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Research paper

The Role of Language, Cultural Norms, and Sensitivity In Shaping Online FMCG Purchase Intentionsin The GCC

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Abstract

The rapid proliferation of digital commerce across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries has transformed consumer purchasing behaviors, particularly within the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector. This study examines the impact of cultural dynamics—specifically, language and communication, cultural norms, and cultural sensitivity—on online FMCG purchase intentions in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar. Employing a quantitative approach, the research collected data from 520 participants through a structured survey. Statistical analysis revealed that language and communication significantly influence online purchase intentions ($\beta = 0.467$, $p < 0.001$), whereas cultural norms ($\beta = 0.090$, $p = 0.141$) and cultural sensitivity ($\beta = 0.052$, $p = 0.244$) did not. These findings underscore the importance of linguistic accessibility and culturally attuned communication in shaping consumer behavior in digital markets, while also suggesting a nuanced or diminishing role for broader cultural values in online transactional contexts within the GCC. The study's implications are particularly relevant for marketers seeking to refine culturally adaptive strategies in increasingly digital economies.

Keywords: *Online Purchase Intention; Cultural Communication; Language; GCC Consumers; E-Commerce; FMCG Behavior.*

1. Introduction

The acceleration of globalization and the digital transformation of commerce have redefined consumer engagement, especially in emerging markets where cultural dynamics play a central role. Within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region, comprising Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and neighboring states, cultural norms, linguistic practices, and societal values deeply influence the reception of marketing content and purchasing decisions [1], [2].

While traditional consumer behavior theories often generalize across contexts, the GCC presents a complex and distinctive cultural landscape characterized by linguistic diversity, high-context communication, and strong affiliations with religious and traditional values [3], [4]. This contextual uniqueness necessitates localized inquiry into how specific cultural factors mediate consumers' online purchase behaviors, particularly in the fast-growing FMCG sector, where convenience and speed are paramount.

The rise of e-commerce platforms in the GCC has democratized access to global brands, reshaped supply chains, and fostered new consumption habits [5] .However, the success of online marketing in such markets hinges not merely on product availability but on the degree to which digital content aligns with consumers' cultural expectations. Existing research has highlighted the decisive influence of culture on brand perception, trust formation, and purchase motivation [6], [7]. However, a significant research gap persists regarding the differential impact of distinct cultural components, such as language usage, cultural conformity, and sensitivity to religious and social cues, on e-commerce behavior in the Gulf region.

Accordingly, this study aims to dissect the role of three key cultural constructs: language and communication, cultural norms, and cultural sensitivity in shaping online purchase intentions for FMCG products in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar. By anchoring the research within a rigorously operationalized theoretical framework and testing hypotheses using robust statistical tools, the study contributes to a more granular understanding of cultural mediation in digital consumer behavior.

The subsequent sections develop the theoretical foundation for these constructs, review relevant empirical findings, and justify the adoption of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as a suitable analytical lens.

2. Theoretical Framework

The present study employs the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as the foundational theoretical lens to investigate how cultural dimensions—namely language and communication, cultural norms, and cultural sensitivity—influence online purchase intentions for fast-moving consumer goods (FMCGs) in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. Initially conceptualized by [8], TPB posits that human

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behavior is primarily driven by three core constructs: attitude toward behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. These factors jointly predict the formation of behavioral intentions, which in turn influence actual behavior.

In the context of digital consumer behavior, TPB remains a robust explanatory framework. However, recent studies suggest that its predictive power increases significantly when contextualized with cultural moderators and domain-specific variables [9] .For example, in cross-national settings, dimensions such as uncertainty avoidance and power distance were found to moderate the strength of TPB components in predicting environmentally conscious or ethical consumer behavior. These findings are directly relevant to GCC societies, where collectivist cultural patterns, religious influences, and high-context communication environments are prevalent.

Within this study's model, the construct of attitude is operationalized through consumers' positive or negative evaluations of online FMCG purchases. Subjective norms are captured via the influence of cultural expectations and societal values surrounding digital consumption. Perceived behavioral control is closely linked with linguistic accessibility and clarity of digital interfaces, which determine the ease or difficulty with which consumers navigate online platforms. This mapping aligns with Zhao [10], who found that perceived control and subjective norms were the most influential predictors of consumer adoption in technology-mediated environments.

Furthermore, the TPB model is extended by incorporating language and communication as a critical control-related factor, echoing insights from recent studies that show multilingual interfaces, culturally adapted content, and clear product descriptions significantly influence purchase intentions in culturally diverse societies [11]. Cultural sensitivity, meanwhile, is theorized to operate through both attitudinal and normative pathways, wherein consumers evaluate not only the functional value of a product but its congruence with religious, ethical, and cultural expectations.

The rationale for applying TPB in this research stems from its flexibility in accommodating both universal psychological constructs and context-specific cultural inputs. As emphasized by [12], the model's strength lies in its ability to integrate culturally relevant moderators without compromising its structural parsimony. This makes it particularly suitable for analyzing digital purchase behaviors in GCC markets, where both rational and culturally embedded drivers influence consumer decision-making.

Taken together, this framework provides a structured basis for examining how the interplay of cognitive evaluations (attitudes), normative pressures (cultural norms), and facilitating conditions (language and communication) affects online purchase intentions in a region where e-commerce is expanding rapidly but remains deeply interwoven with cultural identity.

3. Literature Review

Recent literature consistently underscores the profound influence of cultural factors on online consumer behavior, especially in Muslim-majority societies and dynamic markets such as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Malaysia, and Indonesia [13], [32]. These high-context environments exhibit a complex interplay between religiosity, social identity, and the adoption of digital commerce [14], [33]. Researchers have shown that in the GCC, Islamic values and social expectations are not merely peripheral influences but are deeply foundational in shaping consumer attitudes and responses to online marketing [15], [35].

Foundational theoretical and empirical work has mapped the shopping behavior of Muslim consumers, highlighting the roles of religiosity, personal values, and government support in predicting online purchase likelihood and consumer loyalty [13], [32]. Multi-theoretical frameworks such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), Self-Congruence Theory, Theory of Islamic Consumer Behavior (TiCB), and the Technology–Organization–Environment (TOE) framework have all been employed to explain how compatibility, regulatory legitimacy, and competitive intensity drive both trust and behavioral adoption [33].

Cultural sensitivity—defined as the alignment of marketing with sociocultural and religious norms—emerges as a central construct in digital engagement. Studies from AI-based language platforms have shown that cultural adaptation and respectful, localized communication (such as using proper language, adhering to halal rules, and avoiding insensitive imagery) enhance communication accuracy, authenticity, and trust in digital environments [14], [33]. In Saudi Arabia, informativeness and credibility, when accompanied by a strong brand image, significantly predict purchase behavior, especially in high-context settings [15], [34].

Advanced segmentation models, such as the probabilistic-value matrix proposed by Fedotova et al., enable nuanced analysis of cultural complexity by integrating Hofstede's dimensions with other contextual factors, such as high-context communication and monumentalism. This enables marketers to target collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and social proof drivers prevalent in GCC markets [14], [35].

Empirical studies across sectors further demonstrate that emotional resonance, pride, guilt, and internalized religious identity strongly mediate attitudes and intentions in e-commerce and related contexts [33], [35]. The interplay between emotional and ethical drivers—like community engagement and personal values—has proven especially salient for young Muslim consumers.

Finally, new digital technologies (such as attention-based LSTM models and adaptive, personalized interfaces) show that real-time, culturally localized e-commerce solutions significantly increase user engagement and conversion rates [16]. International business guidelines reinforce the centrality of cultural competence, operational adaptability, and religious congruence as pillars for consumer trust and intent in digital Muslim markets [35].

Collectively, these works urge marketers in the GCC and similar regions to move beyond basic demographic segmentation toward holistic, theory-driven strategies incorporating cultural values, linguistic localization, and community engagement. This study extends this discourse by empirically examining how language, cultural norms, and religious congruence interact to shape online FMCG purchase intentions in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar.

4. Methodology

4.1. Research design

This study employs a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to examine the impact of cultural constructs, namely, language and communication, cultural norms, and cultural sensitivity, on online purchase intentions for FMCG products in the GCC region. This design is particularly well-suited for testing theory-driven hypotheses and analyzing behavioral trends at a specific point in time [16].

4.2. Population and sampling

The target population for this study comprises online consumers in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar, three countries that represent the vanguard of digital transformation and consumer evolution within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). This regional focus is grounded in the unique sociocultural and economic fabric of the GCC, characterized by rapid urbanization, high internet penetration,

and a youth-dominated demographic. Over 60% of the GCC population is under 35, making them the primary drivers of digital consumption and e-commerce growth (GCC Statistical Centre, 2024).

In addition to its youthful demographics, the region is characterized by cultural attributes such as a preference for prestige, appearance consciousness, collectivism, and generosity, which influence purchasing behavior, particularly in fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG). These traits influence consumers' expectations from brands—demanding alignment not only with product functionality but also with cultural resonance and social signaling.

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to ensure that respondents had prior experience purchasing FMCG products online. This inclusion criterion was crucial for aligning the sample with the behavioral constructs under investigation. The survey was distributed electronically to capture the digitally active population, yielding 520 valid responses.

Efforts were made to balance gender, age groups, and national representation, ensuring the sample reflects the diversity of GCC urban consumers. This demographically aware sampling enhances the external validity of the study, enabling the examination of behavioral patterns that are both generalizable and context-sensitive.

4.3. Data sources and instrumentation

Two types of data sources were utilized:

- Primary Data: Collected through a structured questionnaire developed specifically for this study, based on validated instruments from prior TPB and consumer behavior literature.
- Secondary Data: Included theoretical frameworks, literature on e-commerce and cultural behavior, and empirical studies published between 2019 and 2025.

The questionnaire was divided into five sections: demographic information, cultural norms, language and communication, cultural sensitivity, and online purchase intention. All items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale, ensuring consistency and ease of interpretation.

4.4. Data collection procedures

The survey was administered online via social media and targeted email campaigns, using Arabic and English formats to enhance accessibility. Before launch, a pilot test (n = 30) was conducted to assess clarity, linguistic accuracy, and instrument coherence. Feedback informed minor linguistic adjustments, particularly in culturally sensitive terminology.

4.5. Ethical considerations

This study adhered to the standards of international ethical research. Informed consent was obtained electronically before participation. Anonymity and confidentiality were assured, and participants were given the option to withdraw at any point without penalty. An academic ethics committee reviewed the study protocol to ensure compliance with institutional and regional ethical guidelines [17].

4.6. Validity and reliability

Content validity was confirmed through expert panel reviews by three scholars specializing in cross-cultural marketing and digital consumer behavior. Construct validity was established via exploratory factor analysis (EFA), ensuring that measurement items loaded appropriately on their intended constructs. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with all constructs exceeding the 0.70 threshold, confirming internal consistency [17].

4.7. Data analysis techniques

Quantitative data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Version 26. Descriptive statistics summarized respondent characteristics. Multiple linear regression was employed to test hypotheses regarding the influence of cultural variables on online purchase intention. Diagnostic tests were conducted to assess normality, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity. Statistical significance was evaluated at a 95% confidence level, and effect sizes (β) were interpreted in conjunction with p-values and R^2 values to assess model fit [18].

4.8. Research limitations

While this study employed a structured, self-reported Likert-scale survey, such instruments present inherent limitations in capturing implicit cultural influences. Respondents may not always be consciously aware of the deeper cultural norms that shape their behavior, or may interpret standardized scales differently depending on their cultural background—particularly in high-context societies like the GCC.

To address this, future research could incorporate qualitative methods such as semi-structured interviews or focus group discussions. These approaches yield richer, context-sensitive insights into how religious identity, linguistic nuances, and social norms shape digital purchasing decisions. Qualitative data could complement quantitative findings and help uncover latent cultural dynamics that remain hidden in closed-ended surveys.

5. Results and Analysis

5.1. Demographic profile of respondents

The sample comprised 520 respondents purposively selected from three GCC countries: Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar. The demographic distribution is summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	262	50.4%
	Female	258	49.6%
Age	18–25 years	148	28.5%
	26–35 years	190	36.5%
	36–45 years	112	21.5%
	46 years and above	70	13.5%
Education Level	High School or below	98	18.8%
	Bachelor's Degree	282	54.2%
	Postgraduate Degree	140	27.0%
Country	Saudi Arabia	215	41.3%
	United Arab Emirates	178	34.2%
	Qatar	127	24.4%

Analytical Commentary
The demographic composition of the sample reflects a balanced distribution across gender and includes a concentration of respondents aged 26–35, aligning with the most digitally engaged segment in the GCC. The prevalence of bachelor's and postgraduate degree holders signals a digitally literate consumer base, well-positioned to interpret nuanced marketing messages. The geographical representation aligns with e-commerce activity levels in the region, lending further validity to the dataset.

5.2. Instrument reliability

To assess the internal consistency of the scales measuring key constructs —language and communication, cultural norms, cultural sensitivity, and online purchase intention —Cronbach's alpha was computed. The results are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Cronbach's Alpha for Measurement Constructs

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Language & Communication	6	0.84
Cultural Norms	5	0.81
Cultural Sensitivity	5	0.86
Purchase Intention	5	0.88

All constructs achieved Cronbach's alpha values exceeding the widely accepted threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2023), indicating strong internal consistency and scale reliability. The highest reliability was recorded for the Purchase Intention scale ($\alpha = 0.88$), reflecting coherent response patterns among participants regarding their intent to purchase FMCG products online.
This level of reliability aligns with recent studies in GCC settings, such as those by Safeer [19], who reported similar psychometric robustness when measuring culturally bound constructs in consumer research. These findings affirm that the measurement tool is both psychometrically sound and culturally valid for the target population.

5.3. Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics were computed to explore the central tendencies and dispersion of participants' responses across the key constructs. Table 3 below presents the means and standard deviations of the significant variables.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Key Constructs

Construct	Mean	Standard Deviation
Language & Communication	4.02	0.68
Cultural Norms	3.87	0.71
Cultural Sensitivity	4.11	0.65
Purchase Intention	4.18	0.62

The mean scores across all constructs exceed the midpoint value of 3.00, indicating a generally high agreement among respondents. The highest mean was recorded for Purchase Intention ($M = 4.18$), suggesting a strong predisposition among consumers to engage in online FMCG purchases.
The construct Cultural Sensitivity ($M = 4.11$) also showed high salience, underscoring the importance of culturally respectful marketing in shaping consumer trust and behavioral intention. This is particularly significant in a region where religious observance and traditional values influence commercial interactions. Studies such as [20],[21]. Corroborate the centrality of cultural alignment in consumer satisfaction and trust formation in Islamic markets.
The slightly lower mean for Cultural Norms ($M = 3.87$) suggests variability in the internalization of collective behaviors across respondents—possibly due to urbanization and generational shifts. This aligns with Moro [23], who reported that globalization has introduced hybrid consumer identities in GCC markets, blending tradition with digital modernity.

5.4. Regression analysis

To examine the predictive relationship between the independent variables (language and communication, cultural norms, and cultural sensitivity) and the dependent variable (online purchase intention), a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted. The regression model summary is provided in Table 4.

Table 4: Regression Results: Predictors of Online Purchase Intention

Predictor Variable	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value
Language & Communication	0.467	8.416	< 0.001
Cultural Norms	0.09	1.473	0.141
Cultural Sensitivity	0.052	1.166	0.244
Model R^2	0.56		

The regression analysis reveals that the model accounts for 56% of the variance in purchase intention ($R^2 = 0.56$), indicating robust explanatory power. Among the predictors, language and communication ($\beta = 0.467$, $t = 8.416$, $p < 0.001$) emerged as the strongest and only statistically significant factor, highlighting the critical importance of linguistic clarity and accessibility in digital commerce within the GCC.

In contrast, cultural norms ($\beta = 0.09$, $t = 1.473$, $p = 0.141$) and cultural sensitivity ($\beta = 0.052$, $t = 1.166$, $p = 0.244$) did not reach statistical significance in this model. Nevertheless, their positive coefficients suggest potential indirect or contextual roles that may be better captured in more complex models, such as moderation or mediation frameworks.

These findings indicate that while cultural awareness remains a vital contextual element in Gulf societies, the immediate, measurable driver of online purchase intention for FMCG products is effective, culturally resonant language and communication.

Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to examine bivariate relationships among the constructs. Results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variable	Purchase Intention	Language & Communication	Cultural Norms	Cultural Sensitivity
Purchase Intention	1	0.559	0.474	0.313
Language & Communication	0.559	1	0.757	0.446
Cultural Norms	0.474	0.757	1	0.584
Cultural Sensitivity	0.313	0.446	0.584	1

Note: All correlations are significant at $p < 0.01$.

A strong correlation exists between language and communication, as well as cultural norms ($r = 0.757$), highlighting the intertwined nature of linguistic adaptation and behavioral conformity in digital contexts. The weakest correlation was between Purchase Intention and Cultural Sensitivity ($r = 0.313$), indicating that while cultural respect is important, it may not be a decisive factor in driving purchase decisions alone.

These nuances offer empirical validation to studies like Fastoso & González[24], which emphasize that layered cultural engagement—rather than isolated cues—is essential in digital branding across high-context societies.

Table 6: Regression Model Summary

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error
1	0.749	0.560	0.556	0.472

The regression model explains 56% of the variance in online purchase intention ($R^2 = 0.56$). The value of $R = 0.749$ confirms a moderately strong positive relationship between the cultural predictors (language and communication, cultural norms, and cultural sensitivity) and the dependent variable (purchase intention). This indicates that the model provides a solid explanatory framework, showing that the three cultural constructs collectively contribute meaningfully to predicting consumer behavior in the GCC online FMCG market.

The findings underscore the need to integrate language accessibility, cultural sensitivity, and cultural awareness into digital marketing strategies. Together, these elements provide both linguistic clarity and cultural alignment to build consumer trust, strengthen brand perception, and ultimately drive online purchase intention.

Table 7: ANOVA

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	73.337	3	24.446	80.978	0.000
Residual	155.769	516	0.302		
Total	229.106	519			

The model is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), validating that the independent variables as a set have a meaningful effect on purchase intention.

Table 8: Coefficient Estimates

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Constant	0.712	0.081	—	8.817	0.000
Language & Communication	0.455	0.054	0.467	8.416	0.000
Cultural Norms	0.087	0.059	0.090	1.473	0.141
Cultural Sensitivity	0.046	0.040	0.052	1.166	0.244

Only language and communication were found to predict online purchase intention significantly ($p < 0.001$). The other variables, Cultural Norms and Cultural Sensitivity, were not statistically significant in this model, implying that while consumers are culturally aware, their immediate purchasing behavior is more influenced by communication clarity and language compatibility.

5.5. Summary of hypothesis testing

Table 9: Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Statement	Result
H1	Language and Communication significantly impact online consumers' purchasing decisions for FMCG products.	Accepted
H2	Cultural Norms significantly impact online consumers' purchasing decisions for FMCG products.	Rejected
H3	Cultural Sensitivity significantly impacts online consumers' purchasing decisions for FMCG products.	Rejected

Critical Interpretation of Hypothesis Results

The results presented in Table 9 demand careful reflection. While Hypothesis 1 was accepted, affirming that language and communication exert a significant influence on online purchase intention, Hypotheses 2 and 3 were statistically rejected. This outcome should not be viewed as conclusive evidence of the irrelevance of cultural norms and sensitivity in the Gulf context, but rather as a reflection of methodological and interpretive limitations.

First, the cultural landscape of the Gulf region is deeply intertwined with consumption behavior. Cultural markers such as brand prestige, grooming, elegance, hospitality, and religious conformity profoundly shape what consumers buy, how they perceive value, and their

expectations from e-commerce platforms. Therefore, the statistical insignificance of cultural norms and sensitivity, while valid in a narrow statistical sense, appears to contradict the broader sociocultural realities of the region.

Second, the rejection of H2 and H3 may be attributed to the design and operationalization of these constructs. It is plausible that the measurement items did not capture the nuanced, implicit forms of cultural influence prevalent in GCC societies. Culture in the Gulf is often expressed through behaviors that are not easily articulated in survey form, especially when using generalized Likert items detached from local idioms and values.

Third, the sample's demographic makeup, although balanced in age and nationality, included a high proportion of urban, digitally literate youth. This group may be more responsive to cues related to communication clarity and interface usability than to embedded cultural triggers. Moreover, younger cohorts might internalize cultural values subconsciously, leading them to rate such influences lower in self-reported surveys, even as they manifest strongly in behavior.

Finally, cultural factors may operate indirectly or as moderators, a nuance not captured by direct regression models. Future studies employing structural equation modeling or moderation-mediation analysis could offer richer insights into these layered dynamics.

In conclusion, the results should not be interpreted as diminishing the influence of culture on GCC consumer behavior, but rather as a signal to refine theoretical models and measurement techniques in future research. The authors encourage interpretive caution and advocate for methodological pluralism to fully unravel the cultural fabric that influences online purchase intentions in high-context markets, such as the GCC.

6. Discussion

The findings of this study contribute valuable insights into the relationship between cultural constructs and online purchase intentions in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). However, they also present unexpected outcomes that warrant careful interpretation in light of the region's unique sociocultural realities and existing theoretical frameworks.

6.1. Language and communication

The acceptance of Hypothesis 1 confirms that language and communication significantly influence online purchase intentions. This aligns with existing research that highlights the importance of linguistic clarity, localized content, and culturally adapted communication in digital commerce [25]. In the GCC, where Arabic coexists with English and other expatriate languages, communication that respects local idioms and conveys brand authenticity is crucial for building trust and driving purchase intent. The strong statistical effect observed here reinforces the argument that effective digital communication is not merely a facilitator but a core determinant of consumer behavior in multilingual, multicultural environments.

6.2. Cultural norms

The rejection of Hypothesis 2, that cultural norms significantly influence purchase intentions, appears contradictory to a vast body of literature emphasizing the centrality of tradition, collectivism, and conformity in Gulf societies [26],[27]. A plausible explanation is that the constructs were operationalized in a way that failed to capture the embedded influence of norms fully. For example, respondents may not consciously articulate the role of cultural expectations when making purchasing decisions, especially in the context of routine FMCG transactions. Nonetheless, the correlation analysis revealed moderate associations between cultural norms and other constructs, suggesting their role is indirect, subtle, or mediated rather than absent.

6.3. Cultural sensitivity

Hypothesis 3, concerning cultural sensitivity, was also rejected, which challenges expectations based on prior studies that emphasize the necessity of respecting Islamic values, halal compliance, and modesty in marketing communications [28],[29]. The statistical insignificance may reflect the sample composition, which was heavily urban and youth-oriented. Younger digital natives, while deeply embedded in their cultural milieu, may take cultural sensitivity for granted and therefore not consider it a distinguishing factor in their survey responses. However, in practical terms, violations of cultural sensitivity (e.g., non-halal labeling, culturally inappropriate imagery) can quickly trigger consumer backlash, indicating that its influence is latent but potent.

6.4. Theoretical implications

From the perspective of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), these results highlight that attitudes shaped by language clarity and subjective norms embedded in cultural practices operate differently depending on how they are measured. While communication clearly influences perceived behavioral control and intention, cultural constructs may require alternative modeling, such as moderation or mediation frameworks. This call by Vieira [30] for incorporating cultural-level moderators to enhance TPB's predictive accuracy in cross-cultural contexts echoes the need for such considerations.

6.5. Practical implications

For practitioners, the findings emphasize that linguistic and communicative strategies should remain the frontline of digital marketing in the GCC. However, marketers must not disregard cultural norms and sensitivity simply because they did not achieve statistical significance in this study. On the contrary, successful campaigns in the region, particularly for culturally symbolic goods such as perfumes, clothing, and cosmetics, rely heavily on aligning with cultural expectations and respecting local sensitivities. Thus, marketers should interpret these results as a methodological artifact rather than evidence of cultural irrelevance.

While this study provides actionable recommendations for enhancing digital marketing through cultural and linguistic alignment, several implementation challenges must be acknowledged. For smaller businesses, particularly SMEs, resource constraints may limit their ability to invest in culturally localized content, AI-driven personalization, or multilingual platforms. Additionally, regulatory differences across GCC countries, such as varying advertising standards, data privacy laws, and halal certification requirements, may further impede the uniform application of culturally sensitive strategies.

These contextual challenges suggest that while the strategic direction is clear, adaptability and scalability will be essential for successful implementation, particularly for cross-border digital operations within the GCC.

6.6. Limitations and future research

The study is limited by its reliance on self-reported survey measures, which may not fully capture implicit cultural drivers of behavior. Future research should:

- Employ qualitative methods (e.g., focus groups, interviews) to explore cultural underpinnings.
- Use structural equation modeling (SEM) to test indirect and moderated effects of cultural constructs.
- Broaden the product scope beyond FMCGs to luxury and symbolic goods where cultural influence may be more substantial.

In summary, while language and communication emerged as statistically significant predictors, the rejection of cultural norms and sensitivity must be interpreted with caution. Culture remains deeply ingrained in the consumer fabric of the GCC, and its influence, though not easily captured in linear models, continues to shape online purchasing behaviors in profound ways.

While cultural norms and cultural sensitivity were found to be statistically non-significant in the current analysis, this does not necessarily negate their influence in the GCC context. One plausible explanation is the presence of indirect effects, in which these constructs may exert influence through mediating variables such as trust, perceived brand authenticity, or social conformity. Additionally, moderating effects may be present, in which the impact of language or branding may depend on the consumer's cultural orientation or religiosity.

Given the cultural complexity of the GCC, future research could benefit from employing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to uncover such latent pathways. SEM allows for the simultaneous examination of both direct and indirect effects and is well-suited to explore multi-layered constructs like cultural sensitivity in high-context societies. This approach could offer a more nuanced understanding of how deeply embedded cultural traits shape online purchase intentions in digital markets.

7. Results of The Study

A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the influence of cultural factors on online FMCG purchase intention. The model demonstrated robust explanatory power, accounting for 56% of the variance in purchase intention ($R^2 = 0.56$, $F = 80.978$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the set of cultural predictors collectively forms a meaningful framework for understanding consumer behavior in the GCC.

Among the individual predictors, language and communication emerged as the strongest and only statistically significant factor ($\beta = 0.467$, $p < 0.001$), underscoring the critical role of linguistic clarity, accessibility, and culturally resonant messaging in digital commerce.

Cultural norms ($\beta = 0.090$, $p = 0.141$) and cultural sensitivity ($\beta = 0.052$, $p = 0.244$) did not achieve statistical significance in this model. However, their high correlations with purchase intention ($r = 0.474$ and $r = 0.313$, respectively) and with other cultural constructs (e.g., $r = 0.757$ between language and norms) suggest that their influence may be indirect, contextual, or absorbed by the dominant effect of language.

This pattern may reflect the high-context nature of Gulf societies, where cultural values are deeply internalized and may not be directly observable in self-report surveys. Instead, they likely operate as background conditions that shape trust, brand perception, and social validation, factors that are essential for long-term engagement, even if not decisive for immediate purchase decisions.

These findings call for a nuanced interpretation: culture remains central, but its role may be better understood as a moderating or enabling factor, rather than a direct predictor, in the context of routine online FMCG purchases.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

8.1. Conclusion

The findings demonstrate that language and communication are the most significant predictors of online purchase intention in the GCC FMCG sector. This highlights the crucial role of linguistic clarity, accessibility, and culturally resonant messaging in fostering consumer trust and digital engagement. While cultural norms and cultural sensitivity did not show direct statistical significance, their positive correlations with purchase intention and their deep sociocultural embeddedness suggest that they play a crucial, albeit indirect, role in influencing consumer behavior.

Theoretically, these results extend the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) by showing that attitudinal factors (language and communication) operate as direct predictors. At the same time, normative and value-driven dimensions (cultural norms and cultural sensitivity) may exert influence through indirect or mediated pathways. Rather than functioning in isolation, these constructs interact in layered and context-dependent ways, reflecting the high-context cultural setting of the GCC.

Practically, the study reaffirms that sustainable consumer engagement in the region requires prioritizing linguistic clarity and culturally adapted communication, while simultaneously respecting cultural norms and sensitivities as contextual enablers. For marketers and policymakers, this means that while communication is the most immediate driver of purchase intention, ignoring cultural cues would be a strategic misstep in GCC e-commerce markets.

8.2 Practical recommendations

Based on the findings, several practical recommendations can be advanced for businesses and marketers operating in the GCC:

1) Prioritize Multilingual and Culturally Adapted Communication
2) Digital platforms should ensure seamless bilingual (Arabic-English) accessibility, employing culturally resonant messaging that respects local idioms, traditions, and values.
3) Embed Cultural Sensitivity in Branding
4) Even if not statistically significant in this study, ignoring cultural cues such as halal compliance, modesty, and symbols of prestige can trigger consumer distrust or rejection. Marketers should proactively align their offerings with cultural and religious expectations.
5) Target Youth Without Overlooking Tradition
6) While youth drive digital adoption, they remain embedded in collectivist cultural contexts. Campaigns should strike a balance between modern, technology-driven appeals and traditional cultural markers to ensure resonance across different age groups.

7) Leverage Influencer and Social Proof Dynamics
8) In societies where collectivism and community opinion are valued, leveraging influencers, community leaders, and peer validation can amplify the impact of communication strategies.
9) Adopt Advanced Analytical Approaches
10) Future research and practice should employ structural equation modeling (SEM) and longitudinal data to capture indirect and evolving effects of culture on consumer behavior.

8.3. Future research directions

Future inquiries should:

- Broaden product categories to include luxury goods, clothing, perfumes, and cosmetics—items more deeply tied to cultural expression.
- Integrate qualitative methods such as focus groups and interviews to capture the tacit influence of cultural values.
- Examine the moderating role of religiosity, identity, and social media influence on the relationship between cultural constructs and purchase intention.
- Although this study focuses on fast-moving consumer goods (FMCGs), it is important to acknowledge that cultural influences may manifest differently for symbolic or luxury goods. In the GCC, where social identity and prestige play a central role in consumer behavior, symbolic consumption—such as gifting or conspicuous display—often reflects deeper cultural motivations rooted in collectivism, honor, and religious values.
- Future research could extend the current framework to examine how language, cultural sensitivity, and religious congruence shape the marketing and reception of high-involvement or status-driven products. Such expansion would enhance the generalizability of the findings and provide valuable insights for brands operating in the GCC's luxury and lifestyle segments.

In conclusion, while communication emerged as the dominant driver of online purchase intention in this dataset, the undeniable cultural embeddedness of Gulf consumers demands that businesses maintain a strong focus on cultural alignment. Culture remains a foundational lens through which consumers interpret value, trust, and brand authenticity. Ignoring it would be a strategic misstep, even if its statistical impact was not directly observable in this study.

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