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## THE RELIGIOUS SEMINARY AND ITS ROLE IN SUPPORTING NATIONAL PRODUCTS FROM THE CUSTOMERS' POINT OF VIEW A SURVEY STUDY OF THE OPINIONS OF A SAMPLE OF PROFESSORS AND STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF KUFA

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### ABSTRACT

This research, of significant importance, aims to understand the role of the religious seminary in Najaf and its adequacy in supporting national products through seminary directives and guidelines to support and acquire these products and prefer them over foreign products from the perspective of professors and students/University of Kufa. It also seeks to identify the extent of customer preference for these products, a crucial aspect that your participation will greatly contribute to.

Since previous years, specifically after the year (2003), there has been a great interest in improving the image of national products and identifying the factors influencing customer attitudes towards them.

The research relied on the questionnaire to survey the opinions of a sample of customers represented by professors and students of the University of Kufa, with a total of (75) customers. The questionnaire consisted of (8) questions and used statistical and analytical methods.

The research problem arises from a question that is:

(What is the role of the religious seminary in supporting national products from the customers' point of view?)

The importance of the research is evident from the necessity of having such studies to introduce society to the effective and important role of the religious seminary in Najaf Al-Ashraf in supporting products that are produced locally within the borders of Iraq. Your participation in this research will help us to meet the needs of customers for those products, to reduce dealing with foreign products, and to achieve clear tangible results for the role of the religious seminary in supporting Iraqi economic activity as a whole, a role that has been significant throughout history.

## KEYWORDS

Significant importance, aims to understand the role of the religious seminary.

## INTRODUCTION

The economy has become the primary concern of politicians, institutions, and economists. The strength of the regime and the state is due to the strength of its economy. Because of the competition from many factors, the economic issue has become a center of continuous conflict between production and service institutions, which has been reflected in customers in one way or another.

The Iraqi economy has suffered from a weak ability to develop its base of national products for the sectors (agricultural, industrial, and service), whether in terms of quality, consumer protection and safety, or prices appropriate to their income level, which has reduced production and increased unemployment (Ibrahim, 2011: 1). As a result of these circumstances, all institutions have sought to support national products. Among the most important of these institutions, the religious seminary has distinguished itself, and it is considered one of the largest institutions or schools

that present the Islamic religion in its Shiite Imami version. Graduate religious scholars in Islamic jurisprudence, preachers, and researchers with diverse specializations and religious and social functions (Al-Madun et al., 2023: 13). The places of spiritual and jurisprudential study among Shiites are called (the seminary).

Many seminaries were found that formed a religious and scientific center of gravity for them, and many of them witnessed growth and prosperity in various countries and on all levels: political, social, and economic. The most essential seminaries are the Najaf Seminary and the Qom Seminary (Yahya, 2018: 198). In this research, we focused on the religious seminary in Najaf Al-Ashraf, as the seminary has assumed its responsibilities and fulfilled its duties in all fields where it can move, including the economic field. The research problem was embodied in the heavy reliance on foreign products.

The research was important in identifying how efforts can support the national product and customers' preference to buy it and how to find what is known as the customer (National Consumer) (Al-Kharibi, 2023: 245).

The research consists of three sections. The first section dealt with the research methodology. In contrast, the second section included basic concepts about the religious seminary in Najaf Al-Ashraf and the ideas of national products. As for the third section, it focused on analyzing the questionnaire form.

## METHODOLOGY

First: The research problem: Due to the growing gap between national production and imports from abroad, especially in recent years, for various reasons, the most important of which is flooding the market with products similar to local products at lower prices in the importing country.

Second: The importance of the research: The importance of the study lies in:

1- Producers in all agricultural, industrial, and service sectors must pay attention to the quality and safety of the products that they offer to customers in the local market at appropriate prices as high quality is the basis for preferring national products over foreign ones.

2—Taking into account the support of the religious seminary for national products through its directives

and guidelines, it encourages producers and customers and motivates them to stay away from foreign products for religious and economic reasons. This serves the interests of the economy and satisfies customers, creating a competitive environment compared to imported products.

## Third: Research objectives

The research aims to achieve the following:

- 1- Measuring the role of the religious seminary in supporting and encouraging national products.
- 2- Identifying the level of customer response and awareness of the quality of national products.
- 3- Explain the reasons for the customer's preference for national products compared to foreign products.
- 4- Providing recommendations to protect the customer and provide him with a safe cover from the harm of the external product.

Fourth: Research Methodology: The research relied on the descriptive analytical method to obtain information related to the research variables through a survey of the opinions of a specific sample, interpreting the data, and extracting results.

## Fifth: Research Limits

1- Temporal Limits: The research completion period extended from 5/22/2024 to 6/4/2024

2- Spatial Limits: The questionnaire was applied to professors, students, and the University of Kufa in Najaf Governorate

#### Sixth: Research Sample

The research sample was randomly selected, amounting to (75) customers from users of national and imported products from students and professors of the University of Kufa.

#### Fundamental concepts about the seminary

##### First: Its historical development:

Imam Amir al-Mu'minin, peace be upon him, laid the foundations of the seminary in Kufa, and after him, the Imams of the Household, peace be upon them, took care of it. To manage the conditions of the Islamic community in general, which Islam as a whole was exposed to. The history of the seminary in Najaf al-Ashraf extended to nearly a thousand years, as the study in it was inaugurated by al-Tusi Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin al-Hasan (1068 AD) after he was forced to migrate to it from Baghdad in (1056 AD) following the persecution he was subjected to at the hands of the Seljuks. Since then, Najaf has become a scientific capital that embraces students of Islamic sciences who migrated to it from various countries (al-Rifai, without a year: 256).

The seminary is the leading institution of the Islamic state, as it has a high status in religious circles in

general and the Shiites in particular. It gained this elevation from its spiritual quality, which elevates it to a high position that is difficult to reach except with many conditions (Nasir, 2018: 8).

##### Second: The concept and definition of the religious seminary:

The religious seminary is one of the most significant spiritual institutions. It is a group of religious science schools managed by senior scholars who are under their supervision. It includes students of religious sciences for the jurisprudence school affiliated with the Twelver School of Thought. Many prominent jurists and senior Shiite scholars graduated from it in the past, including Sheikh Al-Tusi, Allamah Al-Hilli, and Sheikh Al-Ansari, and its modern scholars such as Sayyid Al-Khoei, Sayyid Al-Sistani, Sayyid Al-Hakim, and other venerable scholars.

##### Third: The importance of the religious seminary:

Thanks to the prominent role played by the religious seminary in the current era, cities have witnessed peace and stability. Perhaps the importance of this entity and its sensitive position in the lives of Muslims has made their thinkers and elites talk about it constantly from multiple and different angles. The scholars of the seminary urged the state to study its trade relations with other countries in a way that ensures commercial progress and the continuity of development. It has to monitor the markets and create

new production sectors to create job opportunities that absorb people's energies and community talents (Al-Sadr, 1961: 350).

In this research, we focus on the role of the religious seminary in Najaf Ashraf in supporting national products through the most critical dimensions:

### 1. Rational decision:

Rational decision is an essential element in Islamic realism. It leads to moderation and appropriate behavior, so encouraging national production is a sensible matter in all countries of the world and is permissible within its legal framework, which may be a legal and national duty at times if it opens up some alarming results from increasing unemployment in our society, as a result of relying on imports, and closing job opportunities in the agricultural and industrial fields (Al-Tai).

2. Authority and Responsibility: The launch of the Islamic project in the fifties placed powers and responsibilities before the religious seminary authorities. The powers of jurists and authorities grew, and the scope of their influence and intervention expanded. Their hand was extended to bear much greater responsibilities than in the past for what is presented in the regional and international arena to perform its role efficiently in guiding and leading the nation towards the higher goals of Islam. (Love of God, 2022: 2). The religious scholar is not an honorary title

acquired by a student in a religious seminary or a member of a scholarly family, but rather it is the title of the person with the great message and the vast responsibility, and the higher his position, the more his responsibilities increase, reaching the position of the reference, which is considered the highest position in the Shiite institution, which imposes on the reference to bear the most significant responsibilities towards the nation in the cultural, political, social and economic fields (Al-Shami, 1999: 73).

### 3: Motivation and encouragement:

All the campaigns to encourage and demand national products have yet to achieve the desired success or the intended goals. Traders are still importing foreign products, and customers still accept them, albeit to varying degrees. Among these products (food, medicine, devices and tools, and other products), the state undertakes to guarantee a portion of its purchases of the products of those craft forces, such as wooden and metal furniture, national textiles, and others, for example, not limited to, to encourage and develop. (Saleh, 2019: 4-5). In addition to adopting the marketing of the products of craft complexes, whether for the benefit of the government itself, as we mentioned, or for The way to spread the sale in cooperative complexes exempt from fees, which should be strongly reactivated, on the broadest scale within the program to protect Iraqi crafts and products.



Motivation is "A group of biological and psychological factors that work to create or direct behavior to work continuously and in a better way." The most essential elements of it are (individual, job, job and institution, individual and institution, institution and environment, and personal and situation) (Zalikha and Fatima, 2019: 47-48).

#### 4- Forms of support:

Support means the benefit or financial contribution provided by the exporting country or any form of income support or price support that leads to achieving a benefit for entities or individuals who produce, transport, sell, or export products. The most prominent forms of support are: (Ben Jalili, without a year: 5)

A. Direct financial support: Establishing an export support fund to organize the flow of financial resources for this purpose would be the first step.

B- Tax exemptions such as exemption from profit tax.

T- Subsidies for intermediate inputs and exemption of imported supplies from customs duties or refund of such duties after export.

C- Adjusting the exchange rate for the exporter.

H- Indirect support, such as support for water and electricity services.

G- Financial support

Export is considered one of the essential pillars on which most countries' economies depend to provide permanent sources of foreign currency, as export resources can be used to finance the needs of the state's production apparatus, service external debt, and pay the import bill. The food industries sector is one of the most critical sectors of the leading manufacturing industries in developing and developed countries in general and in Egypt in particular, as this sector contributes to driving economic growth and achieving food security, as well as contributing to the relative reduction of the unemployment problem and improving the trade balance by increasing exports of this sector. The food industries belong to the group of manufacturing industries, known as agricultural industries, in which intermediate plant and animal raw materials are used, which are processed and converted into manufactured food materials suitable for final consumption or are presented in the form of semi-manufactured or raw food materials directed for use as intermediate products in other production processes. (Mutawa, 2012: 505). Fourth: Supporting national products The national product represents the central axis in the economic development process of countries, and it also represents the national identity that must be protected and supported by all parties, whether governmental or popular, through legislation and developing strategies that support industrial development in the country that supports the national product (Qasim, and Fahd 2021: 74). Iraq was in dire

need of presenting a vision related to its support for national products, as it is constantly seeking to join the World Trade Organization. Despite the significant areas achieved by national products, whether in quality, quantitative production, or marketing. The customer still accepts foreign products of all kinds. Support has been defined as "any financial contribution, direct or indirect, whether it is a product, an exporter, or a group of producers or exporters provided by the government of the country of origin or any public body therein, which results in achieving a benefit for the recipient of support (Hashem, 2020:24). Armstrong & Kotler have defined products as Everything that can be offered in the market to attract attention or demand, or consumption, which leads to the satisfaction of a need or desire (Al-Khafaji, 103:2018). Here, we focus on the most essential main dimensions that should be taken into account when supporting national products:

#### 1: Quality:

The concept of quality refers to the Latin word "Qualitas," which means the nature of the thing, and in ancient times, it meant accuracy and mastery.

(Iraqi Facts) Products were defined as The sum of industrial and agricultural goods (except crops) produced by the industrial sector in Iraq. As for the similar product: It is the local product that is similar in all respects to the imported product or very similar to

its specifications or uses. As for local producers Understanding: The sum of local producers of the local product identical to the product in the public or mixed sector or who collectively produce a large portion of it.

Quality means the ability of management to meet consumers' needs and desires in a manner consistent with their expectations through a set of dimensions (Al-Taie and Al-Abbadi, 2010: 151). We see appropriate quality as a clear reality that satisfies customers' needs, desires, and requirements.

Improving product quality and motivating companies to work is done according to the specifications and approved international standards.

This is done by studying its most important dimensions, represented by;

1. Performance.
2. Special features.
3. Reliability.
4. Conformity.
5. Durability.
6. Serviceability.
7. External appearance and aesthetics.
8. Perceived quality (Saleh, 2007: 28)

2. Safety: Product safety is one of the essential obligations that producers must consider. It has become necessary for the customer to know the risks of goods and services that may affect him directly or indirectly. He must purchase products that provide security and safety. The security of physical or moral products, or in his health, is achieved by finding a kind of balance between all the elements concerned, i.e., the components and characteristics of those products (Mahmoud and Saleh, 2022: 5). We will focus on the agricultural sector as it is one of the critical sectors, despite not occupying the forefront in the formation of the gross domestic product. Due to the enormous contribution of the oil sector to this formation (Shangar and Mahdi, 2017: 5). The crude oil sector dominates the country's economy. It is considered the primary source of income generation and foreign currency to finance import operations abroad. In line with the new changes that have occurred in the Iraqi economy and the opening of markets to global trade and to reduce the risks that may affect the customer, whether, in the interests of safe food (Safe Food), health affairs provide health and preventive factors to maintain the health of customers, it takes the necessary measures to ensure the health and safety of food and its suitability for human consumption in all stages of food production, manufacturing, distribution, and preparation. Food must be free of pollutants and risks so that it does not cause harm, damage, or disease to humans in the long or short

term. This is based on laboratory results and analyses. Small and medium-sized enterprises need to gain basic knowledge on preventing and controlling food safety risks by applying critical control points in retail (Biglia & Dongo, 2020:4).

A product can be defined as something generated by the production process, whether industrial, agricultural, technical, or some other jurisprudence. Safety is the state in which the customer's physical and health integrity is preserved and fully protected from danger.

Safety has several requirements, including It is a safe means under normal or reasonably expected conditions of use, including the actual duration of use, to comply with relevant standards at the national or external level. Product safety is achieved by balancing all the elements, i.e., the components and characteristics of the commodity or service. This is to reduce the risks that may affect the customer, whether in his material and moral interests or in his health (Dong, 2023:2).

Build a national industry and avoid harm from Iraqi products and local producers. Iraqi laws have been enacted to prevent harmful practices of dumping markets with products, unjustified increases in imports, or imported products supported by exporting countries to Iraq. Which leads to the loss of fair competition conditions. And take appropriate



measures to protect and avoid damage to the national product. Dumping: is the process of supplying goods similar to those in the local market at a price lower than their normal value in the market of the supplying country. Anti-dumping measures include increasing customs duties imposed on the product concerned with dumping within the limits of the dumping margin previously determined. These duties are collected at the first customs port and are subject to all imports of the GCC countries of the product concerned with the investigation from foreign producing/exporting companies that the investigation has proven to be practicing dumping that causes damage to the national industry and anti-dumping measures are imposed temporarily or permanently (23:2012, Arabic). The dumping margin is the difference between the average value of the imported product and its export price. This helps to create a general boom in the industrial sector and reduces obstacles to the success of the national product (Rabi'& Ariqat, 2022: 2). We see that the religious seminary seeks to spread the culture of the national product and protect it. Hence, it works to create a legal structure and issue fatwas and guidelines to encourage producers to move toward production. Customers consume national products in support of the Iraqi economy.

### 3. Appropriate price

Prices represent a monetary expression of the value of goods and services provided to the customer. It is

considered one of the most important elements of the marketing mix that helps the organization succeed in the market. Because of its great impact on profits. Price is the single most flexible element. The appropriate price generates profits for production and service companies in various sectors. At the same time, determining product prices is the first problem facing these companies. (Dongoran & Others, 2018: 51)

As for pricing, it is defined as: the process of determining the selling price of products. When the product's price is known in the market, it is different from the new product that needs to be priced (Al-Dhahabi and Al-Ghaban, 2007: 224). Making a decision about pricing products is the essence of every business plan that has a direct impact on profitable and non-profitable production companies. This is affected by the internal and external factors of these companies. Therefore, companies must be able to price their products in ways that achieve relative revenues to the value provided to the customer and thus stabilize their position in the market, and gain the trust and satisfaction of customers to outperform competitors (1423 2012:,(Nasab

### The third section: Practical analysis

The researcher relied on the questionnaire form to collect research data in the practical aspect to ensure the connection between the theoretical and practical aspects. Due to the large size of the study community

only, the researcher limited herself to distributing (100 questionnaire forms). (75 forms) were retrieved and approved due to the incompleteness of some of them or their failure to be returned by the research sample, with a return rate of (75%).

The researcher chose professors and students of the University of Kufa to distribute the research forms because they are the closest to the religious seminary and the most knowledgeable in its orientations towards supporting national products. The distribution of the forms was random and unintentional.

First: The first axis: Personal data

It is clear from Table (1) that the characteristics of the research sample in terms of gender, age and

educational level The profession and years of service in the tourist facilities are as follows:

It was found that the number of males reached (43 answers) at a rate of 57.3%, while the number of females reached (32 answers) at a rate of approximately 42.7%.

The answers varied according to age, as the age group (18-30 years) recorded the first place with (24) at a rate of 32%, and the younger group more than 51 years reached (12) at a rate of 16%.

It is clear that there is a variation in academic achievement, as the results of the field study recorded that the category (university professor) is the highest with (41 answers) at a rate of (54.6%), while the number of students reached (34) at a rate of (45.4%).

Table (1) Personal information:

Male (43) Female (32)	Gender	1
18-30 (24) 31-40 (22) 41-50 (17) Over 51 (12)	Age	2
Student (34) University Professor (41)	Education	3

### Second: The second axis: Measuring the religious seminary

It appears from the results of the questionnaire, Table (2) Figure (1), that there is a clear difference in the respondents' answers to the question (Do you acquire national products and reject foreign ones according to the wise joint decisions between the competent

authorities and the seminary?) The highest choice was (strongly agree) with (36 answers) at a rate of (48%), while the lowest choice was (only 4 answers), which confirms that there is support for acquiring national

products based on the directives of the competent

authorities and the honorable seminary.

**Table (2) Measuring the role of the religious seminary towards supporting national products**

Strongly Disagree	Dis Agree	Natur al	Agre e	Strongly Agree	Agreement Percentage
6	7	4	22	36	Your acquisition of national products and rejection of foreign ones according to the wise decisions shared by the competent authorities and the seminary?
9	6	8	31	21	Your abstention from using foreign products in compliance with the Sharia directives?
4	3	7	33	28	Your choice of national products confirms the ability of the wise decision-maker?
8	5	3	18	41	Affects the prices of national products in the Iraqi market?
5	6	9	19	36	Directing and coordinating efforts and endeavors encourages the production of national products by local producers?
13	9	11	16	26	Awareness helps control problems before they occur?
9	8	3	34	21	Carrying out campaigns and publications encourages you to choose national products?











It is clear from the data in Table (2) Figure (8) on the question (Does it encourage local producers to market their products at a lower price than the imported ones?) that (strongly agree) was chosen, which is the highest with (31 answers) at a rate of (41.3%), and (disagree) and (strongly disagree) were the least with

(6 answers), which calls for studying the market and the needs of the population, knowing their purchasing power, taking into account the economic conditions, and working to provide life necessities without relying on abroad. Figure (8)

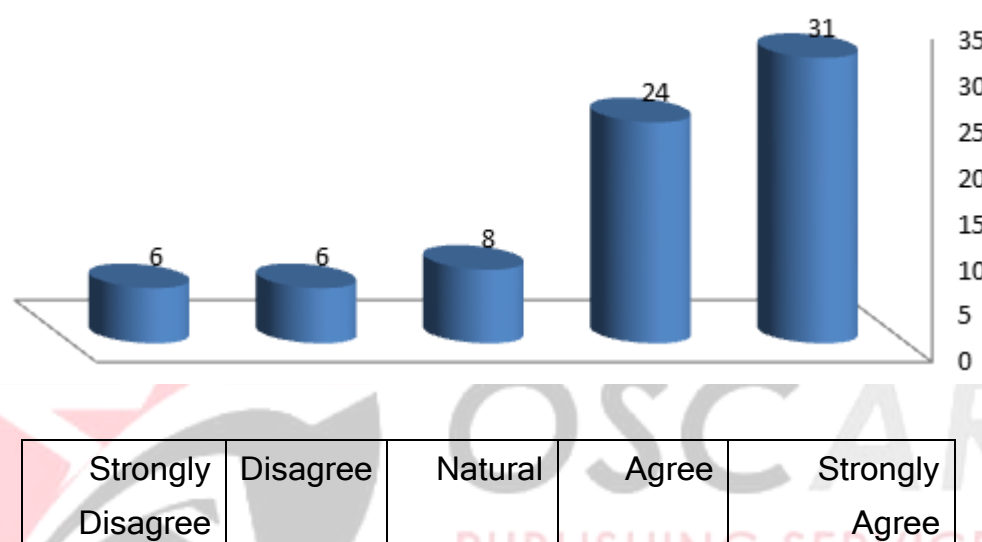
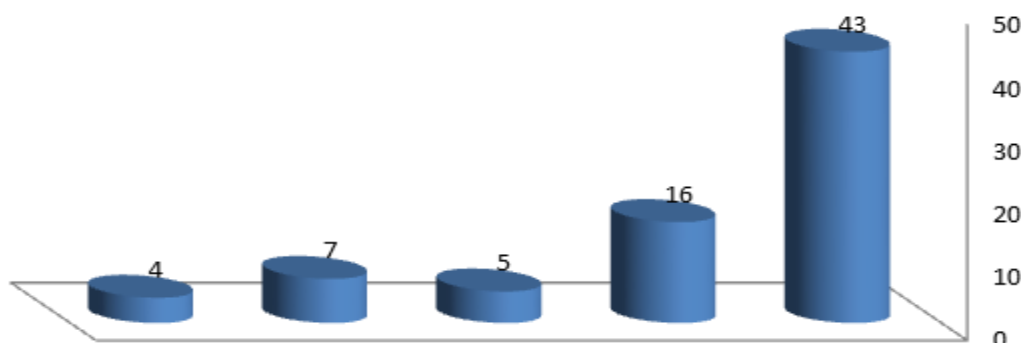


Table (2) Figure (9) shows that on the question (Is financial support important to you?) (Strongly agree) was chosen as the highest with (43 answers) at a rate of (57.3%), and (Strongly disagree) was chosen as the

lowest with (4 answers), which confirms the need for financial support for the success of any commercial or economic project. Figure (9)





















3- The religious seminary carried out

## Second: Recommendations

1- National industrial and service companies must adopt many strategies to develop the quality of products, sell them, protect customers from the harm that may result from using some of these products, and sell them at appropriate prices according to the directives and guidelines issued by the religious seminary to support these products.

2- There is a pressing need to update food laws and legislation to ensure robust consumer protection, particularly from market dumping.

3- Activating the law protecting the national product is crucial, as it plays a key role in encouraging local investment in the industrial sectors, especially agriculture and industry. This, will help revive the private sector by providing enhanced financing for small and medium-sized projects.

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