Organic Food Purchasing Behaviour in Qatar and United Arab Emirates: A Comparative Case Study

Abstract

Purpose: This study investigates the determinants of UAE and Qatar consumers’ perceptions of organic food.

Methods: Using a survey approach and focusing on six known determinants identified from empirical studies, data were analyzed using a mean difference analysis and a multi-regression model.

Results: Citizens in both countries had similar access to organic food products yet consumer perceptions differed significantly. Given the geographical, cultural and topographical proximity of these countries, differences in the mean values indicate that targeted or bespoke marketing is required to attract customers.

Conclusions: This study provides insights into the most important factors influencing consumers’ attitudes toward organic foods. This study fills a gap in the existing research on consumer buying behavior for organic food in two Middle Eastern countries.

Keywords: Organic food Products, Consumer buying behavior, Attitude, Perception, Purchase Intention, Comparative Study.

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None.
Plain Language Summary

It might be expected that countries that share a common border and are geographically and culturally similar would have common perceptions of commonly available food products. This study has explored the perceptions of consumers from UAE and Qatar with respect to their citizens’ attitudes to and purchasing of organic food. Our results show that the two populations’ views of organic food are very different despite their cultural and other similarities. These results will be helpful to food industry marketers as they provide valuable insights to aid targeted marketing programmes to support the sale of organic food in these two countries.

1. Introduction

Agricultural food products that have not been grown using chemical fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides or other synthetic chemical compounds during their production, processing or storage, are considered organic. Global industrial growth and development, in parallel with unprecedented population growth, is placing pressure on agricultural production systems to increase crop yields to meet increasing food demands. Studies have, for example, highlighted concerns about the increasing use of chemical fertilizers purely to boost crop yields (Rapaport, 2019, Ibitoye et al., 2014). Additionally, there are concerns regarding the increasing use of genetically modified (GM) seed stock to grow grain, fruit and vegetables. Research suggests that GM food may not provide the same range and quality of vitamins and minerals that are present in naturally grown foods (de Oliveira Sampaio and Gosling, 2014). Consequently, organically grown food is increasing in popularity amongst consumers who reject food that have been grown using intensive, chemical-laden farming practices (Basha et al., 2021).

The interest in and awareness of organically grown food has witnessed rising global sales in recent years. With a market value of $495.9 billion, organic food is currently one of the largest global markets (Gelski, 2019). Researchers have
therefore understandably focused on factors that motivate consumers to purchase and consume organically grown food. To our knowledge these factors have been appraised in one country only (Willer et al., 2021, Basha et al., 2021); comparisons between two countries that share a border and patterns of lifestyle, culture and religion have not yet, to our knowledge, been reported. Few studies for example, have compared two or more different cultures’ citizens’ buying behaviours regarding organic food. This study seeks to address this gap in current knowledge.

Both the UAE and Qatar are countries with a high prevalence of obesity and diabetes. According to IDF statistics the UAE has one of the highest rates of diabetes and ranks 15th highest in the world (Shieb et al., 2020) and, as the World Health Organisation reports, eight percent of the Qatar population suffers from diabetes (Shieb et al., 2020). Just as these two countries have considerable potential for appreciable market opportunities in organic food sales, so they present an opportunity for comparative research.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Qatar are amongst the fastest growing economies in the Arabian Gulf region, contributing significantly to the market share of the Arab world (WorldData, 2023). They are oil and gas-rich, geographic neighbours with similar demographic profiles. Their differing population sizes (UAE 9.36 million; Qatar 2.78 million) however, mean that the GDP per capita in Qatar is twice that of the UAE (128.702 $: 70.262$) (WorldData, 2023) Nevertheless, they are both considered affluent countries. As such, it is expected that their market share of organic food purchases would be high, given the higher prices products command and the relatively high disposable income of their populations. North America by contrast, has the largest global market for organic food accounting for 50% of global retail sales (Shahbandeh, 2022). The UAE spending on organic products in 2019 was 2.94$ compared with 136$ in the US (Moroni, 2022). Both the UAE and Qatar markets for organic products therefore offer excellent prospects for investment and market growth.
Given the existing knowledge lacuna, this study seeks additionally to compare and contrast these high-income countries whose residents have relatively high disposable income, to ascertain which factors most influence peoples’ attitude toward organically grown food. In studying two non-Western countries, this study seeks to explore populations with distinct demographic profiles. This study therefore explores consumer purchasing behavior in these two countries, based on these demographic profiles, to better understand local perceptions and attitudes toward organically grown food.

1.1. Literature Review - UAE Organic Food Industry
The UAE has a fast-growing economy; its residents enjoy a high standard of living with the country being ranked 31 in the Human Development Index and boasts a 43,000 dollar per capita GDP (Global, 2021) (Table 1). The UAE population has a high buying power. Its healthcare, sports & fitness and healthy food outlet market segments have, as a result, gained considerably from its citizens’ increased awareness of the benefits a healthy lifestyle (Ligaya, 2009). In 2020, the value of organic food sales, in particular, were estimated to be $51.2M representing a substantial increase from the 2017 figure of $38.1M. It is important however, to note that whilst several local companies have launched organic food ranges, the prices of these remain between 40-60% higher than non-organically produced products (DWTC, 2020).

1.2. The Qatari Organic Food Industry
Qatar is another thriving country in the Middle East. The average household income of each Qatari family is $26,555 (UAE, 2023) which is the highest per capita in the GCC. Therefore, Qatari consumers have the highest purchasing power compared to their GCC neighbours and thus enjoy an affluent lifestyle with a high standard of living. Owing to the increase in per capita income and high standard of living, consumer demand for organic food has been growing steadily at a rate of around 5.4% cumulative average. Currently, the organic food and health and wellness product market is estimated to be around $1B (Global, 2021) (Table 1).
Insert Table 1 here

Studies on awareness, perception and attitude toward the purchase of organic food products have, to date, been conducted almost exclusively in Western countries and have tended to focus on food products and patterns of buying behavior that are prevalent in Western countries. This study addresses six known determinants identified from previously published studies (Basha et al., 2021). Moreover, it draws on Schwartz’s (2012) “Theory of basic value” which posits that consumers purchase a product based on a range of motives including self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, tradition, benevolence and universalism. The associations with the six determinants used in this study are health concern and lifestyle (HCLS), environment concern (EC - that emanates from universalism); safety and trust (ST - that is linked to hedonism); convenience and price (CP - that relate positively to achievement); subjective norms (SN - that reflect Schwartz’s notion of conformity) as does attitude toward organic food products (ATT) (Muhammad et al., 2019, Bosona and Gebresenbet, 2018, Maruyama and Trung, 2007, Ajzen, 2011).

1.3. Health Concern and Lifestyle (HCLS)

The health and lifestyle segment in the food industry in the Middle East is buoyant due to consumers’ complex, varied and busy lifestyles and concerns around levels of physical activity. Studies suggest that people tend to purchase foods that are identified as ‘healthy’ to compensate for their lack of time or inability to exercise. Thus, consumers frequently search for different ways to balance their busy lifestyles with the need to live in ways that promote and optimise health.

Organic food consumption has long been associated with health benefits. Indeed, studies have shown a strong association between organic food consumption and health (Bosona and Gebresenbet, 2018). One specific study involving 620 Swiss households (Hansmann et al., 2020), demonstrated that consumers are reluctant to purchase organic foods owing to their higher prices. Additionally, the findings
of that study, identified that crucial predictors for buying organic food are health-related factors followed by social norms and environmental values. In contrast, other studies have shown negative effects or no significant relationship associated with organic food consumption and health benefits (Basha and Lal, 2019). Overall, these studies’ findings suggest that health and lifestyle factors appear to encourage a positive attitude toward organic food.

1.4. Environment Concerns (EC)
Climate change has inspired increasing numbers of people throughout the world to be concerned about living more harmoniously with nature and its increasingly diminishing natural resources. Activists, academics, and practitioners are collectively focusing on factors that can stop or slow climate change. Sustainable food production methods, including organic farming, are important components of such discussions within the climate change action movement (Escobar-López et al., 2017, Ibitoye et al., 2014). Pro-environmental consumers are increasingly turning to organic food in an attempt to protect the environment (Kalehsar, 2019). Recent studies suggest that environmental concerns play an important role in consumers’ expressed preference for organic food (Escobar-López et al., 2017). That environmental concerns drive consumers toward organic food is further strengthened by Tandon et al (2020) who attempt to better understand consumers’ intrinsic and extrinsic motivations in this respect. They have concluded that ethical, or green consumerism, is a particular motivator that encourages the purchase of organic food. Consumers who are pro-environmental are highly motivated to support and promote organic food purchase. Such studies therefore strongly imply that environmental concern is an important factor that drives and underpins positive attitudes toward organic food.

1.5. Safety & Trust (ST)
Safety and trust are key for consumers when purchasing any food item. Increasing food violations in terms of GM foods, intensive farming methods and pesticide use have positively impacted consumer choice for organic foods because of trust and safety issues (Rapaport, 2019). Increasing food-related violations and the consequent adverse impact on health has bolstered interest in organic food.
Organic food is subject to intense regulation, monitored and controlled by private agencies and government bodies such as the National Organic Program (NOP) and USDA, both locally and internationally. This process inspires consumer confidence and increases trust in the reviewed products. Furthermore, consumers are willing to pay a price premium to ensure that the food they consume is safe as well as healthy. This is supported by studies such as that conducted in Lebanon by Tleis et al (2017). These studies confirm consumers’ preference for organic food as a result of concern and lack of trust in conventional food products. In 2018, the Italian market for example, saw sales of €3.5B. Investigating this phenomenon, Canova, Bobbio and Manganelli (2020) concluded that consumers are increasingly turning toward organic food due largely to concerns over the safety of conventional food. Consumers buy organic food because it is grown naturally and is thus devoid of unhealthy, chemical substances. Such studies indicate that safety and trust are primary factors driving a positive attitude toward organic food.

1.6. Convenience and Price (CP)

Some studies have revealed that consumers view convenience (lack of easy access) and high prices as barriers to the purchase of organically grown food. Such consumers might otherwise be willing to purchase organic food (Bellows et al., 2008). Zakowska-Biemans (2011) in fact, concluded that the Polish are less inclined toward organic food owing to its relative scarcity in general and especially in local stores driving high prices. Although recent years have seen an increasingly positive consumer attitude toward organic food for health reasons, environmental concerns and safety coupled with a relative lack of availability of organic food, continues to hinder organic food popularity. High prices are an inevitable consequence of scarcity and thus represents an important factor in determining consumers decision to purchase such goods (Chakrabarti, 2010, Nielsen, 2006).

1.7. Subjective Norms (SN)

Social pressures have played an essential role in shaping the culture of communities as well as consumers’ purchasing behavior. Consumers tend to purchase products or services due to peer pressure, advertising pressure or
pressures brought to bear on them by group dynamics. Influential celebrities’ endorsements increase such pressure on individuals and groups to associate with the advertised or promoted product or service (Saleki et al., 2012). Dowd and Burke (2013) found that subjective norms play an important role in generating a positive attitude toward organic food, illustrating the probability that subjective norms are a major factor that influence a positive attitude toward organic food.

1.8. **Attitude Toward Organic Food Products (ATT)**

Attitude represents how we think or feel toward an object or person (Ajzen, 2001). It is considered an essential factor in respect of purchase intention. Consumers tend to purchase when they develop a positive attitude toward goods or services. Ajzen (2011) showed that attitude can strongly influence and determine the desire consumers develop for a particular product or service. Attitude plays an essential role while evaluating the product or services at the point of purchase (Hill and Lynchehaun, 2002). Furthermore, De-Magistris and Gracia (2016) emphasize consumers’ tendency to have a positive or negative attitude toward organic food that, in turn, influences their purchase intention. Numerous studies affirm a link between positive attitude and purchase intention (e.g. Muhammad et al., 2019, Voon et al., 2011).

1.9. **Demographic Factors**

Very few studies have reported the impact of demographic characteristics on consumers’ purchase intention. In those that have however, gender, for example, has been shown to play an important role. Genders differences determine psychological attitudes and perceptions toward products and services. Lea & Worsley (2005) found that Australian women’s personal values, align with Nature and the environment and thus, they had a positive view of organic food. Other studies have shown that gender, monthly income, residential location and family status additionally influence consumers’ purchasing behaviour (Mervin and Velmurugan, 2013, Rousseau and Vranken, 2013). A study from Turkey, for example, was conducted to explore organic cheese purchase intention based on the product’s country of origin. Comparing Dutch, German and Turkish cheese the authors found that Turkish men tend to have low preference and attitude
toward Turkish cheese and a positive attitude toward Dutch and German cheeses whereas Turkish women preferred Turkish cheese (Aktan, 2020).

Age, educational qualifications and gender have collectively been shown to be positively associated with organic food purchase (Hughner et al., 2007). Young adults are more likely to purchase organic food than older people (Bellows et al., 2008). Furthermore, young consumers with higher educational backgrounds and high income are positively disposed towards organic food. Furthermore, studies show that women generally are more inclined towards organic food compared to male counterparts (Magnusson et al., 2003, Giannini et al., 2014). In contrast, a study from India found that educated 29-39 year-old males prefer to buy organic food compared to other age groups, suggesting that younger, educated men are more likely to have a positive attitude toward organic food (Sivathanu, 2015).

Studies have also shown that family life is positively associated with organic food. According to Omar et al (2016) parents are especially concerned about their children's health and so tend to encourage eating organic food. One study found that eight in ten United States parents are purchase organic food as, “… parents’ desire to avoid toxic and persistent pesticides and fertilizers … antibiotics and growth hormones … and [that] genetically modified organisms … ranked high among the reasons … for buying organic products” (Haumann, 2013). Based on the above discussion, hypotheses 1 to 6 were generated as follows …

**Hypothesis 1:** Health Concern and Lifestyle, Environment Concern, Safety and Trust, Convenience and Price, Subjective Norms and Attitude toward organic food products have a significant influence on consumers’ Purchase Intention regarding organic food.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no statistically significant difference in the mean rating of respondents’ residential location affecting the purchase of organic food.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no statistically significant difference in the mean rating across gender and country of respondents in respect of determining the purchase of organic food.
**Hypothesis 4:** There is no statistically significant difference in the mean rating across age and country of respondents in respect of determining the purchase of organic food.

**Hypothesis 5:** There is no statistically significant difference in the mean rating across educational qualification and country of respondents in respect of determining the purchase of organic food.

**Hypothesis 6:** There is no statistically significant difference in the mean rating across marital status and country of respondents in respect of determining the purchase of organic food.

It is evident from a review of the literature that the six factors purporting to determine consumers’ preference for organic food, have differing degrees of impact on the purchase intentions of consumers with different demographic profiles in respect of purchasing organic food. This comparative study of UAE and Qatari consumers, seeks to explore and address the six hypotheses listed above by means of a research framework that tests the impact of six known factors on customers’ intention to buy organic food (Figure 1).

2. **Methodology and Methods**

This study adopted a quantitative approach in which a randomly selected sample of respondents comprising 416 Qatari consumers and 423 UAE consumers participated. Six study factors were identified from reviewing the relevant literature (Health Concern and Lifestyle (HCLS) Environment Concern (EC), Safety and Trust (ST), Convenience and Price (CP), Subjective Norms (SN) and Attitude toward Organic food products (ATT)); they are widely believed to positively predispose consumers’ attitude to organic food. Each was measured using five items developed by the researcher based on insights derived from the above review of the literature. The survey used a five-point Likert scale ranging from ‘Strongly Disagree’ to ‘Strongly Agree’ with a corresponding numerical scale whose values ranged from 1 to 5 respectively.
A random sampling method was used to collect data. Every subject who participated in the survey did so after they were thoroughly screened and known to be involved in purchasing household products. All stated having had experience of buying and/or consuming organic food. All subjects were asked about their knowledge of organic food by means of an initial screening questionnaire to confirm their previous organic food purchase history. The complete set of questionnaires was given only to those who confirmed their use of organic food at least once in their lifetime. Subjects’ results were used to test the six hypotheses above.

All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS v20. Analytic tests are detailed in the Results section below. Using a survey approach permitted a broad overview of subjects’ experiences and views, which was the principle aim of this study.

3. Results

3.1. Demographic Profile
Table 2 provides subjects’ demographic profiles. 50.4% of respondents were from UAE and 49.6% from Qatar. A preponderance of subjects were male (66.4%). 62.1% of subjects were single and 37.9%, married. 39.3% had a post-graduate degree and 25.3% had a Bachelor’s degree. 17.6% were doctorates and 9.8% had education up to secondary school. Professional/technical qualifications accounted for 8.0% of subjects. Most subjects were 30-39 years old (39.5%), followed by the 20-29 age group (39.3%). 11.3% of respondents were 40 to 49 year-age group and 9.7% were below 20 years of age.

Insert Figure 1 here
### 3.2. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

EFA was undertaken to determine the validity of the questionnaire (Table 3). EFA reduces a dataset to a smaller number of related variables. It aids the identification of any theoretical structure that might apply to the phenomenon under study. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test determines whether the data is appropriate for conducting exploratory factor analysis. KMO test employs Bartlett’s test to assess sampling adequacy. A KMO score of above 0.5 suggests that the multivariate normality of the questionnaire variables is better (Table 4). Similarly, Bartlett’s test should be significant (p<0.05) in order to comfortably perform factor analysis. Factor loadings of 0.4 or above were deemed acceptable for factor extraction. For component extraction, Principal Component Analysis was used with “Varimax” type rotation with Kaiser normalization, was used in this study (Field and Morgan-Klein, 2010). This analysis of the data collected from all respondents is detailed in Table 3.

### 3.3. Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Analysis

Descriptive and reliability statistics are presented in Table 4. The results show that respondents apportioned high ratings to Safety and Trust (M=3.85, SD = 0.58) followed by Health Concern and Lifestyle (M=3.77, SD=0.61) and...
Environment Concern (M=3.71, SD=0.62). The overall mean rating for all other variables was also better. The table also details the reliability coefficient of the scale items. Cronbach’s Alpha values for all variables are higher than the threshold value of 0.6, indicating the questionnaire satisfies the conditions of reliability and is suitable for statistical analysis. The value of skewness and kurtosis for all variables were within the threshold limits of -2 to +2, indicating that the data are normally distributed.

**Insert Table 4 here.**

**3.3.1. Correlation Analysis**

Pearson’s correlation was performed to study interdependency and association between determinants of purchase behavior of organic food. From Table 3, it is evident that all determinants are highly correlated with each other. Determinants such as Health Concern and Lifestyle, Environment Concern, Safety and Trust, Convenience and Price, Subjective Norms, Attitude toward Organic food products are significantly correlated with Purchase Intention. The contribution of each determinant toward the dependent variable “Purchase Intention” was determined by regression analysis (Table 5).

**Insert Table 5 here.**

**3.3.2. Multiple Regression Analysis**

**Hypothesis 1**: The factors Health Concern and Lifestyle, Environment Concern, Safety and Trust, Convenience and Price, Subjective Norms, Attitude toward organic food products have a statistically significant influence on Purchase Intention.
Multiple regression analysis was conducted to test this hypothesis using ‘purchase intention’ as the dependent variable. The factors Health Concern and Lifestyle, Environment Concern, Safety and Trust, Convenience and Price, Subjective Norms and Attitude toward organic food products were used as predictor variable (Table 6).

Insert Table 6 here.

Insert Table 7 here.

Regression analysis showed a statistically significant $R^2$ value of 0.641 ($p<0.05$) indicating a statistically-significant model. The hypothesis is thus proved. The inference is therefore that all factors significantly influence consumers’ purchase intention. Thus, factors such as Health Concern and Lifestyle, Environment Concern, Safety and Trust, Convenience and Price, Subjective Norms, Attitude toward organic food products have a statistically significant influence on Purchase Intention toward organic food products is accepted. The contribution of each determinant on the purchase intention is shown in Table 6. Environment Concern (EC) ($\beta$=0.164) makes the greatest contribution toward Purchase Intention (PI), followed by Attitude toward Organic food products (ATT) ($\beta$=0.154) and Health Concern and Lifestyle (HCLS) ($\beta$=0.137).

3.3.3. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 2: There is no statistically significant difference in the mean rating among respondents with respect to the purchase of organic food products based on subjects’ location according to an independent sample t-test (Table 8).

Insert Table 8 here.
It is evident that there is a statistically significant difference in the mean rating between the respondents of Qatar and UAE on all factors affecting purchasing behavior toward organic food products. Hence the hypothesis was rejected.

A MANOVA procedure was used to further test this hypothesis with respect to gender, age, educational qualification, marital status and country as independent measures (fixed factors). The determinants Health Concern and Lifestyle, Environment Concern, Safety and Trust, Convenience and Price, Subjective Norms, Attitude toward Organic food products and Purchase Intention were used as dependent variables. The table of multivariate tests table portrays four tests of significance such as Pillai’s Trace, Wilks’ Lambda, Hotelling’s Trace and Roy’s Largest Root for each model effect (Table 9).

**Hypothesis 3:** There was no statistically significant difference in the mean rating across gender and country of respondents on different determinants of purchase behavior of organic food.

**Hypothesis 4:** There is no significant difference in the mean rating across age and country of respondents on different determinants of purchase behavior of organic food.

**Hypothesis 5:** There is no significant difference in the mean rating across educational qualification and country of respondents on different determinants of purchase behavior of organic food.

**Hypothesis 6:** There is no significant difference in the mean rating across marital status and country of respondents on different determinants of purchase behavior of organic food.
**Insert Table 9 here.**

All multivariate tests revealed statistically significant differences. Thus, it was inferred that there is a significant interaction effect ($F(7, 829) = 4.093, p = 0.000$; Wilks’ $\Lambda = .967$) between gender and country of subjects on the combined dependent variables. Thus, hypothesis 2 was rejected.

All multivariate tests revealed statistically significantly differences. Therefore, it was inferred that there is a statistically significant interaction effect ($F(21, 2366.633) = 3.502, p = 0.000$; Wilks’ $\Lambda = 0.916$) between age and country of respondents on the combined dependent variables. Thus, hypothesis 3 was rejected.

All multivariate tests showed statistically significant differences and the level of significance is 0.01. It was inferred that there is a statistically significant interaction effect ($F(28, 2968.791) = 4.224, p = 0.000$; Wilks’ $\Lambda = 0.869$) between Educational Qualification and country of respondents on the combined dependent variables. Thus, hypothesis 4 was rejected.

All four Multivariate tests have failed to show a significant difference as the level of significance was above 0.05. Thus, it was inferred that there is no statistically significant interaction effect ($F(7, 829) = 1.555, p = 0.145$; Wilks' $\Lambda = 0.987$) between marital status and country of respondents on the combined dependent variables. Thus, hypothesis 5 was rejected.

4. **Discussion**

This study sought to compare and contrast factors that the literature suggests influence people’s decision to purchase and consume organically grown food in two neighbouring, affluent Middle East countries. These countries had similar demographics (and economies) and were selected for study to eliminate the issue of affordability and thus facilitate easier comparison. The results clearly demonstrate that all determinant variables, Health Concern and Lifestyle (HCLS), Environment Concern (EC), Safety and Trust (ST), Convenience and
Price (CP), Subjective Norms (SN), Attitude toward Organic food products (ATT) significantly contribute to purchase intention. The study supports the comparative study conducted by Thøgersen et al (2015) in Brazil and China and further supports the Schwartz (2012) theory of basic value of ten principles, that shows consumer purchase intention is determined by universalism, hedonism, achievement and conformity. Environment Concern has the greatest influence on purchase intention and suggests that consumer’s values align more with universalism in protecting the environment and people’s welfare. Governments and environmentalists continue to educate their citizens regarding environmental concerns, positively impacting consumers’ purchase attitude as evidenced by the studies of Escobar-Lopez et al (2017) and Sarigollu (2009). These highlight the shift in consumer concern toward environmental protection in a positive correlation with a rise of organic food purchase. In contrast, Rodriguez et al (2007) found that determinants such as environmental concern, price and trust in labelling have limited, if any, influence on organic food purchase patterns. The context and demographics of subjects appear to influence consumer behaviour in complex ways necessitating caution in interpreting data to derive meaning-making and inform decision-making.

Health Concern and Lifestyle as a determinant had the second-greatest impact in promoting a positive attitude towards intention to purchase organic food. As evidenced by the recent COVID19 pandemic and associated lockdown conditions, people around the world have experienced increased stress in all life domains. Being restricted to home has often resulted in reduced levels of physical activity. Consequently, diet and healthier food options have featured disproportionately in offsetting this disruption to a normal, healthy lifestyle that includes outdoor activities and exercise. Health and Lifestyle issues therefore have a significant impact on consumer purchase behavior. Hansmann, Baur and Binder’s (2020) Swiss household study argued that health-related concerns increase organic food purchasing. In contrast, Basha & Lal (2019) found limited evidence to support such a claim.

This divergence in empirical evidence is similarly reflected in the value of the Health and Lifestyle determinant for the two populations studied. This difference
in purchasing behaviour may reflect diverse perceptions toward organic food despite this study’s two countries’ common values and culture. This suggests that health and lifestyle impacts consumers in these countries by a different mechanism. As a result, individual countries may benefit from conducting bespoke consumer surveys to better understand consumer intention to purchase organic food such that marketing managers can devise appropriate marketing campaigns.

Safety and Trust in this study was shown to be positively related to consumer purchase intention supporting the findings of Rapaport (2019) in that consumer trend toward organic food is a reaction to perceived violations of GM food production, agricultural and industrial techniques and food-safety related issues, creating a sense of insecurity and mistrust of food manufacturers. Rodriguez et al (2007) however, found that health, environmental concern, price (Saleki et al., 2012) and trust in labeling too, have no significant impact on purchase patterns for organic food.

Convenience and Price are positively associated with consumer intention to buy organic food (Chakrabarti, 2010, Nielsen, 2006). If a product is affordable and readily available, consumers are willing to buy organic food. Further, consumers are prepared to pay a premium for organic products (Bellows et al., 2008).

In terms of Subjective Norms, this study’s findings are in keeping with those of extant studies (Chiou, 1998, Saleki et al., 2012) in that factors such as peer pressure and societal influences, are positively associated with organic food purchase intention.

Our data show that there is a significant difference regarding country-specific demographics and positive consumer attitudes toward organic products. Based on population mean values there are significant differences taking into consideration reference groups, family size, consumer occupation, income level, education attainment amongst other demographic factors. Distinct clusters therefore appear to exist, in terms of sustainable organic food consumption intention.
These results create challenges for marketing managers for whom a generalised campaign may offer a cost-effective strategy that encompasses vast geographical areas and a well-defined consumer base. Unfortunately, as shown in this paper, the patterns are not uniform nor are they consistent within a given region. Local demographics are instrumental in shaping consumer behavioural patterns and therefore must be taken into account. The inclusion of socio-demographic information enables more accurate profiling such that marketing managers are likely to benefit from this strategy, helping to inform optimal advertising and promotion of organically produced food, both locally and further afield.

Cultural factors play a substantial role in motivating consumers towards organic food purchase and consumption, as supported by First and Brozina's (2009) findings. Their study revealed that social, cultural, personal, and psychological factors significantly influence consumers’ attitudes towards organic food. This aligns with our own research, which highlights the impact of cultural norms and beliefs on consumer attitudes towards organically grown food in the UAE and Qatar. Additionally, the influence of social networks and word-of-mouth recommendations from family and peers, deeply rooted in these cultures, shape consumer preferences and drive the demand for organic food. Moreover, the cultural emphasis on natural and pure products aligns with the core principles of organic food, further driving consumers to choose organic options.

5. Conclusions
The aim of this study was to compare and better understand the significance of factors that determine consumers’ intention to purchase organically produced food in Qatar and UAE. We sought to determine which factors had similar and which, differing impacts on consumers’ intention to purchase such products. We determined that some factors support the published literature whilst some do not. Importantly, our results suggest that most factors impact Qatar and UAE to different degrees and that these differences are significant. It is clear therefore, from the empirical evidence presented in this study, that there is no clear marketing policy that successfully addresses the needs of both countries; their needs are distinctly different and should be acknowledged as such. Our study furthermore, shows that organic food purchase, although a growth area, remains
very context-specific and thus has implications for how other countries might approach the promotion and sale of such goods in their own, local and national markets.

5.1. Study Implications and Recommendations

The two countries central to this research study, the UAE and Qatar, have vested interests in supporting the organic food market that mainly concern supporting and promoting the health of their citizens while protecting the environment. As shown in this paper, the key obstacles preventing consumers’ accessing organic products are mainly availability and price. With appropriate governmental subsidies and logistics support, these barriers can be overcome. Targeted marketing campaigns reflecting the needs of both genders, a wide range of income groups and age groups, through collaborative campaigns involving all stake-holders will likely result in an increased uptake of organic food with consequent greater availability and affordability for all. Finally, to increase consumption, organic food should be widely available in all market-places rather than restricted to limited, elite locations.

The current study’s results have several important marketing implications for the promotion of organic food in the UAE and Qatar. Targeted marketing campaigns are vital if awareness is to be raised and people encouraged to buy and eat organic food. Campaigns should be tailored to the diverse needs of different demographic segments, emphasising the health benefits and positive environmental impact of organic food. Finally, expanding the availability of organic food through diverse retail channels will ensure wider market penetration and cater to the needs of a broader consumer base. By implementing these marketing strategies, stakeholders can effectively promote organic food consumption, leading to improved health outcomes and future environmental sustainability.

The results of this study suggest that governments should focus on educating their citizens about the potential benefits of organic food and encourage them to switch to organically produced food by promoting a positive attitude to them.
5.2. Limitations and Future Research

An important limitation of this study is its sample size, that may limit the generalisability of its results. However, the highly statistically significant results offset this to some extent as the differences we have demonstrated are likely to be meaningful. Our results do require confirmation by further similar studies. Our study relied on a random sample of subjects who might have exhibited bias in answering questions. A future study might usefully focus on socio-economic variables in conjunction with greater demographic variables. Our comparative study could be repeated in other Gulf countries to identify patterns of responses and recurring themes. While our study has usefully employed quantitative methods, future studies may benefit from a qualitative methodology to explore uniquely human perspectives on organically grown and produced food.
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