from Morocco in the Netherlands: Gender Dynamics and Fathers' Roles in a Context of Change", *Current Sociology* 48/4 (2000), 75-93; Ziarat Hossain, "Fathers in Muslim Families in Bangladesh and Malaysia", *Fathers in Cultural Context*, ed. David W. Shwalb et al. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012), 95-121.

5.3. Subjective Norms

Subjective norms surrounding ḥalāl food consumption among Muslim immigrants in Mexico reveal a complex interplay of social influences, both local and transnational, that shape everyday dietary decisions.

5.3.1. Lack of External Social Pressure

The interviews revealed that the informants felt minimal social pressure regarding their dietary choices. The general lack of awareness about Islam and the small Muslim population in Mexico contribute to a lower level of judgment or scrutiny. One interviewee, a woman from Afghanistan who considers herself a practicing Muslim but acknowledges the need for exemptions in certain situations, shared her experience. She arrived in Mexico on a refugee permit and is currently in the process of obtaining citizenship. She explained,

> There aren't many Muslims here, but our mosques are growing […] I feel free to make my own choices without worrying about judgment. The locals are quite open-minded about my dietary preferences. If I decline certain non-ḥalāl ingredients, they don't stare or question me as if I'm being scrutinized. It's a relaxed environment. (Informant M11)

According to her account and existing studies, the Muslim community in Mexico, particularly in Mexico City, clearly has been steadily growing and organizing through various associations that also function as mosques and community centers. At least nine such associations represent different sects of Islam (e.g., Sunnī, Shīʿī, and Aḥmadī), providing spaces for religious activities, prayers, and Friday congregational services. The informants report that although overt social pressure around dietary practices is generally absent, subtle negotiations and self-monitoring do occur. Although most community members adopt a flexible approach to ḥalāl food consumption based on their lived experiences, some remain cautiously aware of potential judgments from more observant or stricter Muslims within these gatherings. This dynamic creates a delicate balance between personal dietary choices and communal expectations and illustrates the nuanced interplay between individual practices and collective identity in Mexico's diverse Muslim community.

Based on the informants' experiences, host-society members in Mexico generally exhibit high levels of openness and low levels of

scrutiny toward Muslim dietary practices. Mexicans often respond to religious differences with curiosity and accommodation rather than judgment, especially in everyday interactions. In addition, local awareness of Islam remains limited, which, in turn, reduces the social pressure on Muslims to conform to or justify their dietary rules.

In practice, many informants deploy what they call the "religion card" – a brief, respectful explanation of their beliefs to request modifications to their orders (e.g., "Sorry, I cannot eat pork because of my religious beliefs; please remove any pork from my order"). Far from eliciting skepticism, this strategy typically garners deference, as the devout values underlying the request resonate within Mexico's own faith-oriented culture. Rather than facing confrontation, the informants reported that restaurant staff and peers readily accommodate their needs, which reflects a broader pattern of cultural hospitality toward religious minorities in the country.

5.3.2. Internalized Family Influence

Within the domain of subjective norms, internalized family influence emerged as a salient theme, particularly shaped by familial hierarchy. Although external community pressure was largely absent due to the minimal Muslim population, several informants highlighted that family members, especially parents and fathers, played a central role in shaping ḥalāl-related expectations and behaviors. For example, in households where the father was viewed as the primary religious authority, his commitment to full ḥalāl observance translated into stricter dietary enforcement for the entire family. Similarly, mothers are often perceived as caretakers of religious routines who reinforce ḥalāl consumption through meal preparation and reminders. This dynamic reflects a form of internalized normative pressure, where religious behavior is sustained not through communal accountability but through respect for familial roles and obligations. These findings align with past research[46] that demonstrates that family, particularly parental figures, can serve as a potent source of moral expectation in the absence of broader community enforcement.

[46] Mehkar Sherwani et al., "Determinants of Halal Meat Consumption in Germany", *Journal of Islamic Marketing* 9/4 (October 2018), 863-883; Afzaal Ali et al., "Factors Affecting Halal Meat Purchase Intention: Evidence from International Muslim Students in China", *British Food Journal* 119/3 (2017), 527-541.

5.3.3. Negotiating Norms in Intercultural Relationships

Another key theme under subjective norms is the negotiation of ḥalāl expectations in intercultural family settings, particularly among informants married to non-Muslim Mexicans or with non-Muslim in-laws. In such households, adherence to ḥalāl practices is often mediated by the need to maintain familial harmony and mutual respect. Some informants described adjusting their dietary expectations, such as tolerating non-ḥalāl-slaughtered meat or only avoiding pork, as part of a broader compromise with partners or extended family members who did not share the same religion.

For example, several informants discussed integrating Mexican cuisine into their household meals; sometimes in fully ḥalāl versions (e.g., using ḥalāl chicken purchased from a mosque) and at other times in partial adaptations, such as preparing traditional dishes with non-ḥalāl-slaughtered meat while still avoiding pork. An informant from Lebanon shared that his favorite home-cooked meal is ḥalāl enchiladas made with ḥalāl chicken, although when dining at his in-laws' home, he ate whatever was served to avoid conflict. Moreover, an Iraqi religious preacher explained that in the early stages of living with his in-laws, he ate whatever was served (except for pork), but over time, he communicated his ḥalāl dietary requirements. Now, he prepares his own food when eating at his in-laws' house or chooses non-meat options. At home, he and his Mexican wife alternate between Mexican and Iraqi dishes, collaboratively managing their meals by using substitute meats when necessary. He continued,

> There are many menus here that can be substituted with chicken or beef, so it is no problem. The thing is, I like the way Mexican food tastes, it's very "home cooking", but … I just don't eat spicy food [laughing]. (Informant M39)

The influence of non-Muslim spouses or in-laws often leads to pragmatic adjustments that prioritize family unity and cultural integration while still attempting to uphold core religious values. Moreover, the blending of culinary traditions highlights the flexibility and adaptability of individuals in their private lives. By incorporating elements of Mexican cuisine into their home cooking, they not only honor their cultural heritage but also find a way to feel more connected to their current environment. This practice of culinary integration

serves as a bridge between their past and present, allowing them to maintain their cultural identity while embracing new experiences.

5.3.4. Virtual and Transnational Influences

Despite being physically distant from their home communities, several informants reported feeling monitored or judged through virtual spaces such as social media platforms. These digital networks served as extended moral communities that upheld expectations around ḥalāl adherence, reinforcing a sense of accountability even in geographic isolation. For some, this translated into self-censorship or caution in online behavior. A Pakistani informant, who had previously sought guidance from imams, shared the following:

> I avoid posting pictures of myself eating outside. If I do, I know my cousins or followers back home will start asking, "Is that meat ḥalāl?" or worse, start labeling me as "a liberal Muslim" [….] I don't want to open debates with people back home who don't understand our situation. (Informant M27)

Similar experiences were also shared by other informants, particularly those from strong communal and collectivist cultures such as Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Egypt. These experiences demonstrate how transnational religious ties can also exert normative pressure that shapes consumption practices in subtle but powerful ways. The concern about being labeled a "liberal Muslim" carries a pejorative connotation and signals that such a label is associated with weakened religiosity or nonadherence to Islamic principles. The statement of "our situation" underscores the tension between maintaining religious integrity and managing expectations from those who are disconnected from the immigrant's everyday reality. This reflects broader patterns identified in scholarship,[47] where digital religiosity plays a central role in shaping identity and behavior among Muslim minorities in global contexts.

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[47] Nik Hasif, "Muslim Immigrant Identifications in Mexico's YouTube Sphere"; Wolfgang Wagner et al., "The Veil and Muslim Women's Identity: Cultural Pressures and Resistance to Stereotyping", *Culture & Psychology* 18/4 (2012), 521-541; Claire-Marie Hefner, "Morality, Religious Authority, and the Digital Edge: Indonesian Muslim Schoolgirls Online", *American Ethnologist* 49/3 (2022), 359-373; Bouziane Zaid et al., "Digital Islam and Muslim Millennials: How Social Media Influencers Reimagine Religious Authority and Islamic Practices", *Religions* 13/4 (April 2022), 335.

6. Perceived Behavioral Control

This section examines how Muslim immigrants navigate challenges such as limited ḥalāl availability and social factors, which shape their sense of control and lead to adaptive dietary choices and cultural integration.

6.1. Accessibility and Availability of Ḥalāl Food Options

Because of the very small Muslim population, the limited accessibility and availability of ḥalāl food options in Mexico present a substantial challenge for Muslim immigrants striving to maintain strict ḥalāl dietary practices. This scarcity affects perceived behavioral control by constraining individuals' ability to consistently perform the behavior of consuming fully ḥalāl food. As explained in the background section, ḥalāl production in Mexico is primarily geared toward export markets rather than local consumption, resulting in a limited supply of ḥalāl-certified products readily available for the local Muslim community. Consequently, many informants reported resorting to alternative strategies such as selective purchasing (e.g., buying ḥalāl chicken from mosque stores), preparing homemade meals from limited ingredients, or applying *fiqh*-based allowances such as consuming People of the Book meat to navigate these constraints.

The availability of kosher and vegetarian alternatives provides a practical solution for those unable to find ḥalāl food easily. However, even though alternatives are available, they still present challenges because of their high cost. A Sudanese informant, who has been studying in Mexico for more than two years, shared the challenges that he faced living alone in a non-Muslim environment. He shared as follows:

> Jewish kosher is more developed here, and butcher shops can be found all over Polanco. I consider *kosher* to be ḥalāl because it is permissible in Islam, so I always buy there, and it is the best option we have in Mexico because they are also strictly supervised … and the facility is clean, so you become confident when you buy there. [...] But the price is a little higher, and I don't think every Muslim here can afford it. (Informant M34)

Kosher is not one of the main options for most Muslims because it is not widely available in restaurants or stores in Mexico and is expensive. Consequently, demanding kosher food as an alternative is not possible except at special dedicated places such as in the Polanco, Condesa, and Santa Fe neighborhoods. Like ḥalāl, kosher is a Jewish term used to describe food or products that meet the dietary standards of Jewish law for the sake of spiritual health. Food that does not meet the requirements is called treif (unkosher or forbidden). The determination as to whether it is classified as kosher or treif is based on whether the sources are permitted and are not from prohibited animals (e.g., pigs, rabbits, camels, and shellfish); the approved preparation of meat (i.e., slaughtering and "koshering" to dry the blood); the use of utensils (e.g., they cannot have contact with non-kosher food); and the process of eating (e.g., meat and dairy cannot be eaten together, and the same cooking utensils cannot be used for this mixture). All of these determining factors are mentioned in the Torah, although some prohibitions are unexplored.

Globally, kosher has become one of the alternatives for Muslims, as the majority of Islamic scholars argue that it is permissible to eat kosher meat when it is difficult to find ḥalāl, as the meat is slaughtered by Ahl al-Kitāb (i.e., the People of the Book). Muslims prefer this option over non-ḥalāl certified products because it is close to the standards of ḥalāl cleanliness, if not stricter. At a scholarly level, there is still some debate about the incompatibility of kosher standards with Islamic dietary law, especially given the argument from the Ḥanafī school of law that Jews do not recite "In the name of Allah, most gracious and merciful" when slaughtering. Other than this, no other issue arises.

The kosher market has grown tremendously compared with that of ḥalāl, making it more visible in Mexico. Some hypermarket chains, such as Walmart, Superama, Soriana, and Gigante Mexico, even have a specific kosher section, in line with organic and gluten-free products. However, except for fresh products such as meat, these products are not local products; the majority of canned and grocery products in local stores are imported from the United States, while the oils and canned fish are sourced from Spain, chocolates come from European countries, and other products, such as jam and marmalades, are from France. American kosher products have dominated local markets because of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), an

agreement among the United States, Canada, and Mexico, which has zero tariffs and low transportation costs. The most common brands are Heinz, Borden, Florida Natural, Seneca Sweet, Arden, Vita, Natures Path, Hodgson Mill, Roland, Badia, Smucker's, Dickinson, and Hershey.

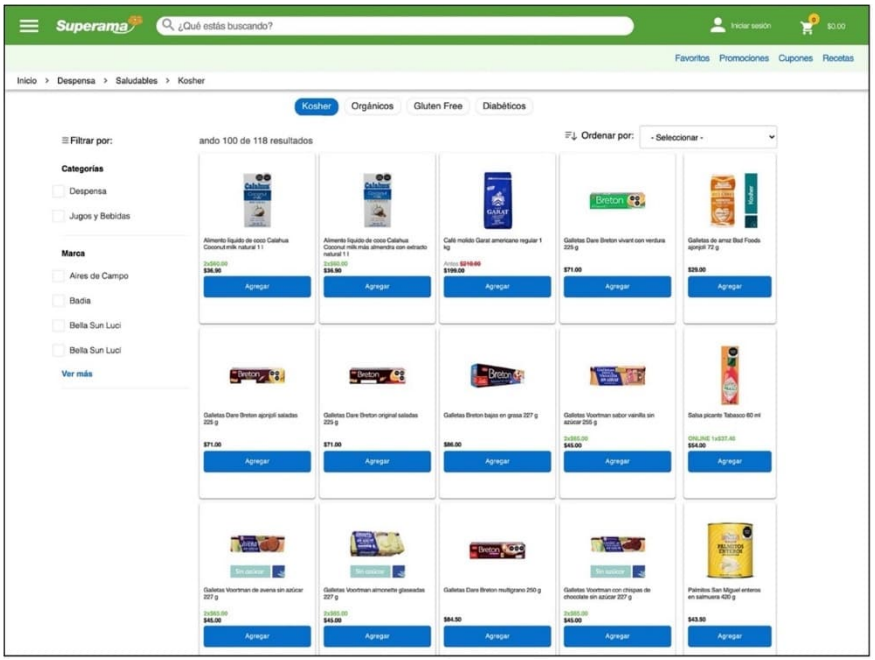

Figure 6: Some of the 118 kosher products available in Superama, Mexico under the healthy section of their website[48]

6.2. High Cost

In addition to kosher, the high cost of ḥalāl food also emerges as a significant barrier that affects Muslim immigrants' perceived behavioral control over maintaining strict ḥalāl dietary practices. When ḥalāl-certified products or meats sold informally are priced substantially higher than their non-ḥalāl counterparts are, individuals experience

[48] https://www.superama.com.mx/catalogo/d-despensa/f-despensa-saludable/l-despensa-kosher.

financial constraints that limit their ability to choose ḥalāl options consistently. This economic burden often forces them to prioritize affordability and accessibility over strict religious adherence, leading to compromises such as choosing non-ḥalāl-slaughtered meat while avoiding explicitly prohibited items such as pork. This financial challenge can weaken their intentions and result in inconsistent behavior, as observed in various Muslim-minority settings where ḥalāl food availability is limited and often expensive.[49] Consequently, economic pressures intersect with cultural and religious factors to shape a pragmatic approach to ḥalāl food, where the ideal is moderated by affordability.

6.3. Cultural Cravings and Food Habits

Beyond limited access, this flexibility is also driven by the challenge of changing deeply ingrained food habits. For many Muslim immigrants, the desire to maintain ties to familiar tastes –particularly fast food brands or culturally embedded dishes– presents a practical challenge to consistent ḥalāl adherence. Such cravings are often amplified by the lack of ḥalāl-certified alternatives, which makes individuals feel constrained in their ability to uphold ideal dietary practices. For example, an Indonesian informant who self-identified as a practicing Muslim stated that he still eats at any local restaurant or well-known franchise that clearly has no ḥalāl certification by simply avoiding meat from impermissible animals. Arriving in Mexico as a postgraduate student, he went on to establish a business, marry a Mexican partner, and raise children, ultimately calling the country home for more than twenty years. He shared the following:

> Here, I still eat at McDonald's because I know most of their burgers do not contain pork. [...] Living here for many years, it is difficult to resist, you know. (Informant M04)

This narrative illustrates the role of habitual cravings and contextual adaptation as barriers to consistent ḥalāl adherence. Although the informant retains an awareness of key religious restrictions, specifically the avoidance of pork, the long-term exposure to a non-ḥalāl

[49] Marco Tieman et al., "Consumer Perception on Halal Meat Logistics", *British Food Journal* 115/8 (2013), 1112-1129; Nuradli Ridzwan Shah Mohd Dali et al. "Is Halal Products Are More Expensive as Perceived by the Consumers? Muslimprenuers Challenges and Opportunities in Establishing a Blue Ocean Playing Field", *Journal of Management & Muamalah* 2 (January 2009), 39-62.

environment gradually weakens his behavioral control. This reflects how the perceived difficulty of consistently locating ḥalāl alternatives, coupled with the comfort and familiarity of certain foods, may override initial intentions. The use of the word "still" indicates that the food at McDonald's reminds him of his past when he used to be able to indulge in the same menu of the same franchise operating in his own Islamic country without needing to worry about ḥalāl-ness. This is what Mead[50] defines as "food habits", which are the manifestations of an individual's habitual decisions regarding the food or drink that they frequently consume in the form of lifestyles, thoughts, and feelings. On a societal level, it can be regarded as a collective behavior that occurs within cultural and geographical boundaries. Moreover, because of the dietary boundaries being contested in a new country, this informant embraced the exemption of being in a Christian country (i.e., eating meat slaughtered by Ahl al-Kitāb at a fast-food franchise) while still avoiding clear and non-debatable prohibited animals (e.g., pork) on the menu.

6.4. Emerging Cultural Integration

The desire to integrate into the local food culture also plays a role in shaping dietary practices. As immigrants settle over time, they often adapt their food habits by blending traditional ḥalāl requirements with local culinary practices. This dynamic process reflects not only practical adjustments but also evolving identities, where maintaining religious observance intersects with embracing elements of the host culture. Understanding this integration is crucial for appreciating how perceived ease or difficulty in adhering to ḥalāl norms fluctuates amid the realities of everyday life abroad.

For example, an Egyptian informant who has been living in Mexico for more than four years, works in an office environment and is married to a local explained his approach to adapting abroad. Embracing the principle of "when in Rome, do as the Romans do", he shared that

> Islam is *easy* [emphasis added], we are now in the country that does not have any ḥalāl restaurants at all […] We are in

[50] Margaret Maed, "The Problem of Changing Food Habits", *Food and Culture: A Reader*, ed. Carole Counihan - Penny van Esterik - Alice P. Julier (New York: Routledge, 2008), 18.

> Mexico, and I also want to try their food like the famous *tacos* and so on but of course not the ones made from pork because that is the limit. Our prophet once said, "You say bismillāh, and eat it"… then you just *tawakkal ʿalá Allāh*. (Informant M07)

"Easy" in this context can be interpreted as indicating that this Muslim believes that his religion is accommodating and flexible and provides solutions for every problem. Many of the informants expressed their love for Mexican food. The most popular local foods among these Muslims were *tacos, quesadillas, pozole, chilaquiles, enchiladas, mole, tostadas*, and *tamales,* and all of these dishes have non-pork options such as chicken or beef. For example, a Jordanian informant who has lived in the country for more than 21 years mentioned that his favorites are "*barbacua, mole*, and *tazajo* (from Oaxaca)". The most frequently mentioned exclusive pork-based dishes they avoid are *tacos al pastor, carnitas, cochinita pibil,* and *chilorio*.

Nonetheless, despite their enthusiasm for local cuisine, the informants still took several precautions to avoid over-compromising their Islamic faith-based demands, mostly by avoiding any ingredient contaminated by non-ḥalāl. For example, Mexicans use manteca (pork fat) in almost everything that they fry and bake, and they rarely use plant oil for the same purposes. This means that Muslims have to be quite vigilant before ordering. The most common question is "What type of oil do you use to fry this, vegetable oil or Manteca?" Other questions are "Is it pork?", "Is there any ingredient made of pork inside?", or "Do you use the same frying pan to prepare pork dishes?" In addition to pork, some informants check for the presence of other substances, such as alcohol and gelatin, especially in spaghettis and pastries. For instance, "Do you add wine to it?" or "Is there gelatin inside?" This is because gelatin is normally extracted from the skin or bones of pigs, which creates concern in Muslim communities.[51]

In some situations, cultural integration in Mexico occurs unintentionally, especially in social settings. For example, a Pakistani informant shared his experience during an emergency situation:

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[51] See Aizhan Rakhmanova et al., "Meeting the Requirements of Halal Gelatin: A Mini Review", *MOJ Food Processing & Technology* 6/6 (December 2018).

> I'm strict with ḥalāl and only choose vegetarian when I'm outside […] I noticed here that vegetarians are not that common in Mexico; Mexicans are still not obsessed with food identity, so they are not used to tolerating others' preferences. [...] I declined [chicken] one time during dinner when I visited my friend's home. I was surprised because he didn't tell me we were going to eat there, and his mom prepared a lot of food for us. […] I only ate salad and the rest. Although his mom did not look upset, my friend's brother said privately to me something like, "Didn't your religion teach you to appreciate others?" It's considered impolite in Mexico to refuse food because not everyone is wealthy enough to afford it. (Informant M27)

This statement reveals how Muslim immigrants encounter varying "breaking points" that compel them to negotiate their religious dietary commitments in real time. This in situ approach required the informant to make a quick decision without having the time to check all of the parameters beforehand. This crisis tested not only his decision-making abilities but also his ability to adapt. His reflection on "food identity" is particularly insightful. In many developed or more culturally diverse countries, there is broader social recognition and respect for dietary choices such as vegetarian, ḥalāl, kosher, vegan, and gluten-free, among others. Hosts often take these factors into consideration to avoid offense or discomfort. In contrast, in home-based social settings, the Mexican context described here features less familiarity with such dietary distinctions, often leading to misunderstandings and social friction.

However, despite these pressures, the informant's decision to maintain his ḥalāl principles demonstrates a strong personal commitment to religious beliefs even in this challenging situation. However, not all Muslim immigrants respond in the same way; some choose to accommodate social demands in similar circumstances by eating whatever is served to avoid conflict or social discomfort. This variation highlights the diverse strategies that Muslim immigrants employ to balance their religious commitments with the realities of intercultural living as they negotiate between personal conviction and social harmony in different ways.

7. Inconsistent Intention and Behavior in Ḥalāl Consumption

By combining the three TPB components, Muslim immigrants in Mexico initially hold a strong, positive intention toward ḥalāl consumption driven by religious obligations, identity, and perceptions of cleanliness. Over time, this intention often shifts to a contextually flexible stance, which reflects limited ḥalāl accommodations, the practical realities of living in a non-Muslim-majority country, and a desire for cultural integration. However, the intention to avoid non-ḥalāl animals (e.g., pork) remains unwavering, underscoring core religious commitments and for some, parental responsibility to protect family observance. A small subset of informants maintains strict intentions, persisting in fully ḥalāl-slaughtered consumption despite the barriers.

Behaviorally, the challenges result in the inconsistent consumption of ḥalāl-slaughtered meat, which is a rational outcome of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. The informants leverage *fiqh*-based allowances (e.g., the People of the Book) and face low social pressure, yet experience internalized family influence, intercultural negotiations, and virtual/transnational monitoring, to guide their choices. They also navigate barriers such as limited access to affordable ḥalāl or kosher options, high costs, cultural cravings, and ongoing cultural integration. Despite some flexibility, the enduring intention to avoid pork manifests in precautionary behaviors by asking for confirmation and scrutinizing ingredients, highlighting how core religious values continue to inform daily practices.

Conclusion

This study sheds light on the complex ways in which Muslim immigrants in Mexico navigate ḥalāl food consumption in a minority context, using the theory of planned behavior (TPB) as an analytical lens. Although their initial intentions toward ḥalāl were generally strong, rooted in religious belief, identity, and cleanliness, most informants adopted a contextually flexible approach over time. This flexibility was shaped by a combination of practical barriers (such as limited access and affordability), exposure to diverse *fiqh*-based exemptions, and a desire for cultural integration. The study further highlights how subjective norms operate beyond physical

communities, with internalized family expectations, intercultural household negotiations, and transnational digital networks that influence dietary choices. Moreover, perceived behavioral control was affected not only by physical access to ḥalāl food but also by emotional attachments to familiar non-ḥalāl dishes and the high cost of certified alternatives. This study innovatively focuses on a numerically negligible Muslim minority outside the typical Western context (i.e., a medium-sized or large minority). It contributes to expanding ḥalāl consumption scholarship by revealing how religious practice is pragmatically adapted in less-researched, resource-limited settings such as Mexico. The findings emphasize that ḥalāl observance is not a binary act but a dynamic process negotiated through personal convictions, sociocultural environments, and global religious discourses. As Muslim migration continues to diversify globally, understanding these localized adaptations becomes crucial for policy-makers, community leaders, and researchers aiming to support religious inclusion and dietary accommodation in multicultural societies.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND FUNDING

This paper was part of the author's Ph.D. dissertation that explored identity negotiations among Muslim immigrants in Mexico and was supported by funding from the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education.

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