

**THE IMPACT OF ANIMAL WELFARE STANDARDS ON CONSUMERS'
BEHAVIOR AND THEIR PURCHASING DECISION IN ARABIC
COUNTRIES**



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ABSTRACT

**THE IMPACT OF ANIMAL WELFARE STANDARDS ON CONSUMERS’
BEHAVIOR AND THEIR PURCHASING DECISION IN ARABIC COUNTRIES.**

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Animal welfare is a vast and complex subject. Ethical questions about our treatment of animals arise in several different industries like agriculture, medicine, and cosmetics; and are subjective to multiple dimensions such as ethical, economic, cultural, social-political, and religious. The concern of the wellbeing of animals is increasing, as well as the demand of adopting transparency regarding their products. In this study we will define “animal welfare” and its implications on animal-based food products (poultry - meat - dairy – eggs ...), and the perception of consumers towards the subject, thus the criteria affecting their decision making process.

Keywords: Animal Welfare, Behavioral Factor

ÖZ

ARAP ÜLKELERİNDE HAYVAN REFAHI STANDARTLARININ TÜKETİCİ DAVRANIŞLARI VE SATIN ALMA KARARLARI ÜZERİNDEKİ ETKİSİ

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Hayvan refahı geniş ve karmaşık bir konudur. Hayvanlara yaptığımız muamele ile ilgili etik sorular tarım, tıp, kozmetik gibi birçok farklı sektörde ortaya çıkmakta ve etik, ekonomik, kültürel, sosyopolitik ve dini gibi birçok boyuta özne olmaktadır. Hayvanların refahı ile ilgili endişelerin yanı sıra hayvan ürünleri ile ilgili şeffaflık sağlanma talebi de artmaktadır. Bu çalışmada “hayvan refahı” anlayışını ve hayvan refahının hayvansal gıda ürünleri (et, süt ve kümes hayvanları ürünleri; yumurta...) üzerindeki etkilerini, tüketicilerin konuya yönelik algılarını ve dolayısıyla tüketicilerin karar verme sürecini etkileyen kriterleri tanımlayacağız.

Anahtar kelimeler: Hayvan Refahı, Davranışsal Faktörler



To My Lovely Wife, Ala

To Our Coming Baby

To My Parents

To My Pets; Khairy & Dahab

To All Poor Souls That I Met In AZIZA

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ETHICAL CONDUCT	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
ÖZ	v
DEDICATION	vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	viii
LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1 Statement Of The Problem	1
1.2 Purpose Of The Study	2
1.3 Research	2
1.4 Significance Of The Study	2
1.5 Definitions	3
Chapter 2: Literature Review	4
2.1 Business Ethics in Animal Farms and Animal Production	4
2.1.1 Meaning of business ethics in animal farms	4
2.1.2 Adopting animal welfare in farms industries and the effect on the quality of the product	4
2.1.3 The effect of adopting animal welfare in businesses on the cost of production thus the price of the product.	5
2.2 The Impact of Animal Welfare Standards on Consumer's Behavior and Their Purchasing Decision	6
2.2.1 How do consumers perceive animal welfare in farming businesses.	6
2.2.2 What are the factors that influence consumers' purchasing decisions when buying animal-origin product	7
2.2.3 EU regulations for animal welfare.	10
2.2.4 A worldwide perspective	12
2.2.5 Animal welfare in the United States.	12
2.2.6 Consumer behavior in Turkey.	12
2.3 Consumers' Behavior in Arab Countries	13
2.3.1 Arab countries culture and demographics	13
2.3.2 Arab consumption of meat products	13

2.3.3 Animal Welfare and Islam	14
Chapter 3: Methodology	15
3.1 Research Design	15
3.2 Setting and Participants	16
3.3 Procedures	18
3.3.1 Data collection.	18
3.3.2 Data Analysis	21
3.3.3 Limitations.....	21
Chapter 4: Findings	22
4.1 First focus group	22
4.1.1. Data Collection.	24
4.1.2. Data Analysis.....	27
4.2 Second Focus Group	28
4.2.1. Data Collection.	29
4.2.2. Data Analysis.....	33
4.3 Third Focus Group	34
4.3.1 Data collection.	34
4.3.2. Data analysis.....	40
4.4 Fourth Focus Group	42
4.4.1. Data collection.	43
4.4.2. Data analysis.....	48
4.5 Findings summary	49
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion	55
5.1 Discussions.....	55
5.2 Conclusion	58
5.3 Recommendation.....	59
REFERENCES.....	61

LIST OF TABLES

TABLES

Table 1 Screening Table 17

Table 2 Focus Group 1 23

Table 3 Focus Group 2 29

Table 4 Focus Group 3 36

Table 5 Focus Group 4 43



LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURES

Figure 1. Awareness Percentage	50
Figure 2 Willingness To Pay Extra Percentage.....	51
Figure 3 Willingness To Pay Depending On Income	52
Figure 4 Willingness To Pay By Gender	53



Chapter 1

Introduction

The world that we live in is becoming mostly all about profits and materialistic commodities. People nowadays are living in this infinite rollercoaster trying to maximize their profits to fulfill their desire of acquiring their wants, despite the fact that it raises ethical issues and have severe effects on all living creatures on earth. Whether it was agriculture, medicine, cosmetics or any other industry, animals are being used without taking into consideration their wellbeing or the probable negative outcomes that may occur to them or to the products originated from them.

1.1 Statement Of The Problem

Food is one of the most important necessities that act as fuel to maintain survival. Many kinds of diets exist that people can choose to adopt, and yet the most commonly used is omnivorous, meaning that the individuals derive their energy and nutrients by feeding on both animals and plants. Because like it is said “we are what we eat” the new generations are more aware and have more concern about what they consume especially after the development of medical care and discoveries of so many diseases and outbreaks. Add to that, the increase in population caused an elevation in demand of animal originated products, which led farmers and manufacturers to adopt severe and unconsidered methods in their businesses to accommodate this huge demand and keep their flow of supply. Moreover corporate greed and carelessness to all animals, environment and even human lives aggravated the situation and made consumers more persistent and active to try and solve the issue. Finally, the development of new technologies and social media globalization with the help of several animal and environmental group activists highlighted the situation and pushed people to care more about animal’s welfare and animal’s wellbeing.

1.2 Purpose Of The Study

Taking this subject into hand, there were significant lack of studies in Arab countries that addresses this situation, for that reason this research was made with its main purpose to reveal Arabic consumers' perception and knowledge of animal's welfare and its related products, as well as to understand their purchasing decision process and to know what might affect it and how.

1.3 Research

Throughout the course of this study, perceptions of consumers from non-Arab countries is researched as well as behavioral factors that may alter their decision while purchasing animal welfare products. The study continued by conducting several interviews from participants coming from several Arab countries, and collecting data based mainly on their awareness of animal welfare and the willingness of the participants to pay extra amount of money to purchase the related product. A clear analysis and interpretation of the information was made and then compared to the research made in non- Arab countries.

1.4 Significance Of The Study

This study will enable the reader to understand Arab consumers' perception about animal welfare and its related product. By identifying the behavioral factors that triggers their emotions and alter their thoughts and decisions, concerned individuals can use this data to reach as many Arabs as possible and help spread awareness in Arab countries. Add to that, it will give a little bit more understanding of how behavioral factors affect their mentalities while purchasing and consuming animal originated products, and alter their preferences, their drive, and their expectations. Marketers as well can use this data to rely on in their studies to promote new products or enhance existed one. Moreover the data may act as reference for feasibility studies and social studies for interested individuals.

1.5 Definitions

As a general definition animal welfare is the state of animal before it was consumed, meaning how the animals are treated during their lifetime and the care in their wellbeing. Hence, animal welfare products or what they also called “happy products” are the commodities originated from animals that lived under the conditions of animal’s welfare.

Behavioral factors are the sum of the variables that may cause or/and justify an individual’s choices and mentalities. It shapes a person’s perceptions and affects the way he sees and reacts to things as well as set the process of his thoughts, choices, decisions and preferences.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Business Ethics in Animal Farms and Animal Production

2.1.1 Meaning of business ethics in animal farms. According to the OIE Global Animal Welfare Strategy code (oie, 2021) “animal welfare means the physical and mental state of an animal in relation to the conditions in which it lives and dies.” It consists of five principles or “Five Freedoms” that describe the living conditions of animals under human control:

- “Freedom from hunger, malnutrition and thirst.
- Freedom from fear and distress.
- Freedom from heat stress or physical discomfort.
- Freedom from pain, injury and disease.
- Freedom to express normal patterns of behavior.”

2.1.2 Adopting animal welfare in farms industries and the effect on the quality of the product. It is only logical to assume that animals’ health is crucial for having a good animal-origin product, considering that, in order for us to have an optimal quality product; animals should reveal good health indications.

A study conducted by Professor Neville G Gregory PhD Professor of Animal Welfare Physiology (Gregory, 2007) retrieved from his book “Animal Welfare and Meat Science” shows that the quality of meat can be affected tremendously in the last days, hours, or even moments of an animal’s life. Research has proven how imperceptible levels of stress and small amounts of exercise can have great effects on meat quality. According to Prof Gregory DFD (Dark, Firm and Dry) meat is caused by high levels of pH. After slaughter, the level of pH is determined by the level of glycogen in the blood at the time of death. Animals that exhibit high levels of stress or has exercised before slaughter may have consumed a substantial amount of glycogen in their blood preventing them to convert the pH to the optimum level, hence the meat will have a purplish color rather than a red healthy one (fail to bloom properly), and

will have a shorter shelf life. Despite the negative consequences, the tests showed that DFD meat is slightly more tender and juicier but less tasty (especially with beef origin) so the meat will undergo several processes to enhance the taste and regain the quality desired.

In addition, a study published in Environmental and Research Economics (Espinosa, Tago, & Treich, 2020) shows the relation between animal products and diseases. About 75% of the current infectious diseases are zoonotic, which means the majority of pathogens are transmitted to us via animals and animal products. Due to the increasing demand for food supply, the industry is adopting an intensive farming strategy to meet the demand, which means poor welfare reigns as the farms are crowded, the animals have no outdoor access, they are fed with a specific feed rather than natural crops plus they are given large amounts of antimicrobials to prevent disease spread. As a result negative outcomes such as high density, high genetic similarity, lack of hygiene, biodiversity losses, immunosuppression, development of resistant strains of antimicrobials, ventilation of contaminated air, and spread of animal waste on land, emerge. These results will not only affect dramatically the quality of food produced by these animals but also put human consumers at serious health risks.

2.1.3 The effect of adopting animal welfare in businesses on the cost of production thus the price of the product. A recent study published in Agriculture 2021 (Fernandes, Hemsworth, J.Coleman, & Tilbrook, 2021) explains how improving the welfare of farm animals can cost substantially without a definite certainty on profitability increase. Depending on the size and the nature of the farm, improving animal welfare means incurring different types of expenses some of which are one-time costs such as developing the farm's infrastructure for example installing shades in feedlots, purchasing configurations and technologies to monitor animals..., some others are ongoing operational costs such as training personnel, time, extra man labor, supplies including the cost of purchasing pain relievers and enrichment materials as well as additional veterinary expertise, and last the indirect expenses associated with the costs of research developments and extensions. This significant amount of capital would inevitably increase the price of the product. The benefits of this strategy are to optimize the product's quality, increase productivity, gain competitive advantage and become a market premium. As mentioned previously animal welfare will benefit each

of the animals, products, and productivity, although economically, the profitability and the sustainability of it relies on consumer's willingness to pay and marketing efforts of the business itself to promote their merchandise.

2.2 The Impact of Animal Welfare Standards on Consumer's Behavior and Their Purchasing Decision

2.2.1 How do consumers perceive animal welfare in farming businesses.

A study had been made as part of the welfare quality research (Kjaernes, Miele, & Roex, 2007) to investigate the variation of consumers' perception on animal welfare and its influence on their purchasing practices. After conducting several interviews and surveys all around Europe (7 different countries) the preliminary results showed that consumers' views on animal welfare varied much from one country to another. The majority of consumers believed in the importance of animal welfare although it didn't reflect on them perusing to buy correspondent products, some others (minority) showed elevated positive attitudes towards the subject and were willing to associate their purchasing practices accordingly. To understand the cause of these variations we need to identify the criteria upon which purchasing decisions are based upon. According to the study, only a few products show their animal welfare strategy on their labels the thing that linked them automatically to the organic products category. The awareness about animal welfare is increasing throughout the years, and consumers are demanding to know more about the products they are consuming, especially after the debates caused by the spread of scandals in the meat industry, and the increasing legislations to improve animal welfare in farms. Moreover, concerns arise about food safety, environmental issues, and basic problems that address killing animals for the purpose of eating. Finally, we can add the issue of trusting suppliers and manufacturers with the information that they provide (if such information existed) on their labels or through their advertisements. Despite the ongoing dilemma studies show that consumers have not yet pushed themselves out of their comfort zone and taken action towards product development that forces suppliers to concern about animals' welfare. In addition, the analysis of consumer's demand indicated a slight shift after the BSE crisis where the interest in beef, in particular, has dropped in Italy, France, and Britain,

yet soon after it was completely restored to its former levels with no long-term alteration depicted. In conclusion, Humans are creatures of habits; any change in their routine will be subjected to a great amount of time and several interrelated factors.

2.2.2 What are the factors that influence consumers' purchasing decisions when buying animal-origin product. People make their purchasing decisions simply according to their needs. However “Need”, “want”, “prefer”, and “afford” are all a mix of human nature, economy and marketing. To introduce a new product, to enhance a current one or to identify new opportunities in the market companies study the purchasing habits of consumers and what might influence their decisions. This study of consumer behavior is an important integrant that every business relies on when it comes to their merchandizing. Knowing the right segment to target, and positioning the products from others in the market, constitute key elements nowadays for having a successful business. Given that the market is saturated with products, and consumers are becoming more aware and more intrigued of what they are consuming, marketing divisions as well as research and development departments, are intensifying their efforts to find ways to attract and influence as many people as possible, in order to optimize their sale numbers hence maximize their profits.

Based on its definition from a course given online on consumer behavior (study.com, 2016) to understand what triggers consumer's behavior, the study of these three factors: Personal, Psychological, and social are essentials to have a productive analysis and optimal results. These factors are linked together in a way that one completes the other to make each individual unique. One of the main aims of studying this behavior is to know consumers' willingness to pay. The complexity of studying this kind of behavior comes in relating these factors to forecast what will the consumers think, feel and act towards a certain product. Any alteration made on a person's purchasing habits and decision making process will be the consequence of a change in these mentioned factors or variables.

2.2.2.1 Personal factors. Personal factors are the most defined variables to target, considering it's purely related to the consumer's own habits, what interests him, what relates to him and, how does he make decisions (decision-making process). To determine this variable and its effect on consumers, studies should be made by

selecting a group of criteria and dividing it according to Age, Gender, and culture (quantitative and qualitative). The analysis of the results will contribute to the building of generalized data on consumer's personal variables. Relying on an online article published in 2018 (Spain, Freund, Mohan-Gibbons, Meadow, & Beacham, 2018) a survey has been conducted on 1000 United States consumers of meat, eggs and dairy, in order to study consumer's willingness to pay for animal welfare products. According to the results based on demographics – around half male half female group sample –there was a slight difference where women were more likely than men (82% vs. 72 %) to be concerned about animal welfare products, as well as, consumers below the age of 45. Similarly, the same categories showed the most attention to labels and the most willingness to pay. To be more exact in the purchasing statistics, consumers below the age of 30 were the most willing to pay for certified eggs and chickens. In addition, relying on (Kjaernes, Miele, & Roex, 2007) and taking into consideration that culture also plays a role in the decision making process, the comparison between European countries results, for instance, revealed that Italy and Sweden showed the most concern and were the most willing to pay money for animal welfare products and the Dutch and Norwegian were the least.

2.2.2.2 Psychological factors. This factor is what businesses' rely on to impact and attract as many clients as possible. Minds will become “play dough” shaped by the hands of marketers. Consumer's decisions are influenced by advertisements and good marketing techniques. It consists of targeting individuals' perceptions, thought processes and attitudes. A common way to promote their product is labeling. Whenever we talk about information, we talk about consumers' trust in the chain supply, consumers' concern about the actual product (origin, quality, nutritional value, cleanliness...), and their habit to look for label information. Several pieces of research have been made to determine the effect of labeling helping in the decision making process. Results showed that consumers were willing to pay extra money depending on two conditions: First one, relating to the sensory property of the product which means consumer match the product to the desired quality that they expect, and if the product did not meet the required criteria than label would not alter their decision and no purchase will be made (F.Napolitana, C.Pacelli, A.Girolami, & A.Braghieri, 2018). Second one relates to consumer's trust in the food chain supply, based on (Kjaernes,

Miele, & Roex, 2007) and (wikipedia, 2021) mixed opinions about trust emerged. For example Italians and French have low trust concerning animal welfare products, and it's the results of not having enough legislations and monitoring to control the food supply process which will lead to vulnerability gaps easily penetrated by business schemes and low ethics. Moreover, another important key element of people buying animal welfare products is actually the ability to access them easily. According to (Kjaernes, Miele, & Roex, 2007) availability was more important than the increase in price. The process of finding animal welfare products were too time consuming for at least 50% of the study sample (page 21), as consequence more effort will lead to fewer sales.

2.2.2.3 Social factors. Social variables are the hardest to predict considering it's pure subjective to each consumer's influence groups. This factor consists of any group of people that an individual is linked to; they may be family members, work friends, neighbors, community acquaintances, basically anyone who's in contact with the consumer and may have influence on their behaviors and decisions. In addition, living conditions, religion, social status, income and educational levels play an important role in the social environment consequently decision making and purchasing products. According to the studies of consumers' willingness to pay (Spain, Freund, Mohan-Gibbons, Meadow, & Beacham, 2018) income was not a significant factor affecting consumers' perception on animal welfare product nor was it with them paying extra money for similar products although, it may affect the percentage of the money increase acceptance. On the contrary, results of a study on European consumers (Bozzo, Barrasso, Grimaldi, Tantillo, & Roma, 2019) revealed that, consumers with high educational levels have more concern about the subject hence, will pay more to get animal welfare products. In addition, religion has tremendous effect on the consumption of animal product as a whole far less mistreating and torturing them. Relying on a study on "Animal Welfare in Different Human Cultures, Traditions and Religious Faiths" (Spain, Freund, Mohan-Gibbons, Meadow, & Beacham, 2018) the results revealed that in the Islamic religion for instance, mistreating animals is disobeying Allah's will, moreover, Islam limit their consumption on what they consider it to be Halal meat, which means that they will not consume pork meat nor meat that they wouldn't know its origin (Bonne & Verbeke, 2006); another example

is Jainism, Hinduism and Buddhism where animals should be treated with respect like they treat humans, because of their beliefs that ancestors return in animal forms... Considering these two examples it is only logical to deduce that religion has great influence on consumers' perceptions towards animal welfare and as a result will alter their purchasing decision.

According to the factors discussed above we can estimate that a consumer's willingness to pay extra amount of money to purchase animal welfare products, depends on his actual perception towards the subject. The most influential factors that will determine his decision are either personal: his culture (country, location), age (younger adult 25-45 years of age are more likely to be open to follow new trends), gender being the least important; social: educational level (awareness towards healthier and safer products without animal torture), status (family, religion, class, income); and psychological: marketing efforts that establish trust and persuade consumers in the benefits of buying their products, labeling, and its actual availability (where it is easy to access such products in any supermarket).

2.2.3 EU regulations for animal welfare. In the European Union has created many conventions since 1968, which cover in details the protection of animals and are summarized in the following:

2.2.3.1 *Animals during international transport.* This convention notes welfare standards when transporting animals, while taking into account food, water, space allowance, veterinary control and good conduct while treating the animals being transported

2.2.3.2 *Pet animals.* This convention notes the animals kept for leisure and companionship, where it regulates many attitude towards these pets some of which are breeding and prohibition of modification of natural appearance.

2.2.3.3 Vertebrate animals kept for scientific research. This convention controls the use of animals in research, education and training. It takes into account that the animals have to be treated with care, accommodated, killed humanely, and it puts up strict authorization procedures.

2.2.3.4 Animals Kept for farming purposes. This convention applies to animals being kept for breeding and for different kinds of production (food, wool, skin.....). The aim of this convention is to preserve the well-being of animals, while removing aspects that deter unnecessary suffering and injury.

2.2.3.5 Animals kept for slaughter. This convention covers the equipment used, treatment of animals with care, and the use of equipment to stun the animals before slaughter, while not being restricted in movement, nor suspended beforehand.

The five mentioned conventions are concerned in this study as they affect consumer behavior in selecting food. A study in 1998 conducted by the European Union on 5 of its members, showed that animal welfare did not affect the food choice. However, consumers mentioned that if they could get more information about the subject, they would make “the responsible choice”. But when the study continued it showed that consumers were more concerned with quality of the food rather than the welfare of animals. (Caporale, Alessandrini, Villa, & Papa, 2005)

Some studies in the European Union, which goes more into consumer behavior, have found that the lack of information and trust in food labels makes a big difference in purchasing behavior. It was found that the dissemination of information, labeling of products, followed by a perceived responsibility of the consumer make a significant difference in the purchasing behavior of consumers. (Toma, Stott, Revoredo-Giha, & Kupiec-Teahan, 2012) Other studies noted that status, income and education have a positive effect on animal welfare purchasing behavior (Lagerkvist & Hess, 2001). In a survey done in Germany, the reasons for buying products is health and animal welfare. Further studies in the UK have found that meat products (pork, beef and chicken) are preferred due to animal welfare, health and food safety. (MUTLU, 2007)

2.2.4 A worldwide perspective. As the food production has been steadily increasing, appreciation to animal welfare has also increased. As people around the world are looking at production systems and the effect that this production increase could have on the quality of the products purchased. Therefore, “animal friendly products” are being considered by consumers as the healthier, safer, and more acceptable choice.

These products should be labeled by a transparent worldwide system that can increase the consumers trust in the product they are purchasing. (Alonso, González-Montaña, & Lomillos, 2020)

2.2.5 Animal welfare in the United States. a survey conducted by telephone in the United States households has found that females are more likely to buy animal friendly products than their male counterparts. Furthermore, when studying the income difference, consumers with higher income and more education stated that they are less willing to buy animal welfare products, even though the bigger number of people that took part in the survey considers animal welfare while purchasing products, even with the added price. When looking deeper into the survey, the study found that people in densely populated areas are more likely to accept regulations of farm animals and restriction for animal welfare. (PRICKETT, 2007)

2.2.6 Consumer behavior in Turkey. A study done in Turkey in 2012 done by questionnaire, found that while buying organic foods, Turkish consumers would rank “animal welfare”, during the production phase, below “healthier”, “food safety”, and “protection of natural resources”. It also shows that the most common argument to a higher purchase rate of organic food is to lower the cost of such products, therefore, the price is very important for Turkish consumers when considering the product. When comparing income, the research found that the group with income between 1500 to 2000 Turkish Lira are more likely to purchase organic products than other income categories, excluding the over 5000 Turkish Lira income category. (Aygen, 2012). . What’s more, as noted in many researches mentioned in this literature review, the

dissemination of information about organic food and animal welfare, and logos used, is essential to increasing the purchase rate of such products. Adding to that, higher awareness about animal welfare leads to better understanding of food safety perception. (Aygen, 2012) (BOLAT, KAYGISIZ, & BULUT, 2020)

2.3 Consumers' Behavior in Arab Countries

2.3.1 Arab countries culture and demographics. The subjects concerning Arab countries in general are always subjective to misconceptions and filled with stereotypes. Few researches have been made on Arabic consumers, and information related to these countries is scarce. In order to determine the Arabs perception towards animal welfare and their willingness to pay for correspondent products, an understanding of its demographics and culture is a must.

Based on (Harb, 2016), the Arab world is composed of 22 countries. Their estimated population is around 363 million people from different ethnicity, culture and background. They are spread in a vast region with different geology; hence cultures and traditions, as well as, habits and way of living differ greatly from one country to another if not even from one city to another. This diversity continues in the religious field where the most common ones are Islam (in all its sects Sunni, Shiaa...) and Christianity (in all its sects Maronite, Catholics, Orthodox...); other religions such as Druze, Judaism and Hinduism are also adopted in this region. In addition, Arab world History is ample with wars and colonization resulting in a mix of cultures from all over the world. Moreover, the majority of Arabs are young and highly skillful people that have established elevated educational level.

2.3.2 Arab consumption of meat products. According to a study conducted on the Gulf countries (MARKET ACCESS SECRETARIAT, 2017) , Arabs are large consumers of red meat and poultry. This region of the Arab world is well known for its wealth and high living standards. They lavish themselves with what their money can provide, and care about the quality of what they are consuming. Although they are producers of meat, they are not only limiting themselves with local products and they

rely greatly on importing meat from other countries. The fact of them being trend followers, and the fact that the region is booming and becoming more touristic, the demand for meat has been increasing consequently. The local producers are following the trends and going towards food safety strategies where they are investing more in infrastructure to elevate their productivity and enhance the quality of their products.

2.3.3 Animal Welfare and Islam. when studying the Arab world, it is essential to study the influence of religion on the subject at hand, as religion is the leading followed guidance in the countries. Having Islam as the dominant religion it is only fair to dig deeper to reveal the concept of the relationship between animals and Arabians that adopted Islam as a religion. Many researches have been done on the subject of halal slaughter but rare are the ones that go into the animal welfare and Islam. The article by Tasgheer and Anwar in 2021, studies the writings in the Quran to find the significance of animals and the fair treatment of the latter. In their research, they found stated that animals have the right to live and only killed when needed and not on impulse, also they have the right to shelter. The studied writings showed that animals are considered to have emotions and attachments. Furthermore, they found that animals in the Quran are protected, should be treated well and with compassion, as it is stated that being good to animals is rewarded and viewed in high praise, where as being cruel to them is punishable and “puts a person to hell”. (Tasgheer & Anwar, 2021). What’s more, it is written that a good deed to an animal is similar to a good deed to a human being, same goes for doing bad deeds. (Rahman, 2017)

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Research Design

In this study, focus group method is adopted to conduct the research needed. The reason behind this choice lies in the fact that the subject lacks tangible and quantifiable studies in the targeted area; in addition it is subjective to each consumer's preferences and behaviors. Moreover, using this method makes it more feasible for the researcher to conduct the study as it is less expensive and needs less participants than the quantitative methods, add to that it offers flexibility for both, researcher and interviewers, as far as location and timing especially with the existence of the current social media platform. (wilkinson, 1998)

Focus group method consists of small groups of people that fit the criteria (age, gender, culture, ethnicity, education, income...) of the targeted subject. They are gathered to discuss and give their own opinions and preferences towards certain products, services, ideas and topics. The interactions between the group members and its dynamics will widen the range of responses by activating forgotten details, releasing inhibitions and provoking feelings that may be hidden. Thus the interview will serve as a platform for the interviewed /consumers to allow themselves to think about the subject from all of its aspects and freely express their thoughts (Jordan Civil Society Program, 2012). This qualitative approach enables the researcher to deepen his knowledge in each of the group members opinions' by being directly engaged with the targeted section and, by being more involved with the interviewers. As a consequence, the information will be more detailed as the researcher can ask and direct the discussion according to his need. The information gathered to be analyzed does not stand only on the verbal information but also on each individual's body language (voice, tonality, hand gestures ...). These gathered data taken from the sample will be then analyzed and interpreted to serve the purpose of the study.

3.2 Setting and Participants

The research will be performed on four focus groups; each group will contain five to ten participants in total. This selection is due to the fact that if the sample contains less than five members, the information gathered will be scarce and there would be a lack of momentum between the participants. Moreover, the sample that contains more than ten participants will affect the focus group negatively, for the reason that the information will be crowded; hence it will be harder for it to be organized and analyzed. Add to that, the moderator will face more difficulties in keeping the discussion flowing and on track, plus there wouldn't be enough time for all of the participants to express themselves fully. As a consequence, the information gathered will not be diverse and wouldn't accurately represent the targeted section studied in this research. The participants will be from Arab origins and will differ by gender (male- female), religion (Muslims, Christianity...), age (18-60), family status (single, married, with children, without children), income (below 1500\$, between 1500\$ and 3000\$, above 3000\$) and countries (Lebanon, Palestine, Qatar...).

Based on what was presented above, and to carry out the qualitative approach for the research, focus groups were conducted by choosing people from various backgrounds, countries, cultures, and different financial, social, and educational levels.

Considering that the research topic is based in Arab countries, it is only logical to assume that the best place to start searching for candidates would be in an entity that contains people from Arabic origins, such as a co-working space for example, a business center or incubator where, people with different Arabic nationalities are employed or brought together. Candidates from this sample group are often known for traveling, and visiting more than one Arab and non-Arab country. The unstable conditions that the Arab countries face nowadays facilitated the access to Arabians due to the fact that a large number of them immigrated in search of stability and prosperous future.

To be able to choose the participants of the first focus group, 30 people were approached and asked if they were interested to be part of this research and participate

by discussing their opinions in a focus group. 12 of them agreed, and the selection ended by choosing 8 of them based on the following screening tally sheet:

Table 1 Screening Table

Participant Name
Age
Gender
Educational level
Job
Have you traveled outside your native country? Where?
Are you willing to participate in the discussion group that discusses “The Impact of Animal Welfare Standards on Consumers' Behavior And Their Purchasing Decision In Arabic Countries” knowing that the discussion duration will be 60 – 120 minutes?
Moderator Name
Moderator Signature

This screening tally enabled the moderator to get the needed information to try and diversify the sample as much as it was reachable for him. The initial role as moderator of these groups was to screen through the initial candidates and ensure that people were suitable to join the sample. After the first group of participants was selected, the snowballing method was adopted to find candidates for the other groups. Participants of the first group were asked to nominate whomever they deemed interested in this discussion, and would fit in the designated criteria of this study. Then, after they shared their suggestions, the recruiting of the rest of the participants was embarked by the researcher, by contacting them via phone and filtering them through the same questions asked in the previous tally sheet.

3.3 Procedures

3.3.1 Data collection. The sessions will start with an introduction of the thesis and the reason why the meeting is held, followed by a thorough background discussion on each individual. The researcher will be asking general questions letting the interviewed members introduce themselves identifying in a way the 6 factors that may affect their consumption behavior and purchasing decisions. The questions will start from a broad scope to narrower and more precise ones, where they will move from less to more important in relation to the subject studied. Generally, when adopting focus group methods ethical challenges emerge due to the unpredictability of the discussion and sensitivity of the topic for some members. This obstacle may be amplified by the fact that the discussion has a public nature, and the moderator has no control over what the members may communicate during the interview. To minimize these potential confidentiality and anonymity problems created by these factors, consent should be taken from the participants after giving a clear account of the topic and by stating the unpredictability of events that may occur during the course of the interview before the actual discussion starts (Sim & Waterfield, 2019). Any languages can be used considering that the participants will be from different countries, thus language diversity may occur in order to let the interviewed individuals express themselves freely and more accurately.

The duration of the interview will be from 60 to 120 minutes long and will be recorded to be an available reference upon need. The session can be held online or offline depending on the group members' availabilities and preferences. The interviewer will ask his previously prepared questions and lead the discussion according to his findings, adding more questions along the way according to the flow of the interview. The results will be also written to be studied and evaluated in the interpretation stage. They will be classified along with the participants' backgrounds given that each sample group will have a letter code and each member in each group will be codified by a number to preserve the participants' rights to be anonymous. A report summarizing the findings will be compared then to other studies mentioned earlier in the literature review making it easier to draw a final deduction to the study.

For the first and second groups, the meetings were held virtually by using zoom application. The Face-to-face method was not an option due to limitations imposed by the outbreak of covid-19 epidemic. In contrast, the other two groups were held face to face meetings due to the easing of the existing health restrictions. The date, location and time was discussed and approved by all participants prior to the meeting. All group members were notified that the session will be audio-recorded for research data analysis and references, as well as taking of each individual's consent in moving on with the discussion and using the data collected knowing that some events may occur unpredictably (yelling, discomfort with other opinions, misconceptions, misunderstandings,...). Moreover, the moderator stated the fact that the research will be anonymous and each participant's privacy is reserved, all personal information will be dealt with strict confidence and the data provided by them will be classified according to each individual code name as stated previously in the methodology. In addition, the moderator led by stating that the atmosphere of the interview is an open discussion dominated by respect of different opinions without prejudices. Finally he insured the smoothness of the discussion flow so that one person may speak without interruptions.

The discussion with all the groups started by clarifying the topic of the study first, then it was proceeded by asking main questions:

- Are you aware of animal welfare standards? If yes, what are they?
- What are the main things that you check before buying any product?
- What is the main reason that makes you select a branded animal origin product rather than another before buying it?
- Are you willing to pay more for better product quality?
- Are you willing to pay more if you knew that this specific product came from a company that follows animal welfare standards?
- If the price is the same, would you select the products from a company that follows animal welfare standards?
- Did you ever see any products with a particular label that says, "This product came from a company which follows animal welfare standards"?
- Did you check the labels on the products before buying them?

- Do you think that the product from a company that follows animal welfare standards will be cheaper than regular products or more expensive?
- Are you willing to donate to animal welfare organizations?
- Do you think your country's government cares about animal welfare?

Then participants were left with the freedom to express their opinions under the guidance of the interviewer. Different methods of forming the discussion were used:

- Open-ended questions: where participants stated their opinions without framing or limiting their expressions.
- Non-leading questions: where questions were neutral and did not adopt a point of view. Sometimes the researcher had to take the role of the devil's advocate. Every time the discussion went in the same direction and the majority of opinions were almost similar the moderator intervened to push the participants to think in a broader scope and to provoke a wider range of thinking and feeling, hence enriching the discussion with more extensive data.
- Funnel questions: starting with a general question and then direct it to reach more precise information
- Confirmation Questions: the moderator rephrased what he grasped from the participants' point of view and res-asked it to confirm that it was correctly understood.

Closed-ended questions, questions with prejudice, or leading questions that lead the discussion to specific opinions were avoided to insure a better flow of the interview and to gather more intricate information.

During the discussion with the participants, essential notes discussed, heard, felt or seen were written down. This action provided an easy access of the data. Moreover, it helped in referencing the most critical points and keywords thus facilitated the summary and analysis of the results at a later stage of the research. The data were collected and recorded ready to be interpreted. All focus groups were conducted by the same moderator.

3.3.2 Data Analysis. After collecting all the information needed from the interviews, the data was filtered. The irrelevant data was eliminated and the rest of useful information were sorted by themes and compared accordingly to obtain a more refined data. This method of focus group analysis is a continuing process that offers accuracy due to its systematic and verifiable traits.

3.3.3 Limitations. A disadvantage of this method is the disability to deduce a more generalized conclusion. To hedge this problem, several diverse samples are studied in order to eliminate any possible bias in the research, and increase the reliability of the data collected. In the previous case studies cited in the above literature review, the quantitative approach was more adopted, or the alternation of both quantitative and qualitative were used, for that, a quantitative approach can be used at a later stage if needed to quantify the research and make it more general and scientific as far as the “how many” and “how long”.

Chapter 4

Findings

In the following data collecting process, it should be stated that the moderator started the interviews of each focus group by applying the steps mentioned in the methodology above. Initially he introduced himself and let the participants get acquainted for them to be more acclimated and more comfortable throughout the meeting. The terms of the interviews were explained as well as stating the privacy agreements. After the legal and ethical aspect was agreed upon, the moderator continued by explaining the Masters theses: "The impact of animal welfare standards on consumer's behavior and their purchasing decision in Arabic countries". First question asked was about the participants' knowledge on the topic. The moderator indicated the path of the discussion and let the participants freely express their thoughts and point of views. He recorded the whole meeting as well as writing key notes as well as leading the discussion according to his need. The interviews ended by thanking the interviewees for their time, patience and input.

4.1 First focus group

The first focus group contained a moderator (the researcher) and six participants: four males and two females. All participants were educated, and have jobs. They came from different Arab nationalities and mostly shared the same religion (Islam). It should be noted that some participants lived abroad (Europe, America) for a brief period. Each participant of this group was codified by the letter "A", which will help identifying to which focus group he belonged, followed by a number to differentiate him from the other interview members of the same focus group. This way, the privacy and anonymity of all interviewees will be preserved. The different factors are represented in the table 2 Focus group 1:

Table 2 Focus Group 1

Participant's Code	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6
Age	41	36	29	32	30	39
Gender	Male	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Nationality	Syria	Iraq	Iraq	Egypt	Lebanon	Iraq
Education	Bachelor	Masters	Bachelor	Bachelor	Masters	Ph.D.
Occupation	Developer	Project coordinator	Social Media Specialist	Logistics supervisor	NGO project manager	Business Consultant
Religion	Islam	Islam	Islam	Islam	Islam	Islam
Marital status	Married	Single	Single	Single	Single	Married
Income range	1500- 3000 USD	Below 1500 USD	Below 1500 USD	Below 1500 USD	Above 3000 USD	Above 3000 USD
Lived abroad	Not stated	UK	Not stated	Not stated	Not stated	Not stated

4.1.1. Data Collection. A1 was the first to answer, where he expressed his unawareness of animal welfare standards and that he thought it was about product quality and nothing else. When asked what concerns he has before purchasing animal related products, he immediately answers: "price then quality," adding that he visually examines the quality of a product without checking the label and reading the nutritional value, focusing mainly on the packaging. Moreover, when asked if he is willing to pay more for a better-quality product, he said: "depending on the product itself," explaining that he does that, especially on electronic products and high-value products, for more than 200\$. Then he expressed his unwillingness to purchase a product just because the farm was practicing animal welfare, which did not weigh his decision-making process. Adding that he has never heard of animal welfare practices being a vital factor in a consumer decision-making process in Syria; therefore, the rest of the questions were answered repeatedly by "this does not exist" or "we do not have this kind of standards."

A2 was aware of animal welfare standards, and he stated and explained them, and he was familiar with the specifics of animal welfare. He pointed out the difference between the UK, where he studied, and Iraq, and concentrated on animal welfare practices, elaborating with an example where he saw "the happy eggs" in the UK supermarkets and noticed the price gap compared with the regular eggs or "the boring eggs" as he described. One day he decided to try the happy eggs and noticed the difference between the two products. When asked if he was willing to pay more for products produced by animal welfare farms, he said: "yes, as long as the price difference does not exceed 15% of the total price". Furthermore, when asked if he considers the product's value before purchasing, he answered: "of course, the product value is the main factor in my decision-making process as a consumer." Then he proceeded to explain the situation in Iraq, where meat (white and red) has some severe supervision issues regarding the quality, not to mention animal welfare standards. So he hasn't seen any animal welfare practices or animal care in Iraq. However, his experience in the UK was great, and he is willing to spend money on animal-origin products from animal welfare farms.

A3 has an entirely different view, she stated her unawareness of animal welfare standards, but after the discussion, she was willing to pay more for animal-friendly farms' products. Also, she was determined to boycott products of firms that do not

practice animal welfare standards. She also pointed out that Iraq and Turkey do not pay much attention to animal welfare standards. She noticed general unawareness in these countries regarding animal welfare standards and animal-friendly behavior, and she accused governments and media of not shedding light on this issue. She said she is very interested in product quality in her current situation (living in turkey), and she reads product labels. However, she has never come across a label presenting this issue. She emphasized her words by saying: "I am willing to buy only products of animal welfare farms, and boycott farms with no animal welfare standards," so she concentrated intensely on the media and governments for not giving this issue the attention it deserves.

As for A4, he answered the first question with a laugh, explaining that this issue is a luxury for the average Egyptian. In contrast, Egypt has massive supervision and quality problems regarding animal-origin products. He continued to elaborate that poverty and general unawareness cause this state of neglecting similar issues; he reconfirmed that this issue does not concern Egyptians, calling it "non-essential luxury issues." He stated his unwillingness to pay extra for products of animal welfare farms; he pointed out his interest in humanity, "humans are the superior species," as he described. Adding: "I am more concerned about currency exchange rates and inflation, and the purpose of life," compared to animals' living situation before becoming consumable products. He expressed his lack of interest in the production chain and how this product was manufactured; as long as it is Halal, he has no more interest.

A5 from Lebanon was passionately in agreement with animal welfare standards and pointed out that her organization has some programs especially for raising awareness on animal welfare practices around the world and particularly in Lebanon; she gave an example of stray dogs and how to deal with them and the best way to treat them. Also, she mentioned donkeys in rural areas and villages where they are widely spread. She expressed her deep interest in product quality and her inclination to buy products from animal-friendly farms. She talked about some products available in Lebanon, such as happy eggs that come from chickens with a good living condition, better than cage chickens. However, the current political situation in Lebanon and the media focusing on other issues is not very suitable for everyone to take an interest in this issue, according to her. Despite that, she believes animal welfare standards are

essential for Lebanese, and discussing it more often may enlighten and encourage them to buy from animal-friendly farms more than others. As for the price and if she is willing to pay extra for animal welfare farms, she said: "Obviously the price would be higher because of the additional costs on production processes," and she pointed out that purchasing these products might be more suitable for middle and upper class compared to working-class, without forgetting the importance of raising awareness to all classes.

A6, from Iraq who has lived in Italy for a while, has an entirely different opinion, he is fully convinced that animal welfare standards and animal-friendly farms are just a marketing game, nothing else, and he believes there are no animal-origin products from animal-friendly farms, as he explained that as long as animals end up being consumable products, it makes no sense that there is such thing called animal welfare standards. He elaborated by saying: "raising an animal to end his life eventually conflicts deeply with animal welfare," reconfirming that animal welfare standards are a marketing game and a manipulation of customer's feelings as justification for high prices. Then he stated that despite his financial ability to buy high-priced products, he is unwilling to spend extra money on products from farms that practice animal welfare standards because he thinks it is not different from regular products. When asked about the government's role in raising awareness and keeping an eye on animal welfare standards, he answered: "I feel it is completely normal for the government, and any Arabic government, not to participate in these issues due to dealing with bigger issues such as political complications, unemployment rates, and healthcare." Then he pointed out his disagreement with donating or helping this cause because he thinks humans are much more valuable and worthy of his money than animals.

He explained that he is unconvinced by the whole animal welfare standards. He believes it is just a vast media propaganda run by big companies aiming to replace animal-origin products with manufactured products. What they show has nothing to do with their actual intentions.

4.1.2. Data Analysis. Considering that the main aim of the research is to know the interest of Arab consumers in animal welfare and their willingness to pay extra for related products, we can somewhat divide the first interview data into two categories: group 1 (A1, A4, A6) that represents consumers with no interest in the subject, they considered it to be one of the marketing hacks invented by companies to justify the increase in their prices, hence elevating their profits. They mentioned that they are not concerned about the animals nor have interest to know what happens to them before becoming consumable products; they will continue to consume them as long as they are “Halal”. They stated that the idea of even thinking of such topic is considered to be a luxury in the country where they came from, where people are dying from hunger and wars. Moreover, they are surrounded by an unstable environment whether it be on political, economic and social level, so they have much more essential things to consider and prioritize over animals’ wellbeing. They mentioned, as well, their distrust in the system and in their governments. Add to that, they consider that Humans are the “Superior Species”, therefore, raising awareness and spending resources on such subject is a waste. They emphasized that instead of spending the time and money on such matters, it should be diverted into more important issues that need to be addressed. Furthermore, one of those participants indicated that it was ironic and hypocritical to think about animal welfare when the fact is; it is raised to be killed. This shows a conflict in the principal of animal welfare and he wasn’t convinced by it. Lastly, this group is unwilling to pay extra money to buy such products despite their ability to do so.

Group 2 (A2, A3, A5), these participants showed much interest in the topic. Two of them were aware of the concept prior to the interview and even stated that they have tried products that adopted animal welfare standards and one of them (A2) even sensed the difference in their quality. Similarly, the remaining one who hasn’t heard about animal welfare before the interview primarily linked it to product quality, and when the concept was properly explained, he revealed a sympathetic view towards the subject and showed real interest in the topic. Add to that, they shared a common trait where they were willing to pay more money to buy such products as long as the increase was logical and didn’t exceed 15% of the regular product. Moreover, a main similar concern was finding such products in the market and trusting the label attached to them, due to marketing savviness, corporate greed and lack of government control.

Finally, they mentioned their desire to spread awareness of the topic considering that product quality is of great importance to them.

4.2 Second Focus Group

The second focus group contained the moderator and eight participants: three females and five males. Similar to the first group, all participants belonged somewhat to the same age category, have university degrees, and come from different work backgrounds. The majority shared the same religion and had the experience of traveling abroad. Each participant of the second focus group was codified by the letter “B” followed by a relative number allowing each member to be identified and differentiated from the others, as well as preserving his privacy and anonymity. It should be noted that the participant B8 was disqualified and eliminated later on in the analysis phase due to his nature of being a vegan (he does not consume meat, poultry, fish, eggs, and dairy products); hence he cannot be a reliable source for this research data. Table 3 below shows the different factors related to each participant:

Table 3

Focus Group 2

Participant's Code	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7
Age	38	28	28	29	36	33	32
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Male	Male	Male	Male
Nationality	Syria	Morocco	Jordan	Iraq	Syria	Yemen	Syria
Education	Bachelor	Bachelor	Bachelor	Bachelor	Masters	Bachelor	Bachelor
Religion	Islam	Islam	Islam	Islam	Islam	Islam	Islam
Marital status	Single	Single	Single	Single	Married	Single	Single
Income range	1500-	Below	Below	Below	1500-	Below	1500-
	3000	1500	1500	1500	3000	1500	3000
	USD	USD	USD	USD	USD	USD	USD
Lived abroad	Not stated	Not stated	Not stated	Not stated	Not stated	UK	

4.2.2. Data Collection. B1 started by explaining her unfamiliarity with the animal welfare concept and that she gets it confused with product quality regarding health, safety and expiration date, etc. So, she is new to animal welfare standards and does not understand what it represents. After elaborating on the meaning of animal welfare standards and asked if she is willing to pay extra for products from animal

welfare farms, she replied with a similar previous answer, that she is willing to do so by practicing a sympathetic behavior towards animals with two conditions, firstly, the price gap should not be more than 20% of the total price. Secondly, the reliability of notifying parties such as the government, explaining that she does not trust the market whales and some media parties when they advertise and drive similar campaigns. She also raised a second point regarding the lack of accountability in the Arab world, where people cannot hold governments or big companies accountable for product quality, not to mention animal welfare standards. This raises anonymity and unclarity between customers, which leads to distrusting similar concepts and standards.

B2, as a pet owner and animal lover, shared that she is passionate about protecting all animals and that she does not consume red meat or Poultry, but only fish. Moreover, when asked, “why only fish?” she replied: “I do not see any unkind behavior in fish production.” She agreed with animal welfare standards expressing that she rejects the absence of rationing consumption and awareness campaigns on animal rights, especially when they are alive. She pointed out the poor treatment practiced on pets in rural areas, not to mention consumable animals that people keep to consume eventually. She focused on who should be accountable for this kind of behavior by saying: “It is not the government responsibility as much as us human beings not caring about our partners on planet earth.”, explaining that we must look after and respect other species and do whatever possible to strengthen their presence, “with superiority comes great responsibility” as she described, elaborating that we should fight unkind practices towards animal or at least try to rectify our ways in dealing with animals. Her attitude was shocking to the group. They come from a background where humans are superior, and they are justified to use other species and universe elements to facilitate their lives.

B3 was leaning slightly to agree with B1. She might be affected or influenced by B1’s opinion where she focused on the inability to trust anyone who says he practices animal welfare standards simply because animals cannot speak; she said: “As long as we cannot hear animals voices, we cannot say that any particular practice is considered animal-friendly,” she pointed out the possibility that our global standards and perceptions set to protect animals might be completely wrong and there is nothing forces us to believe they are true. When asked about products and her purchasing

decisions, she answered: “If there were a label, without getting into the lack of trust, I would prefer to buy products with a label indicating the producing farm is practicing animal welfare standards.” She also pointed out that labels are essential to raising awareness, and it allows customers to compare products based on the nature of the production process. Furthermore, when she was asked if she was willing to pay extra for products from animal welfare farms, she expressed her willingness to pay extra, without setting a price gap margin, but just the product type and her need to buy it.

B4 answered with a smile, referring to his uninterest to paying extra for products from animal welfare farms, assuming they already exist, as his only concern is price, explaining that there are many essential products for him to pay for rather than “products from happy animal-origin” as he says. Then he proceeds to talk about the situation in the Arab world, where the financial situation is the sole factor in purchasing behavior. He talked about the situation in Iraq, especially that there is nothing that determines consumer behavior other than price. When asked about other factors besides price, he said: “I believe that price is the only factor, but maybe brand and quality can significantly affect consumer decisions less than price.”

B5, a reporter, believes that each country has its issues depending on the individuals’ financial situation. Therefore the media and social platforms pick up suitable subjects for the audience. Then he explained that in the Arab world, except in the Arabian Gulf, animal welfare is considered a subject with less importance than many others, referring to wars, political disputes, and poverty. Then he raised a new point that any entity or organization pays its full attention to animal welfare in the Arab world is considered unjust giving that at the same time, people are getting killed and murdered, which might get severe criticism and indignation, so he thinks it makes sense to concentrate on human well-being rather than minor issues. When asked about his purchase behavior, he replied: “Personally, if the price is the same, I might prefer products from animal welfare farms, but if not, I would never pay extra just because it came from animal-friendly farms.” Then he pointed out our need for independent agencies, not governments, supported by animal rights organizations to supervise farms and companies to ensure animal welfare standards are met. Then he suggested that these independent agencies should globally publish the names of animal-friendly

companies in what he called a “white list,” so is the case with non-animal-friendly companies, and share their names globally in a “blacklist.”

B6 from Yemen, who lived in Britain for a while, has pointed out that culture defines the difference of views, and he agreed with the others that animal welfare standards do not concern the Arab citizen. Also, he does not think Arab citizens would pay extra just because a particular product came from animal-friendly farms. He emphasized the lack of trust in government or big companies when they put a label on a product and sell it at a higher price. Then he pointed out that this type of product is unavailable in most Arab countries. He does not expect it to be available in the next ten years unless the situation changes drastically, causing a shift in people’s interests. Then he raised a point that companies should not be concerned about getting into the details and exposing their production processes because he thinks it is an “endless cycle of sterile controversy,” as he described, where some customers will always object to a particular practice. Therefore, companies will never get “Moral approval,” as he says.

B7 has expressed his unwillingness to buy products from animal welfare companies. He thinks price and quality are the main factors in his purchase behavior, explaining that quality means product validity, production date, expiry date, and nutritional value of ingredients. He expressed that these standards are just a market play and not a motivation to buy a specific type of product. Then he pointed out that in Syria, his home country, there is a severe lack of supervision on animal-origin products, especially in slaughterhouses and places of slaughter in the neighborhoods where this process is conducted out of the eyes of supervision in rural areas far from city centers, which makes it challenging to have this conversation with ordinary people. Furthermore, he emphasized that the social and financial situation of the majority of people does not allow the discussion of this issue effectively in light of wars and terrible economic conditions that Arab citizens suffer from, mainly Syrians.

B8 shared that he is vegan, and therefore, he does not consume animal-origin products. He believes that all global problems, the most important of which is global warming, are caused by the uncontrolled consumption of meat, the spread of cow farms, and the lack of human interest in the planet. Moreover, he indicated that we would all pay the price of our demagogic actions. When asked about products from

animal welfare farms, he replied that people should wake up and boycott these products once and for all. He added: “Governments and large companies are liars and profiteers from creating such flimsy advertisements.” So he took a very extreme opinion of his desire not to buy animal-origin products under any circumstances. Then he added that he uses his position as an influencer on social media platforms to spread this idea on his pages and educate his followers about the need not to consume meat and products of animal origin because they are the cause of many diseases of unknown origin, weak human immunity, and the destruction of the planet.

4.2.2. Data Analysis. The answers of the second focus group showed great similarities to the first focus group regarding thoughts, preferences and concerns. Some participants were unaware prior to the interview of what animal welfare was. They confused it with healthiness, safety, expiry dates... The data of this group can be split into two categories as well where group1 (B1, B2, B3) were interested and sympathetic of animal welfare and were willing to pay extra for relative products. Group 2 (B4, B5, B6, B7) contained the higher percentage of participants in this interview. This group was really uninterested in the subject, and like the first group, they took the subject with Sinicism and emphasized the fact that it was a luxury to think about such topic while their surrounding environment is filled with conflicts and problems. Although some important differences happened in this focus group that should be noted, one of them was the fact that the price came first as the most influential factor; whereas, it was the product quality in the first focus group. One participant of group 2 shared the notion that it was the price that drives him in making his purchasing decisions, and another stated that if the prices were similar he might consider buying animal welfare products, if it wasn't the case, he is not willing to pay the increase in price for such a matter. On the other hand, also one participant in group 1, who was interested in the topic didn't put a ceiling for the increase in prices for animal welfare products; or the prices had an impact on her willingness to purchase them, whereas another stated that the increase in prices shouldn't surpass 20% of the normal product price for her to choose to buy relative products. Paying extra amount of money for animal welfare products is a matter of propensity to consume that product. To the majority of group 2 they would rather spend their money on other

commodities more important to them. Participant B6, who has lived abroad in the UK, saw the interest of people in this type of product. He said that, even though it is interesting for people in first world countries, it will not be so for people in the Arab world, since they had much bigger issues to deal with. They also mentioned that labels will be a good way to start spreading awareness, although they did share the same distrust with the governments, companies and related systems. Add to that, one of the participant stated that with being the superior specie came great responsibility; it was upon humans to protect animals and not mistreat them. Finally, a member finished the conversation by saying that a separate entity with no link to any politics, governments and companies that produce animal-origin products should be the one who controls such affairs, and be responsible to hold accountable the businesses that cheat or lie on their labels and in their products.

4.3 Third Focus Group

The third focus group contained the moderator and seven participants: two females and five males. Like the two previous groups the interviewees shared somewhat the same religion, educational levels, and all of them have jobs. This group's participants were codified by the letter "c" followed by a number that represented each of the interviewee in order to preserve their privacy and anonymity. Table 4 focus group 3 represents the different factors of each participant.

4.3.1 Data collection. C1 replied that he did not know these standards and added that he was interested in checking the price and examining the nutritional components of the product and its quality. Still, he does not know anything about these standards and indicated that he pays more for high-quality products, but he does not think that he is willing to pay more for products of animal origin produced in farms that adopted animal welfare procedures. He explained that if the product was available at the same price, he could go with this option, but he was not willing to pay a higher price if the price was higher. As for the labels, he explained that he cares about quality, nutritional standards, and nutritional values, and the labels refer to this only. And that the

government in his country, Iraq, and the people are not concerned with these standards, not from near or far, according to him.

As for C2, he indicated his knowledge of the existence of these standards and explained them from his point of view, but he believes that there is no actual application for them and indicated the lack of companies and farms that take them into account in the Arab region in general, specifically in Syria. He shared his belief that the living conditions and economic conditions of the Arab people prevent their interest in these luxuries. From his point of view, he explained that the consumption of all products of animal origin decreased significantly in Syria after the war and economic hardship, as people turned to vegetable alternatives because of their cheapness.



Table 4

Focus Group 3

Participant's Code	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7
Age	34	34	31	20	30	31	32
Gender	Male	Male	Male	Female	Female	Male	Male
Nationality	Iraq	Syria	Saudi Arabia	Palestine	Jordan	Palestine	UAE
Education	Masters	Bachelor	Masters	Bachelor	Bachelor	Bachelor	Masters
Religion	Islam	Islam	Islam	Islam	Islam	Islam	Islam
Marital status	Married	Single	Single	Single	Single	Married	Married
Income range	Above 3000 USD	1500 – 3000 USD	Above 3000 USD	Below 1500 USD	Below 1500 USD	Above 3000 USD	Above 3000 USD
Lived abroad	Not stated	Not stated	USA	Not stated	Not stated	CHINA	Not stated

He pointed out that the presence of problems in importing from major companies in Europe, for example, prevents the development of purchasing cultures and habits

for the Syrian citizen. He does not often see products that are different from the products of the local market or products from minimal brands from abroad. He believes that this negatively affects the purchasing culture of the average consumer who cares about price and nothing else.

As for C3, he shared his knowledge of these standards due to his studies in America. He said that in those days, he used to notice "happy egg" products and pointed out that in Saudi Arabia, these products were available. Awareness was widespread about them; the Saudis would have the desire and ability to buy them, indicating that the existing labels are related to quality, ISO 22000, and halal, which is the focus of the Saudi consumer's attention. In contrast, the other labels are unavailable, and there is no interest in them. When asked about the reasons responsible for the lack of this culture and awareness, he answered that he does not rule out the influence of the cultural, social, and religious dimensions on people's interest in these standards. He pointed out that in Saudi Arabia specifically, an Islamic country, religion sets specific standards during slaughter and how to deal with animals yet does not address standards concerned with the Lives of animals, "As long as we have compassion, public standards, and moral values, we don't need those standards," as he puts it. Here the dialogue developed by him referring to Western attempts to launch new terms on things we already apply, but they are trying to steal them and show them in a marketing appearance rather than as absolute values they believe in, while from his point of view, Islam and Arab culture dealt with these matters in a better way. He inferred Islamic heritage with its relationship to animals, horses, and camels specifically, where they are often praised and described in poetry and literature; he sees that the relationship of Arabs with animals is normal. There is no need to import these extraneous terms.

C4 explained that she did not know the term precisely. Still, when she heard it, she immediately remembered the farms that practice force-feeding to speed up the process of benefiting from the animals. When asked about the labels indicating that this product came from a farm that practices animal welfare standards, she replied that she had never seen such labels. She expressed her willingness to buy these products if the price was identical to other products. Still, if the cost of the product was higher, she is not ready to pay an additional amount because she considers this a luxury. And

she believes that the majority of Palestinians will do the same insisting on their interest in the opinion of religion and whether the product is halal or not; as for the lives of animals and their way of living before they became consumable products is a matter that the vast majority of the people do not care about. She gave the example of how people treat street cats and dogs, referring to the killing of stray dogs and the poor treatment of cats. She explained that the interest in such practices is more critical than addressing animal welfare standards and that the situation in Palestinian society is very isolated. Such measures will not receive attention from the people. C4 gave another reason for her belief, that the Palestinian society struggles to achieve the basics of human rights and fights high prices and high unemployment rates, which affect the consumer behavior and the interest in price only. When offering a more expensive product on the pretext that the animal lived a better life than others, the Palestinian would laugh at that and say that human beings themselves do not get a decent life. But if it is the same price, she has no objection to spreading awareness and encouraging people to buy products of animal origin from farms that practice animal welfare standards. She cited the example of the Palestinian company "Candia," whose name spread after campaigns to boycott Israeli products, noting that local farms can take advantage of the current situation in raising their shares and sales and spreading awareness of animal welfare standards due to the tendency of people, especially the upper class, to support the national product.

C5 indicated that she loves animals and respects their rights. Despite the lack of these products in Jordan, she is ready to buy them and pay an additional amount, given her great interest in quality, nutritional values, and ISO. As for the labels, she had never seen them before, and she explained that if she saw them, she would be encouraged to buy the product carrying them, even if its price was higher. And the issue for her is not related to the price, but rather a clear conscience and making sure that these animals have rights and a decent life. When asked about the reason for the lack of spread of these concepts and standards in the Arab countries, she answered that the economic conditions and people's concerns do not direct in this context, and inferred from her words that the people's relationship with pets in her surroundings has not matured enough, not to mention the animals that are described as "consumable animals" that are cared for only to benefit from Meat, eggs, or milk. She was spiteful of society's view of these animals. She considered the need to change this view with

the development of generations and the revision of cultures and knowledge of the importance of a balanced life on this planet, which will lead to increased awareness of this issue and thus improve people's view of animal welfare standards.

As for C6, his point of view, given that he lived in China and Arab Gulf, was that despite his knowledge of different cultures, he did not feel that this issue is essential to the average consumer. He thought that there are attempts to focus on it without a convincing reason, as he believes that the price and observance of local regulations and laws are most important to him as a consumer. When asked about the issue of prices, he indicated that this was not his decision. Still, instead, it is up to governments if they believe in this issue, as they will establish authorities capable of examining and following these standards and issuing certificates to companies and farms that practice animal welfare standards. He pointed out that if the culture of the country and the consumers encourage adherence to these standards, then the correct behavior should be to ban all products that do not take into account animal welfare standards, and this is a new point raised by C6, that if there is a real possibility to control animal practices, governments are supposed to apply these decisions to all manufacturers and farmers, so the question is no longer about the willingness of the consumer to buy this product, but rather the question becomes, "What kind of animal-origin products that came from animal welfare companies would you choose?" So the trade-off is then based on the synergy between value, price and quality. He continued his talk with an example about validity and quality, as today we do not ask consumers whether they will buy good or expired products because this question has become among government needs and production standards. He believes that incorporating these standards into laws will lead to everyone's commitment to these practices, encouraging governments to do so. But he pointed out that this issue is not mature enough to be applicable and measurable.

As for C7, given his presence in the United Arab Emirates, he indicated the existence of products that bore the concepts of animal welfare and shared that he had seen them in eggs and some dairy products and did not see them in meat products. He said that he buys these products, pointing out that their price does not exceed the price of other products by more than 20%, and he said that this is understandable because every increase in quality leads to a rise in the level of operations and production and

thus an increase in the cost of the final product. When asked about his view of these standards being more prevalent in the United Arab Emirates than in other countries, he indicated that the degree of well-being is an essential factor, as well as the economic level and the average per capita income all play a vital role in the possibility of the Emirati citizen to draw attention to these concepts and the conviction to spend more on products from animal welfare farms.

4.3.2. Data analysis. This group's data was more diversified regarding the point of views considering two of the participant came from the gulf region. All participants declared their unwillingness to pay more for products that adopted animal welfare practices except two. Now, the reason behind their decisions was mainly due to political, social, and economical factors of the countries that they came from. As it was explained in the previous focus groups, people originated from these countries are living through wars and despair. Unemployment rates are high, thus, their ability to pay for what is considered to be luxury products is almost negligible; if considering that such items were actually found in those country to begin with. People are caught up in a cycle trying to provide their basics needs, therefore, thinking about the wellbeing of animal is not a priority or a concern to them. One of the participants stated that it is essential to introduce to the Arabic culture mercy towards cats and dogs found in the streets first, before even starting to spread awareness towards animal welfare products. The participant added that this topic is still way out of reach considering the chaos and mistreatment that humans live through in these countries; hence their culture is not ready for such a concept. It needs a certain level of cultural maturity and a clear state of mind.

The majority also stated that they are willing to pay for good quality food and their primary source of information regarding the products was labels. Moreover, they said if the prices of non-animal welfare products resemble to the prices of animal welfare ones, then maybe they would consider buying them. Another remarkable reason shown by the data given by C3, a Saudi (coming from a Gulf country) during the interview was that in Saudi Arabia, an Islamic country, religion sets specific standards during slaughter and during dealing with animals and does not address standards on their lifetime, quoting: "As long as we have compassion, public

standards, and moral values, we don't need those standards," as he puts it. To him, it is just Westerns attempting to launch new terms on things Arabs already apply, and he added by stating that they are trying to steal them and show them in a marketing plot, rather than absolute values they believe in. While from his point of view, Islam and Arab cultures dealt with these matters in a better way. He inferred Islamic heritage with its relationship to animals, horses, and camels specifically, where they are often praised and described in poetry and literature; he sees that the relationship of Arabs with animals is normal. There is no need to import these extraneous terms. Another matter in this focus group that stood out, was the concept of taking corrective actions in order to make the practice of animal welfare in Arabic countries work. For instance, if the country's culture was improved and consumers were led to encourage adherence to these standards, followed by banning all products that do not take into account animal welfare standards, only then, there will be a possibility to control animal practices. It is part of the governments' duty to set rules and regulations and force these decisions to be applied by all manufacturers and farmers. After these actions, the question will no longer address the consumers' willingness to buy animal welfare products; instead, it becomes what kind or what brand of animal welfare to buy, where the trade-off is then based on price and quality. It was believed that incorporating these standards into laws will lead to everyone's commitment of these practices, but unfortunately, he pointed out that this issue is not mature enough to be applicable in the current situations.

In contrast of what was stated above, two participants (C5, C7) expressed their interest and their willingness to pay extra considering that they hold great importance for product quality, nutritional values, and ISO. Moreover, C7, an Emirati (coming from a Gulf country) stated that such products exist in his country with an increase of 20% in prices compared to other products. He added that the price is totally justifiable considering that every increase in quality leads to a rise in the level of operations and production, thus an increase in the cost of the final product. He then added that the degree of well-being, as well as the economic level and the average per capita income all play a vital role and essential factors in the possibility of the Emirati citizen to draw attention to these concepts and the conviction to spend more on products from animal welfare farms.

4.4 Fourth Focus Group

The fourth and last focus group conducted for this research contained the moderator and six other participants: two females and four males. The inclusion of different religions made this sample distinct itself from the others. This diversity represented a fragment of the non-Muslim part of Arab countries and gave more depth to the research given that the rest of the criteria measured by the factors are relatively the same as other groups (educational level, career). It is notable that this sample contained as well a slightly younger point of view considering that it included younger participants. One of the group participant's (D4) stated in the interview that she's a vegetarian, meaning that she does not consume meat (red, poultry, fish), but she was not disqualified nor eliminated considering that she may consume dairy products and eggs . This group's interviewees are represented by the letter "D" followed by a relative number. As previously depicted, the factors of this group's participants are classified in table 5 focus group 4.

Table 5

Focus Group 4

Participant 's Code	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6
Age	32	36	29	29	25	30
Gender	Female	Male	Male	Female	Male	Male
Nationality	Jordan	Palestine	Kuwait	Jordan	Qatar	Oman
Education	Masters	Bachelor	Bachelor	Masters	Bachelor	Bachelor
Occupation	Serial Entrepreneur	Operations Manager	Nutritionist	Pharmacist	Marketer	Freelancer/ Copywriter
Religion	Islam	Christian	Islam	Christian	Islam	Islam
Marital status	Married	Married	Single	Single	Single	Single
Income range	Above 3000 USD	1500- 3000 USD	1500- 3000 USD	1500- 3000 USD	Below 1500 USD	Below 1500 USD
Lived abroad	UAE	USA	FRANCE	Not stated	Not stated	Not stated

4.4.2. Data collection. D1 explained that she did not fully understand the concept. However, she expressed that when she heard it, she immediately thought of high-tech and clean farms and that animals are treated mercifully, apart from abusing and force-feeding them. She shared her beliefs that animals feel and have emotions

just like us, which affects their bodies, so they should always be in a clean environment where medical treatment can be found easily. When asked if she was willing to pay more to get these products, she expressed her willingness to do so, then elaborated by saying: “Last year I got a pet in my home, and ever since she walked through the door, I was exposed to a whole new world where I reached an understanding that our partners on Earth deserve just as much as we do.” She expressed that where you live is a significant factor in shaping your point of view. She shared that her living in Turkey now and the United Arab Emirates before has affected her idea of animal welfare; in contrast to Palestine, where she grew up, the term is almost non-existent. The focus is on productive processes and benefiting from animals regardless of their way of living. The concept of animal welfare in Palestine is expressed by feeding stray cats and avoiding harming street dogs, far from the expanded concept of the term. When she was asked about seeing the labels, she replied that she saw these labels in the UAE in some luxury supermarkets - British and French - and did not see them in Turkey, where the content of the label only shows if the animal was fed organically without mentioning the environment in which it lived. She stated her willingness to pay a higher amount for these products, as this behavior will clear her conscience and rid her of negative feelings due to the general treatment of animals. When asked about the extent of the spread of these standards in the Arab world according to her point of view, she replied that she does not think that they are widespread in the Arab world because people believe that adhering to these standards leads to more measures for producers and farms and thus a higher final price for the product. Because of the inability of the majority to bear these additional costs, considering the price is the main factor in the purchasing process, we find that these standards are not widespread and not applied as they should be, even if the majority of people are concerned with animal welfare, price is their only measure. She explained that she supports applying these standards compulsorily and legally on all farms because she believes that legal intervention will lead to everyone’s commitment to these standards and thus increase people’s interest in this aspect and its impact on their purchasing decisions. After all, applying standards on all farms will lead to almost unification of prices, and the buyer’s attention is focused on quality and animal welfare rather than just price.

D2 was asked the general question if he knew about the existence of animal welfare standards. He replied that in his work in the field of food manufacturing and

restaurants, he knows the standards and even he listed them, the most important of which is that animals should not be treated violently and that they should not be confined in narrow places, and that they should not forcibly be fed, etc., and showed extensive knowledge on this subject. When asked if he is willing to buy products of animal origin from animal welfare farms, he agreed and said that these standards are essential not only for animals but for our health as humans because he believes that these animals have a better quality of meat and products than others. Moreover, before D2 continued his talk, D3, the nutrition expert, joined in to agree with this point and strongly supported D2's words. D2 then continued by answering the question about his willingness to pay a higher amount for these products. He said that he had no objection to one condition, that the increase in the price should be reasonable. When he was asked about his definition of "reasonable," he replied that he could not be precise and based his decision upon examining the product and its quality. When asked about his knowledge of these products and if he had seen them, he indicated that he had not seen these products in Palestine yet, but through his frequent visits to America due to his work there, he sees these products in abundance and is ready to buy them, specifically Happy Eggs. When asked about the reason for the non-proliferation of these concepts in the Arab world, he indicated that this issue is not addressed by companies because of its high cost, with doubts from his point of view that people are interested in this issue, as he attributes the non-proliferation of these standards to its high cost to manufacturers and companies who are unwilling to pay that cost. When asked about the role of governments in disseminating these concepts, he stated his belief that the government's perspective is purely economic; as long as companies and markets do not address this issue, governments will not prioritize this issue.

D3 pointed out his awareness of these standards and mentioned his passionate attitude in defending animal rights as well as insisting on the importance of their lives in a compassionate manner. Furthermore, he referred to many studies related to the quality of meat, as these studies indicate that meat from animal welfare farms is softer and more delicious than others; he added that stress directed to animals forces them to secrete stress-related hormones, which leads to a clear impact on the quality of their meat and products. He explained the issue of stress in detail, explaining the effect of hormones on the physical and physiological structure of the animal. When asked about his personal opinion, he replied with similar answers to D2 in his willingness to pay a

more considerable amount to buy these products. He carried the same idea that the issue is purely economic, with his statement that he hopes these standards will be implemented and spread in Palestine like in foreign countries, such as France, for example, as he visited it during his university stage for a whole semester, where he saw many products bearing labels explaining that these products are from companies and farms that practice animal welfare standards.

As for D4, as a pharmacist, she indicated her knowledge of these standards and the intersection of these standards with cosmetics products regarding animal tests before being released on the market for human use. She believes that this is brutal treatment, like all our dealings with animals in various fields. She added that our claim to treat animals compassionately is questionable, as she decided to boycott products of animal origin and switch to a vegetarian diet. She said that the reason for the non-proliferation of these concepts and standards is caused by the backwardness of our prevailing culture that does not take into account human rights, so how about animal rights, due to the immaturity of people's intellectuality concerning animals and the rest of our partners on the planet—referring to humans performing all the ways and methods that bring them comfort and luxury without taking into account any health or global consequences or the health of future generations.

D5, a Palestinian living in Turkey, shared his knowledge of the standards, explaining that this term is connected to his mind with actions such as friendly practices toward stray cats and dogs, periodic vaccinations, and the provision of appropriate food for pets, in addition to laws that prevent mistreatment of animals and punish violators with fines and imprisonment in some cases. When asked if he had seen labels indicating that a certain product is from a company that respects animal rights, he replied that he had seen such products and was encouraged to read the labels, specifically milk products and happy eggs. When asked about his willingness to buy these products despite the fact that they had higher prices than others, he replied that he is willing to buy some products, particularly milk, because he believes that the quality of these products is higher and better than others. When asked about the non-proliferation of these standards in the Arab region, he replied that although Islam encourages such practices, the societal culture is not interested in such issues due to its preoccupation with more significant issues such as unemployment rates, high

prices, and political disputes. He expressed his regret for this situation due to his interest in animal rights, pointing out that the period he spent in Turkey has inspired him to research in-depth in this issue and formed a viewpoint in favor of animal rights in general. When asked about the role of governments in this issue, he answered that governments need to intervene in addressing the mistreatment of animals by building care centers for stray animals, enacting laws that deter animal cruelty, and working with international institutions in spreading awareness among the different classes of society. Also, they should work on including these concepts in the school curriculum to modify and develop the mentality of future generations in dealing with animals.

We moved the discussion to D6, a Palestinian who lives there. He shared his understanding of these standards and his familiarity with them despite their lack of representation in Palestine. He indicated his interest in exploring this issue because of its space in social networking sites, specifically Twitter, where many global issues are discussed. He expressed his interest in similar discussions because of his desire to learn about the interests of different cultures. He expressed his attention to the Western society's interest in animal welfare standards, in contrast to the Arab society, which focuses mainly on political and economic issues. When asked if he had seen these products, he replied that despite his interest in learning about many issues, this one, in particular, does not occupy his mind. He did not deny the existence of these products in Palestine. However, he expressed his lack of interest in noticing them, as his interest is limited to products in general regarding validity and quality. His response to whether he is willing to pay an additional amount to purchase these products was that he is willing to do so after making sure that the quality of these products is better than other products. He explained that the idea of animal welfare from his point of view should focus at this stage on animal species without others, such as endangered animals and animals that face the risk of losing their natural environment, rather than focusing on consumable animals. Therefore, it was clear that his position was neutral towards the standards and their application, as he said: "It is good to enforce them, but I will not commit to a position that speeds up or disrupts this matter." When asked about the reason for the non-proliferation of these standards in the Arab regions from his point of view, he answered that the main issues that occupy the people's thinking had been formed over many years. The Arab society has developed political, economic, and educational interests that seek to improve the lives of people over the past hundred

years, so it is illogical to assume their interest in animal welfare issues before resolving their pending issues. He pointed out that the harsh conditions experienced by the Arab citizen may be the main reason for shaping the way he deals with other creatures. Moreover, when he was asked about the role of governments in this issue, he indicated that the performance of governments should be a reflection of the people's interests, so it is unreasonable for people to demand a solution to problems of unemployment, high prices, and poor health services, as is the case in Arab societies. The response received from governments is to take legal procedures to support animal welfare standards. He believes that the government's interest in this issue must occur after securing the essential people's requirements and needs.

4.4.2. Data analysis. It was clearly noticeable in this group's data that majority of participants was aware of animal welfare concepts, and had the assimilation of all of its aspects. For instance, this was the first group that discussed the effect of animal's wellbeing during its lifetime, especially the time before slaughter, on the end product. They specifically mentioned that meat originated from farms that adopted animal welfare practices had better quality than the others. The data showed also a neutral interest in the subject, in the sense that, for example Participant (D6) was interested in animal welfare and animal care, but not enough to pursue the quest to find "happy products". He added that his concern was greater for animals that risk endangerment species and loss of their natural habitats. Moreover, he didn't show much care to animal welfare standards for consumable goods, quoting: "It is good to enforce them, but I will not commit to a position that speeds up or disrupts this matter." Another issue was brought to light in this group is the use of animals in experiments for pharmaceuticals and cosmetics, hence they stated that there should be some kind of measurements to apply animal welfare in such industries as well, regardless of the fact that the actual animals are not necessarily the origin of the end consumable product. The participants that were unaware of the subject, either revealed initially a link between high-tech farms, forced feeding, cruel treatment of animal, lack of hygiene and medical supervision or they directly associated it with friendly practices toward stray cats and dogs, periodic vaccinations, and provision of appropriate food for pets, in addition to laws that prevent mistreatment of animals and punish violators

with fines and imprisonment in some cases. These concepts were elaborated and clarified in a wider scope. Afterwards, these participants declared their interest in helping animals in addition to their willingness to pay more for relative products. Some members added that their propensity to pay more is conditioned by a reasonable increase in prices and valid confirmation of better product quality. Regarding their opinion on the non-proliferation of the subject in the Arab region, the answers were similar to the other focus groups, stating the economic and political factors to be the main problems. Peoples' purchasing decisions are mainly affected by prices. The societal culture is not interested in such matters due to its preoccupation with more significant issues such as unemployment rates, high prices, and political disputes. Participants argued that people in that region are denied from their Human rights far less animals. They also mentioned that the lack of dissemination of the subject is caused and intensified by the immaturity and retardation of the Arab culture and mentality. Which lead to the depiction of Arabians performing and buying all the ways and methods that bring them comfort and luxury without taking into account any global consequences, or health of future generations. Moreover, it was stated that the government's perspective is purely economic; as long as companies and markets do not address this issue, governments will not prioritize it. Animal welfare products will not be that abundant in the Arab region due to its high cost on manufacturers and companies who are unwilling to pay that cost. Finally, they believed that legal intervention will lead to everyone's commitment to these standards and thus increase people's interest in this aspect and its impact on their purchasing decisions. After all, applying standards on all farms will lead to almost unification of prices, and the buyer's attention is focused on quality and animal welfare rather than just prices.

4.5 Findings summary

This study was aimed to find the level of awareness in Arab countries on animal welfare, its impact on consumers' and their purchasing behaviors. To accomplish this, the researcher conducted 4 separate focus groups, each with different number of participants, and the participant themselves coming from different Arabic countries. The total number of participants was 27; however, since one of them was a vegan,

meaning he does not consume any kind of animal products, he was not taken into consideration while determining the results of this study.

When asked about their awareness on the subject of animal welfare, a fair number of participants were not aware of the meaning of the term and have not yet came across such concept in their daily lives. Their majority lacked the conception that animal welfare will enhance product quality, and maltreated animals could lead to a lower quality product, even in some cases, damaged products filled with diseases that may be transmitted to consumers and threaten their lives. The pie chart below represents the percentage of awareness of participants that took part in the research:

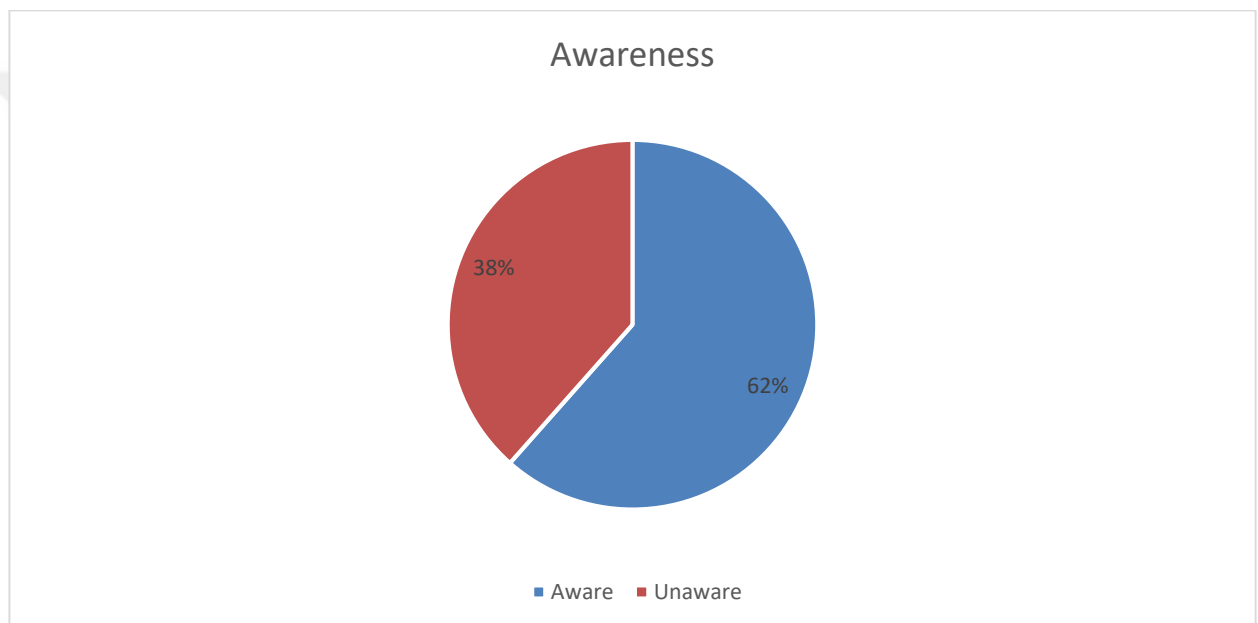


Figure 1. Awareness Percentage

One thing that was observed here while looking at the candidates' background was that awareness on the subject was more wide spread among people who traveled abroad. As it was noted earlier, these products were not made available or were not observed in many Arabic countries. The existence of animal welfare product (that has labels on them) played an important role in the spread of animal welfare concept. Add to that, such items were found mostly in the countries that don't have political conflicts and social/economic issues. Moreover, the results showed that there was more awareness and acceptance in the countries of the gulf region due to the more stable political, social, and economical environment. Consumers from that area could afford the luxury of thinking in these matters, as well as pay for them considering that the

related product will be higher in quality thus more healthy. Add to that bandwagon effect can be applied here considering that it could be a trend for the people coming from this region. Finally, people who had occupations in food, nutrition, pharmacy had more knowledge in the subject.

The majority of participants were willing to pay extra for animal welfare products; however, some have put conditions on the additional cost that they are willing to pay which varied between 15 and 20 per cent additional to the price of ‘non-welfare’ products. The graph that follows shows the percentage of people who are willing to pay, people who have conditions on the price and people who are not willing to pay.

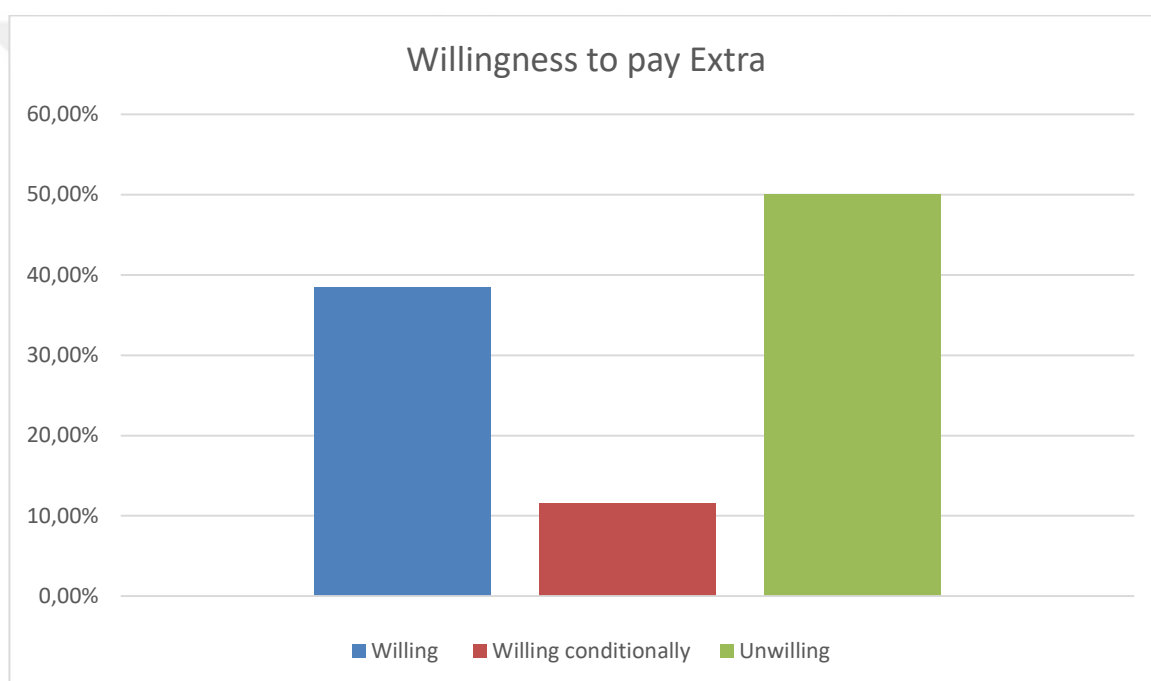


Figure 2 Willingness To Pay Extra Percentage

It should be noted that, many of the participants preferred buying these products over traditional ones if the prices were the same. What’s more, many participants were able to justify the reason for the higher pricing, with the reason that higher standards needed a higher cost, which in turn leads to a higher selling price. After doing the analysis, it is clear that the participants who weren’t interested in the subject or willing to pay extra amount of money to buy animal welfare products lived in countries where war reigned, so it was a common concern that they didn’t trust the system or the governments to provide them with such products. Arab countries are filled with

conflicts and considered to be the incubators of schemes and chaos, as long as there will be profit they will hack their way through, coning the consumers into believing that the products they are providing uses animal welfare standards, but in reality it will be just a marketing fling to boost the sales and increase profits. Add to that, the majority of Arab governments are swiped from head to toe in political and economic problems, there is no trust in their supervision, control or justice system to hold accountable the companies that cheat in its products never less take corrective actions towards the subject. Moreover, counting on them to raise awareness on animal welfare and spending their scarce resources on the subject is almost impossible. When referring to Maslow's pyramid it shows that the majority of Arabic countries clearly lack their basic needs, for that there are far more important issues that need to be addressed and have more priority over animal welfare; the subject is considered to be a luxury even to talk about.

Taking into consideration the wage effect on the matter at hand, this chart below depicts the percentages of willingness to pay for animal welfare products depending on participant's income:

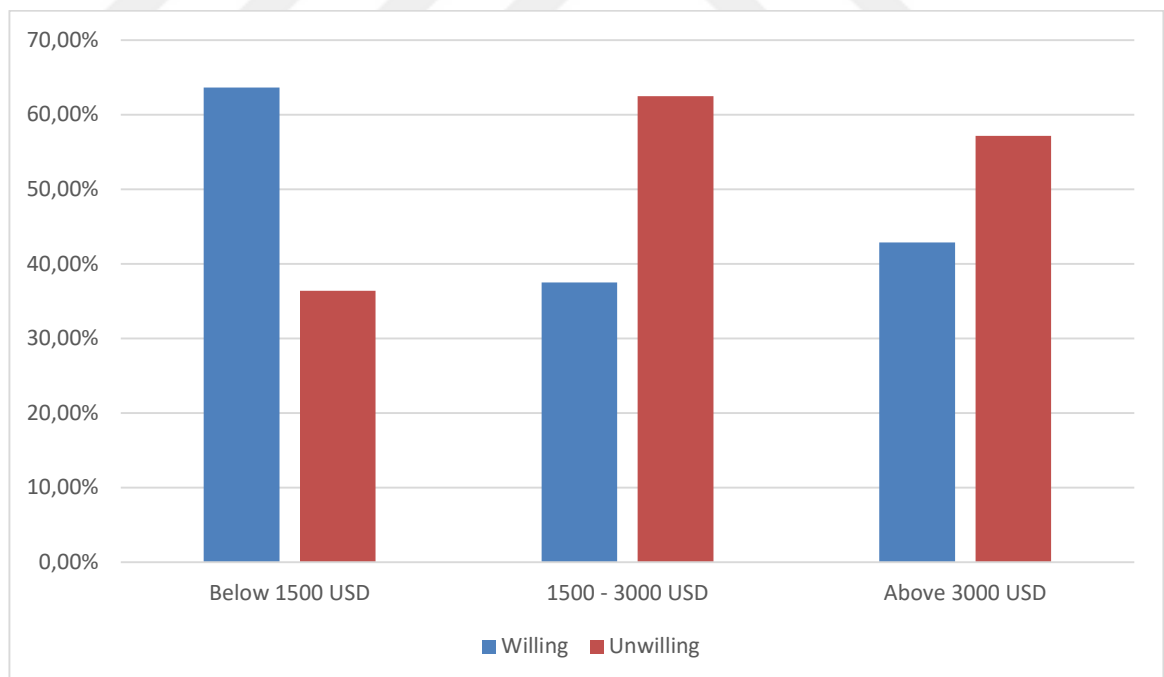


Figure 3 Willingness To Pay Depending On Income

The analysis of the results showed that people with lower incomes were more willing to pay hence showed more interest and care towards the subject. In contrast,

the majorities of people with higher incomes were unwilling to pay and showed less interest taking into account that they considered the matter was remotely a marketing hack to pay more money for the same products.

When looking into the participants themselves, we could see that gender may have played a big role in accepting the concept and their willingness to pay for such products. Out of 26 interviewees 9 were females and 17 were males. Out of the females 6 were willing to pay the difference, and out of the men only 8 out of the 17 were willing to pay whether it be conditional or not. These numbers are visualized in the following chart.

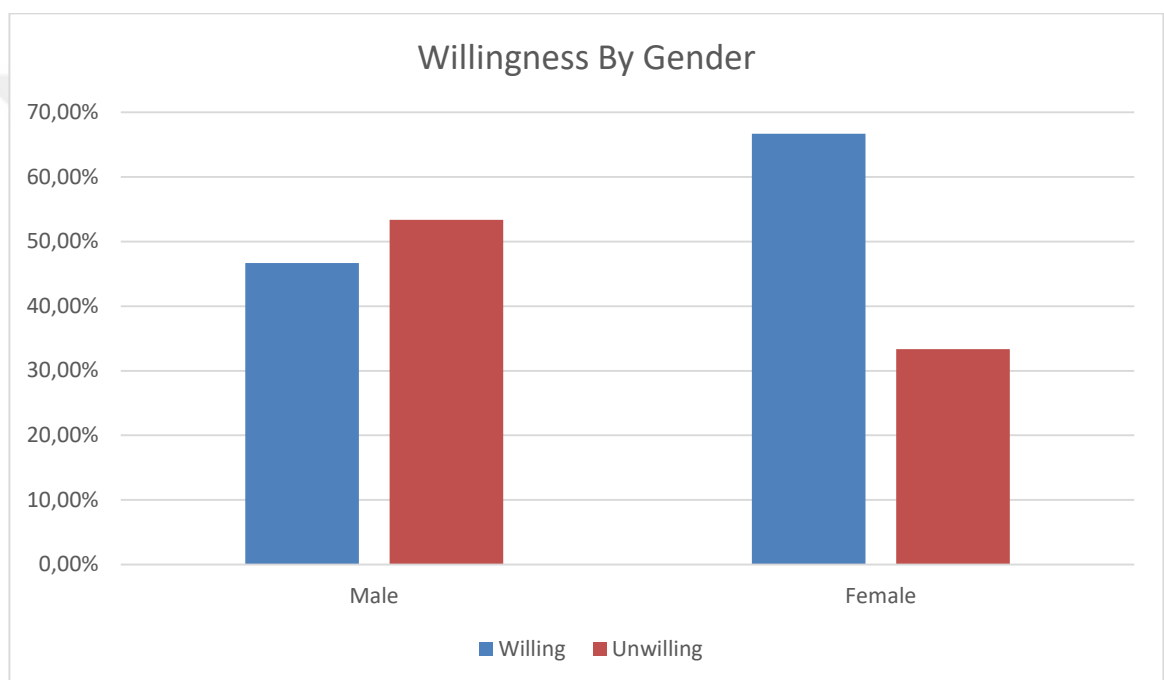


Figure 4 Willingness To Pay By Gender

As far as marital status, the results showed a 50% split between willingness and unwillingness to pay, considering that 9 single participants out of 18 were willing to pay more. In addition, 4 married participants out of 8 were also willing to pay more; hence marital status had no significance over the research's results nor influenced the participant's decision making process while purchasing animal origin products.

Considering that all participants have variable degrees of high education, it is noted that the ones with higher diplomas showed less interest and less willingness to pay. It can be presumed that their degrees enabled them to get good careers where they

were exposed to the behind the scenes business operations in the Arab world where corruption reigns, hence they have severe distrust in both political and economic sectors. To them, the government is not insuring its' citizens basic rights and needs far less taking care of the wellbeing of the animals. Moreover unemployment rates are high and business owners are struggling to maximize their profits, so incurring extra production cost seems unlikely. As a consequence any so called "happy product" is the making of a marketing scheme aimed to create a more modern strategy that follows nowadays trends and boost sales.

The last factor to look at is religion, and taking into account that Islam is the dominant belief in the Arab region it should be noted that some of them consider that the concept of being merciful to animals is something that they already apply from earlier times, even dated back to their origins. Their religion imposes that their food only be Halal, and they consider that the new terms such as "animal welfare" and "happy products" are mainly marketing hacks invented by westerns to boost their sales. The Islamic people who were willing to pay were considering their health and product quality as main concern, their majority came from stable environments.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Discussions

The aim of the research was revealing the way of how Arabic consumers, especially the ones who live in Arab countries, think about products originated from animals and their purchasing process for related commodities. Add to that, the perception of Arabic consumers of Animal welfare (meaning, importance, effects...) was the core of the research, hence knowing what are the factors that may alter their purchasing behaviors and how they may change their decision making process while buying such products. The Arabic region like any other region is distinguished with its own set of mentalities and cultures. Because this region is filled with diversity, the results of the research may only enable us to project on a fraction of the Arab world.

Similar to what was discussed in the book written by Unni Kjaernes concerning animal welfare perception in European countries (Unni Kjaernes, 2007) , Arabs' perspective on the subject varied from one country to another. The initial perception was viewed either with sympathy towards animals or with cynicism and indifference. The turbulence invading the environment of the Arab region made animal welfare a luxurious topic rather than an ethical most. Moreover, the mentality of making ends meet and surviving day by day during these harsh times, override the possibility of even thinking about animals' wellbeing and led to neglecting the outcomes that may occur as results of their practiced habits, and its impact on earth. Add to that, only a small sample of Arabic consumers linked animal welfare with better quality and enhanced products. Their majorities' main concern was price (limitation in price increase, logical price...). Other significant points mentioned in the literature review cited from (F.Napolitana C. , 2018) , (Unni Kjaernes, 2007) , (wikipedia, 2021) were labeling and availability of these "Happy products" in Arab countries. As it was indicated during the interviews, the scarcity of the products and the distrusts in labeling enhanced the unawareness of the subject and led to more indifference, considering that

the consumer is paying more money for the same product. Labels were only a mean to show nutritional values and expiration dates and not to indicate the well treatment of the origin animal. There were great similarities in the results when compared to other studies with Non-Arab consumers (especially Italians (Unni Kjaernes, 2007)), concerning consumers' perception of animal welfare products.

As the results showed, the majority of Arab countries lie under a tremendous amount of pressure due to the unstable environments that surrounds them, the fact that had a great toll on Arab consumers' purchasing behavior. The majority of Arabs adopted the "survival mode" where the key element is to find nutrition at the lowest cost possible; everything that is not essential is systematically eliminated by simply not considering it as an option to begin with. Political, economic, or social, the effects were clearly noticeable in all three factors discussed earlier in the literature review above (personal, psychological, and social). For instance, taking the social factor in consideration, living conditions of Arabs coming from countries were disputes and war reigned showed a minimal interest in the subject and a lack of willingness to pay for animal welfare products. Add to that, religion played a more or less negative effect considering that if they adopted Islam as religion (the vast majority of Arabs) they only needed to obey the "Halal" rule as it was the only mandatory rule for such products. Educational level, marital status and income had no significant effect regarding the subject. In contrast to the results in Non-Arab consumers mentioned in the literature review (Giancarlo Bozzo, 2019) and (C. Victor Spain, 2018), educational level and income had an opposite effect considering that people with higher incomes or/ and higher degrees of education were less willing to pay extra to purchase animal welfare products. This is due to the fact that these people are more engaged usually in the political and economic field and were more exposed to schemes and plots that occur in businesses. They are more prone to consider the issue at hand as marketing hack knowing that it is going to be farfetched and hard to apply in the Arab region. Consumers don't have the right amount of awareness and cultural development to adhere and comprehend the idea.

Moreover, while taking the physiological factors into account, it is safe to say that the distrust in the system and in the government made it harder for companies to focus on such topic and marketed appropriately. Add to that, Arabic consumers think

twice before submitting in front of what they are provided with due to their repellences of marketing hacks and corruptions. There was a clear gap between the interviewees' perception and knowledge of the topic and it is due to the lack of awareness towards animal welfare in the countries that they live in. Labels were only existent to show basic information of the product thus animal welfare products were not widely spread in the Arab region nor available everywhere for the ordinary Arabic consumer, hence its effect on the study were theoretical. It was mentioned in the interview that labeling could be an effective way to promote and spread awareness of animal welfare products but it was also stated that Arabic consumers' didn't trust the companies ethics nor the governments care, control, and supervision.

Taking the subject further, while analyzing the personal factor aspects, the participants clearly stated that they as Humans, are deprived from their basic needs, and to consider even thinking about animals' wellbeing is remotely a stupid luxury that they are not willing to adopt at their current condition. In contrast participants coming from the Gulf region, showed a more open minded view towards the subject. Their main concern was the actual product and its quality not the price which was compliant to what was mentioned in (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 2017) . In the gulf area, people live in better conditions considering that they are booming economically and have more stability both politically and socially, as a consequence their purchasing power is higher as their propensity to consume products with better quality regardless of its price. Another personal factor to discuss was gender where the results exhibited the same outcome as in Non-Arabic countries (C. Victor Spain, 2018). They showed a higher percentage of female interested in the subject and revealed their willingness to pay a bit more to acquire such products. Taking into account that the focus groups' samples in this study contained more or less participants with the same age category, it is unclear how the age variable may affect the decision making process while purchasing animal welfare products, or can show the perception of individuals belonging to different age categories on the topic.

Finally, the last point that needed to be discussed was the difference in awareness and willingness to pay between participants who had the experience to live abroad in non-Arab countries such as Europe and the United states. The results showed that Arabs that were exposed to foreign culture were familiar with the concept; more open

towards animal welfare subject, and had more acceptances of the idea and its implication. They could link the process to better quality product and they justified the increase in prices for such commodities.

5.2 Conclusion

Animal welfare is a vast and intricate subject that can extend to have many ramifications. The perception of how people react to it and understand it is subjected to many different factors that vary from one person to another. The results of this study gave a glimpse of how Arabic consumers perceive the subject of animal welfare and reveal their decision making process while purchasing related products. The topic was not properly addressed due to the fact that it was seen by the majority of Arabic consumers as marginalized topic with no importance what so ever to their daily life. After conducting the study, it was clear that as per other studies, social, personal and psychological factors had affected Arabs and their purchasing decisions, where social variables had the most impact on the subject. The political feuds with the economic and social crisis dominated the scenes where Arabs find themselves in a whirlpool that keeps draining them. Thinking about animal's wellbeing is the least of their priority considering that some humans from those countries are deprived from their basic rights. The lack of awareness and distrust in the systems and in governments aggravated the indifference of these consumers. Excluding the gulf region, the price was the main weight that flipped the balance. Taking into account that Arabians belong to high context culture, customs and trends are very widely spread. To sum up the findings it can be stated that if animal welfare products were available at relatively same prices and were assured to be better quality products, then the willingness of Arabians consuming "happy goods" and caring for animal's wellbeing will increase and the subject would have had more acceptance, awareness and openness.

5.3 Recommendation

To omit any speculation and to draw a more generalized conclusion on the topic, a quantitative approach may be done to offer more statistical input. The increase in reliability is due to the larger number of participants which will back the study with more tangible data. This action will boost the research even further. A wider sample can be reached from different background, ages, culture, religion... hence more accurate and detailed information can be collected.

As for spreading awareness on the subject and increase the culture of caring about animals and their wellbeing in Arab countries, labels will be a good way to start followed by a constant distribution of “happy products” all over Arabic countries making it available and feasible for Arabic consumers to purchase them. Add to that governments need to play a more active role by legislating a set of rules defining the correct way to apply animal welfare in agriculture and manufacturing industries obliging them to alter their way of production to suit animal’s wellbeing. Moreover, monitoring and controlling companies’ work by making sure their adherence to the new laws, and more importantly taking corrective actions to punish and rectify any misinterpretations or misapplications of animal welfare terms. This way, consumers may regain a bit of trust in the system and what it has to offer. To insure a better application of the subject, a non-governmental entity can be formed to push the matter even further and prevent chaos and offer more control over the government’s and the companies’ work. Marketing animal welfare and introducing animal wellbeing and animal care in the Arabic mentality should be maintained to make it a part of the culture that will withstand the boundaries of time and not only a trend that will fade after facing any kind of lapses in all or one of behavioral affecting factors.

After addressing animal welfare subject, the topic of the continuous increase in demand of animal-origin products should be raised and highlighted considering its passive effect on earth. As a consequence to the increase in population, which led to the growing demands for meat and dairy products, the supply chain industry for such commodities had to take extensive measures to meet those demands and elevate their profits. Will it be feasible to keep applying animal-welfare to meet those demands? Should humans keep their habits in heavily consuming animal-origin products? What

are the effects of animal agriculture on the planet and its habitats? Will the Arab world have these concerns? (deforestation- water usage- earth's landmass- rare animal extinction- gas emission- global warming...)



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