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Understanding cross-cultural chicken consumers' behaviour

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Abstract: Concerns for human health and food safety are gaining momentum in emerging and developing nations as well as in food research due to the reputations that products have established over time. Understanding cross-cultural consumers' purchasing behaviour for chicken meat (CM) could provide valuable insights into the global food sector since it is the most consumed meat worldwide. This study examines the effect of buying features (*BF*), culture factors, behavioural attitudes (*BA*), subjective norms (*SN*) and perceived behavioural control (*BC*) on CM actual purchase behaviour (*APB*) in China and Sierra Leone. Primary data were sourced from 588 Chinese and 410 Sierra Leonean participants. We adopt structural equation modelling (SEM) to verify the model and test the associations between the variables. The SEM results confirm that *BF*, *BA*, *SN* and *BC* stimulate customers' intent and actual purchase of CM in both nations. The findings indicate that cultural factors (CF) significantly moderates the association between the independent constructs (*BF*, *BA*, *SN* and *BC*) and *APB* in Sierra Leonean markets. This study provides significant insights for chicken industry stakeholders that can help them increase CM sales along the supply chain via a marketing strategy focused on cultural and psychological factors.

Keywords: buying features; behavioural attitudes; chicken meat; cultural factors; consumer behaviour

Meat consumption has increased tremendously over the past five decades, particularly in emerging and developing nations like China, and its consumption has surged 15-fold since 1961 (Giromini and Givens 2022). As demand for white meat (chicken) increased, consumer concerns about safety and quality also surged due to intensified production (Escobedo del Bosque et al. 2021). Chicken meat (CM) is more popular in many African and Asian dishes (Awono-Bessa et al. 2008; Asante-Addo and Weible 2019) due to the advan-

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tages it has over other types of meat, including availability, affordability, being relatively less expensive and preventing cardiovascular diseases and cancer (Asante-Addo and Weible 2020; Boimah and Weible 2021; Lupoli et al. 2021). This study focuses on domestic and imported high-quality CM. Domestic chickens were raised in the two countries (China and Sierra Leone) selected for this study. Concerning imported chicken, China imports from countries like Brazil, the United States, Thailand, Russia and Argentina, while Sierra Leone sources chicken from the United States, Poland, Brazil and the Netherlands.

In addition, changing consumer behaviour (CB) from buying whole chicken to buying chicken cuts has been attributed to increased CM consumption (Escobedo del Bosque et al. 2021). The change in CB from purchasing whole chicken to purchasing chicken cuts has not been fully examined. Although chicken is the second largest animal protein consumed in Sierra Leone, the factors influencing consumer purchase behaviour remain unknown. Several studies have examined the influential factors of purchase behaviour for quality food in China (Kantono et al. 2021; Budhathoki et al. 2022; Wang et al. 2022a). However, previous research has not investigated consumer purchase behaviour in a cross-cultural context. Despite the rise in chicken consumption and rapid market expansion, the determinants that affect chicken purchase behaviour remain relatively unknown and are highly varied when compared across nations. For instance, markets in developing countries are in varying phases of development, making it crucial to advance research on the variations in consumer purchase behaviour for CM, particularly the variables that contribute to such variations. Therefore, this study explores the antecedents – particularly psychological factors and buying features (BF) – that influence customers' purchase behaviour of CM in two distinct markets.

Interestingly, numerous updated studies focused on purchase intention (PI) have explored the factors that influence CB towards quality meat such as country of origin (Asante-Addo and Weible 2020), environmental factors (Jiang and Kassoh 2022) and psychological factors (Kantor and Kantor 2021; Kung et al. 2021; Ling et al. 2021; Quevedo-Silva and Pereira 2022; Li et al. 2023). However, studies that examined the impact of psychological factors and BF on consumer purchase behaviour for CM are at a rudimentary stage and have largely focused on developed nations (Carfora et al. 2019; Ogorevc et al. 2020; Escobedo del Bosque et al. 2021; Roseira et al. 2022). In addition, few studies have examined meat purchase behaviour (de Araújo et al. 2022; Jiang and Kassoh 2022), leading to repeated recommendations for additional research to include actual purchase behaviour (APB) in a cross-cultural context (Roseira et al. 2022). Therefore, there is a quest to produce more research on the differences among consumers and the factors influencing their APB for chicken meat in two different nations. Despite several studies regarding the attributes that influence individuals' APB for quality food products, exactly how these elements influence customers seems to vary depending on the region, as indicated by the diverse findings, and most of these factors have been found to be inconsistent for predicting CB towards meat (Ahmad and Zhang 2020; Kumar et al. 2021; Munerah et al. 2021). Additionally, the empirical literature on CB has emphasised impulsive purchases rather than examining buyers' cognitive evaluation (Rodrigues et al. 2021; Song et al. 2022).

It has been generally acknowledged that culture has a significant effect on consumer APB (Afzal et al. 2019; Doanh et al. 2021; Jeong and Lee 2021; Zong et al. 2023), and additional research on chicken consumption would be helpful for the field (Roseira et al. 2022). Acknowledging the relevant role of culture in food purchase behaviour, Watanabe et al. (2019) emphasised the scarcity of research with respect to Hofstede's cultural elements in food acquisition behaviour in a cross-cultural context. However, few cross-cultural investigations have examined the impact of culture on PI, and many of these investigations have been concentrated in developed nations (Djekic et al. 2021; Peña-García et al. 2020; Roseira et al. 2022). Furthermore, many studies have suggested expanding the research beyond developed nations (Iguisi 2018; Liu et al. 2020). Studies have also suggested that cultural factors, particularly uncertainty avoidance (UA), might have a strong positive effect on customers' PI for CM (Jiang and Kassoh 2022), advocating the need for more cross-country research between emerging and developing nations.

To bridge this gap in the empirical literature, this study answers to the call for a deeper understanding of consumer shopping intention and behaviour regarding CM in a cross-cultural context, as suggested by Sreen et al. (2018), Ruangkanjanases et al. (2020), and Jiang and Kassoh (2022). This study compares Chinese and Sierra Leonean consumers' PI and behaviour towards CM, which varies based on UA and other cultural dimensions. The investigation expands the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) framework to evaluate the degree to which one of Hofstede's cultural dimensions (UA) moderates the impact of BF, behaviour at-

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titudes (BA), subjective norms (SN) and perceived behavioural control (BC) on consumer intention and behaviour towards CM. Finally, the study examines the effect of BF, BA, SN and BC on the intention to purchase CM. Based on the research gap, this study seeks to answer the following research questions: How does UA influence chicken meat PI and APB among Chinese and Sierra Leonean consumers? Does UA significantly moderate selected independent constructs and APB? Are differences evident in the impact of SN, BF, BA and BC on APB between the study markets?

The rationale for selecting Chinese and Sierra Leonean consumers for this study is that broilers have an extremely significant and dominant role in food consumption demand in both countries, and both countries have similar preferences and behaviours towards meat consumption and some common cultural dimensions. Another significant reason for selecting these countries is the differences between them in perceived broiler quality and other cultural factors, particularly Hofstede's uncertainty avoidance cultural dimension. Chicken meat consumption has surged in emerging and developing countries, indicating the necessity to conduct research on the significant considerations that might influence PI and behaviour for CM. Second, both countries have different cultures with an extensive array of customers' preferences towards chicken. Despite the fact that the two nations are situated on different continents (Africa *vs.* Asia), which widens the potential cultural gap between them, we anticipate that the model will not be invariant given the pre-existing differences that have been previously established. This distinction may be significant because purchasing power appears to affect the choice of meat. Chinese and Sierra Leonean consumers have different profiles and preferences regarding food safety attitudes and behaviours. Exploring the dynamics that affect chicken APB in emerging and low-income developing nations could provide insights for stakeholders in chicken markets and a clearer comprehension of the chicken markets. The findings could also serve as the basis for advancing chicken trading in the meat industry to develop effective strategies for developing the chicken market in Sierra Leone and improve the existing market in China.

Theoretical framework

In nutritional psychology and food safety studies, the TPB has been the primary framework used to investigate food purchase behaviour (Nguyen et al. 2021; Jiang and Kassoh 2022; Mai et al. 2023); therefore, this study employs a TPB model to explore Chinese and Sierra Leonean consumers' CM APB. The TPB model is a modified variant of the theory of reasoned action (TRA) (Ajzen 1991) that predicts consumers' APB by incorporating perceived BC (PBC) into the TRA. The TPB model employs three major elements (SN, BA and PBC) to predict consumer PI and APB (Ajzen 1991). The TPB framework has been extensively used to explain consumer PI and behaviour in various contexts, including meat purchases. For example, Shen and Chen (2020) and Chang and Chen (2022) adopted the TPB framework, and their findings revealed that SN, PBC and BA strongly influence Taiwanese PI for meat. In the same vein, studies on purchases in China also indicated that a person's attitude, SN, PBC and BF significantly affect customers' APB (Song et al. 2017; Ruangkanjanases et al. 2020; Jiang and Wu 2022).

According to Ajzen (1991), the most significant element in predicting CB is PI. The association between behavioural intention and individual behaviour is used together to examine consumer buying behaviour. The TPB framework indicates that an individual's behavioural intentions are influenced by three main components of BA, SN and PBC. We extend the TPB model by integrating BF and cultural factors into the TPB construct to predict consumer PI and APB for CM in the sample markets. This study also incorporates UA into the conceptual model to examine this construct and effectively moderates the link between TPB's variables (BA, BF, SN and BC) and PI and APB regarding CM. The research paradigm is illustrated in Figure 1.

Hypotheses development

The link between purchase intention and actual purchase behaviour. One of the principal objectives of the TPB is to emphasise that individual behaviour is predominantly determined by intention, which holds true for customer purchases of CM. Intention is defined as a person's promptness to engage in the intended behaviour. Numerous CB studies, including those concerning meat purchases, have assumed the underlying premise that PI statistically influences APB (Jiang and Kassoh 2022; Roseira et al. 2022). A limited number of studies have focused on individual APB related to meat purchase; however, such studies have typically concluded that PI is a key predictor of meat APB (Shen and Chen 2020; Chang and Chen 2022). Consumers' PI positively influences APB (Carfora et al. 2019; Ogorevc et al. 2020; Jiang and Kassoh 2022; Roseira et al. 2022) and is a major indicator used by marketing managers to predict upcoming sales (Chang and

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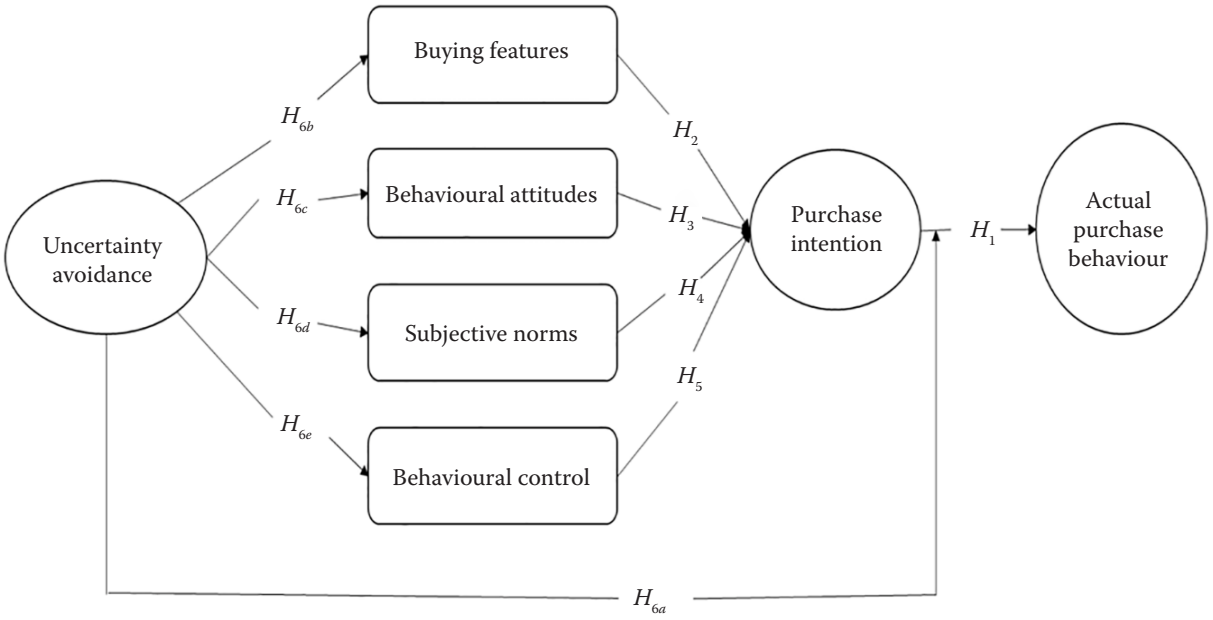

Figure 1. Conceptual model

Source: Authors's own elaboration

Chen 2022). Referencing the TPB model and previous empirical literature, we anticipated that the stronger consumer intention towards acquiring CM, the more likely the consumer will successfully acquire it. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H_1: Individual intention to purchase CM favourably influences actual purchase behaviour.

The relationship between buying features and purchase intention. Buying features include sensory, colour, appearance, taste and tenderness considerations that are influential factors of PI (Kung et al. 2021; Yang 2021). PI can be influenced by BFs such as product attributes, personal characteristics, health, safety and social factors, and related impulses positively affect CB. Therefore, we incorporate BF into the TPB model as an influential construct of chicken meat APB. The link between BF and PI has been examined from diverse perspectives, including cognitive and psychological perspectives, rational processes and the outcome of advertising food quality attributes on individual CB (Sreen et al. 2018; Afzal et al. 2019). For instance, production processing attributes and intrinsic and extrinsic factors positively influence individual shopping decisions (Cozzio et al. 2020; Kumar et al. 2021; Javeed et al. 2022). In the context of chicken meat, BF is a vital component in PI and APB; hence, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

H_{2a}: Buying features positively influence consumer purchase intention towards CM.

H_{2b}: Purchase intention positively mediates the link between buying features and actual CM purchase behaviour.

The link between behavioural attitude and purchase intention for CM. A positive BA towards CM is a primary premise that drives chicken meat PI (Ajzen 1991; Kamboj et al. 2023). According to the TPB, consumers' attitude is an essential component of behavioural intention, and a stronger BA indicates a stronger intention towards APB (Mai et al. 2023). Previous empirical research has demonstrated that BA positively influences PI and APB (Ruangkanjanases et al. 2020; Iqbal et al. 2021; Ling et al. 2021; Nguyen et al. 2021; Assefa et al. 2023). Hence, we propose the following hypotheses:

H_{3a}: Attitude strongly influences chicken purchase intentions.

H_{3b}: Individual intention to buy chicken positively mediates behavioural attitude and actual buying behaviour.

The association between subjective norms and purchase intention for CM. Since individual attitudes alone cannot elucidate PI, SNs are important antecedents of intention in the TPB that influence a person's decision to execute a behaviour (Jiang and Wu 2022). The concept of social pressure towards behavioural intention for quality food purchases refers to perceived social pressure from trusted individuals that influences others to perform a specific behaviour (Ajzen 1991; Ling et al. 2021; Nguyen et al. 2021). SN is a crucial fac-

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tor in determining society's influence on behavioural intentions. Previous studies have ascertained that SNs greatly influence PI for food products (Asif et al. 2018; Zayed et al. 2022; Kamboj et al. 2023). Based on the aforementioned literature, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

H_{4a}: Subjective norms have a positive impact on CM purchase intention.

H_{4b}: Consumers' intention significantly mediates the link between subjective norms and actual purchase behaviour.

The association between behavioural control and purchase intention for CM. Ajzen (1991) defined PBC as an individual's perceived capability to control certain behaviours, indicating the perceived difficulty of declining the invitation to participate in an action. Ajzen (1991) asserted that when an individual purchases food, their behaviour is motivated by intentions, which are influenced by beliefs, attitudes about the person's perceived control, product attributes and the decisions of others whose opinions they consider to be influential. Several studies on food purchase behaviour have argued that the correlation between the intention to execute a specific behaviour and BC significantly influences behaviour (Shahriari et al. 2019; Doanh et al. 2021; Zayed et al. 2022). Research has demonstrated that food safety concerns alter consumers' eating behaviour in relation to quality, which is a key attribute that positively affects consumer food preferences (Sreen et al. 2018; Ling et al. 2021). In this study, BC refers to the consumer's perception of CM quality, which influences PI. Hence, the study proposes the following hypotheses:

H_{5a}: Behavioural control affects consumer intention to purchase CM.

H_{5b}: Purchase intention towards CM mediates the link between behavioural control and actual purchase behaviour.

The role of cultural dimensions. Culture is a crucial element for understanding CB. Hofstede (2001) described culture as 'the collective programming of the mind that differentiates members of one class of persons from other groups'. As such, individuals associated with various nations can carry distinct opinions and attitudes regarding the same topic. It has been argued that cultural elements statistically influence how individuals feel, think, believe and behave. In other words, culture moderates how people perceive their environment and establishes social norms, which influences subsequent behaviours (Sreen et al. 2018; Roseira et al. 2022; Wang et al. 2022b). Cultural moderators may also change the association between PI and APB. We postulate that cultural factors may help to explain conflicting results regarding the chicken meat PI and APB relationship and advance our knowledge regarding the intention–behaviour gap. Therefore, we investigate the role of the UA cultural dimension as an essential moderator of PI and APB in the domain of chicken meat PI and APB. Comprehending the effect of culture is significant for advancing foreign trade, particularly regarding meat, because intrinsic and extrinsic information on meat positively motivates consumers' chicken meat PI.

Hofstede's culture framework is one of the most common theories applied in cross-cultural studies in various domains such as psychology, marketing, agriculture, economics and management (Jiang and Kassoh 2022; Matharu et al. 2023), and we employed the concept of UA in this research. Hofstede (2001) proposed six cultural dimensions for examining cultural differences. Table 1 presents the scores of Hofstede's cultural dimensions between the selected countries.

Based on the number of dimensions suggested by Hofstede, UA (the degree of stress in a community in the midst of an unpredictable future) is assumed to be among the most influential dimensions of consumers' intention and behaviour (Sohaib et al. 2019; Matharu et al. 2023). UA gauges the level of anxiety people experience when they feel threatened by ambiguity due to insufficient knowledge. High UA countries strive to minimise the occurrence of unstructured circumstances through establishing stringent behavioural standards, regulations and procedures, whereas low UA countries tend to foster greater flexibility, openness to change and new ideas and fewer laws and regulations.

UA has been used in previous studies in developed countries to analyse consumers' PI for quality food products, and UA has been demonstrated to exert a significant influence on PI (Sohaib et al. 2019; Ma-

Table 1. Hofstede cultural dimensions' comparison between China and Sierra Leone

Dimensions	China	Sierra Leone
Femininity and masculinity	66	40
Uncertainty avoidance	30	50
Collectivism and individualism	20	20
Long-term and short-term orientation	87	–
Power distance	80	70
Indulgence / restraint	24	–

Source: Hofstede (2001)

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tharu et al. 2023). Consumers from low UA nations like China, as opposed to high UA countries like Sierra Leone, accept uncertainty more easily, have good ambiguity management skills and are highly risk-tolerant (Hofstede 2001; Matharu et al. 2023). Furthermore, they are more inclined to search for innovative solutions. In the meat industry, choosing quality chicken production with information as a BF may be considered creative behaviour. For instance, chicken with information BF might reduce consumers' doubts regarding quality and safety. Consumers may feel that CM with a BF label is of better quality compared with meat that is not labelled. In this regard, this study proposes the following hypotheses to examine the link between UA and PI for CM in the study countries:

H_{6a}: Uncertainty avoidance significantly moderates the link between purchase intention and actual purchase behaviour; as such, high uncertainty avoidance will support a favourable association between purchase intention and actual purchase behaviour, while low uncertainty avoidance will diminish the association between uncertainty avoidance.

H_{6b}: Uncertainty avoidance significantly moderates the link between buying features and purchase intention; as such, high uncertainty avoidance will support the favourable association between buying features and purchase intention, whereas low uncertainty avoidance will diminish the associations between buying features and purchase intention.

H_{6c}: Uncertainty avoidance significantly moderates the link between behavioural attitudes and purchase intention, such that high uncertainty avoidance supports the favourable association between behavioural attitudes and purchase intention, while low uncertainty avoidance diminishes the association between behavioural attitudes and purchase intention.

H_{6d}: Uncertainty avoidance significantly moderates the link between social norms and purchase intention, such that high uncertainty avoidance supports the favourable association between social norms and purchase intention, and low UA will diminish the association between social norms and purchase intention.

H_{6e}: Uncertainty avoidance significantly moderates the link between behavioural control and purchase intention, such that high uncertainty avoidance supports the favourable association between behavioural control and purchase intention, and low uncertainty avoidance would likely diminish the link between behavioural control and purchase intention.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study applied a quantitative technique to statistically test how UA moderated the impact of BF, BA, SN and BC on PI and APB for CM in China and Sierra Leone. We used descriptive statistics to analyse the participants' socio-economic profiles. The validity and reliability of the variables were thoroughly evaluated to ensure applicability. Finally, structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to determine the effects of the constructs. SEM is a statistical method that uses component analysis and multiple regressions to analyse the structural relationships between measured and latent constructs.

Questionnaire development and pre-testing. We designed the questionnaire based on a thorough review of previous empirical studies. The survey tool included two sections. The first section included questions related to participants' socio-economic profile, and the second section covered questions regarding the variables' measurement scale items. We adopted and modified at least three items from each construct. Details about the constructs and items are presented in Table 2.

All the measurement items used a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = completely disagree to 5 = completely agree. We pre-tested the tool among the students in China to assess the questionnaire's content and usability. The survey tool was administered in Mandarin for Chinese buyers and English for Sierra Leonean consumers.

Construct measurement. The evaluation scale referenced previous studies to produce our survey tool for data collection using existing validated measures. Detailed descriptions of the measurement scales and their sources are as follows. We employed five items from Kung et al. (2021) and Javeed et al. (2022) to examine BF and three items to measure BA (Mai et al. 2023; Kamboj et al. 2023). We used three elements from Chang and Chen (2022) and Mai et al. (2023) to measure SN, four items from Song et al. (2017) and Shen and Chen (2020) to examine BC, and evaluated PI using three elements from Ruangkanjanases et al. (2020) and Wang et al. (2022a). UA was measured using four items from Matharu et al. (2023) and Jiang and Kassoh (2022), and we used four elements from Roseira et al. (2022) and Asif et al. (2018) to measure APB.

Sample and data collection procedures. This study employed non-probability (convenience and snowball) sampling strategies. The study was conducted in urban locales that were the major consumers of high-quality

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Table 2. Constructs and their measurement items

Construct	Symbol	Description of items
Buying features	*BF*1	I pay attention to the freshness when buying chicken
	*BF*2	I pay attention to chicken's health when buying.
	*BF*3	I considered chicken that are free from chemical additives, antibiotics, and pesticides.
	*BF*4	I pay attention to the traceability information when buying chicken.
	*BF*5	I pay attention to the place of origin when buying chicken.
Behavioural attitude	*BA*1	I think it is worth buying a chicken with traceable quality information.
	*BA*2	I think it is worth buying a chicken with humanized standard animal rearing.
	*BA*3	I think it is worth buying a chicken with a place of origin brand.
Subjective norms	*SN*1	My family and colleagues give greater attention to the chicken with a place of origin brand.
	*SN*2	My relatives and colleagues consider the chicken with industrialized and intelligent raised.
	*SN*3	My family and colleagues pay more attention to the chicken with traceable quality information.
Behavioural control	*BC*1	I think it is easy to buy chicken with traceability information.
	*BC*2	It is important and easy to buy products.
	*BC*3	I am interested in knowing more about my health status before buying chicken.
	*BC*4	If I want to buy a chicken with a local brand, I can find where to buy it.
Purchase intention	*PI*1	For the following 12 months, I want to buy the chicken with place of origin information.
	*PI*2	For the upcoming 12 months, I want to buy chicken with traceable, safety, and quality information label.
	*PI*3	For the following 6 months, I am willing to purchase chicken with industrialized and intelligent raising.
Cultural factors	*CF*1	Before I make a purchase, I thoroughly investigate the chicken.
	*CF*2	Life is so uncertain that one must continuously be on the alert so as not to be caught at a disadvantage.
	*CF*3	It is essential to consider dissenting views when making personal and social decisions.
Actual purchase behavior	*APB*1	I have frequently purchased chicken with the place of origin brand during the previous 12 months.
	*APB*2	During the previous 12 months, I have often bought chicken with humanized standard animal rearing.
	*APB*3	During the previous 12 months, I have often bought chicken with traceable quality information.
	*APB*4	During the previous 12 months, I have often bought the chicken that are healthier.

Source: Song et al. (2017), Asif et al. (2018), Ruangkanjanases et al. (2020), Shen and Chen (2020), Kung et al. (2021), Chang and Chen (2022), Javeed et al. (2022), Jiang and Kassoh (2022), Roseira et al. (2022), Kamboj et al. (2023), Mai et al. (2023), Matharu et al. (2023)

meat based on residents' economic status that also represented various culture and consumption habits. The countries were selected based on surges in chicken consumption, preferences and cultural variations. The survey was conducted from December 2021 to January 2022, targeting meat consumers who were at least 18 years of age and had been involved in shopping or expressed a desire to buy CM. The study focused on high-quality (domestic and imported) CM that was free from antibiotics and chemical additive residue, for which environmental and ethical issues were considered during production, processing and distribution processes.

The questionnaire was administered via social media platforms such as Facebook, WeChat and WhatsApp. The respondents were fully informed about the research, and their participation was voluntary. Finally, 588 and 410 completed questionnaires were received from Chinese and Sierra Leonean consumers, respectively.

Statistical analysis. A two-stage maximum likelihood analysis was conducted using SPSS Amos 23, ref-

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erencing Hair et al. (2019). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was employed in the first stage to evaluate the model's reliability and validity. A convergent validity test was computed and verified using average variance expected (*AVE*). When the computed *AVE* value was higher than the threshold (0.5), we could conclude that a construct met the convergent validity criteria (Byrne 2016; Hair et al. 2019). Similarly, when the computed value of factor loading was at least 0.5, which was the benchmark, we could conclude that the construct was a reliable and valid predictor (Byrne 2016). Discriminant validity also verified that the *AVE* values were higher than the squared correlation across all the selected variables of the measurement model (Fornell and Larcker 1981; Hair et al., 2019). We used the internal consistency of each construct, the computed value of Cronbach's alpha (α) and composite reliability (*CR*) as indicators. Cronbach's α was used to measure the internal consistency of each construct, which is confirmed when the estimated value is at least 0.7; the minimum threshold value recommended by Hair et al. (2019) and Sarstedt et al. (2020).

In the second stage, we applied the SEM to verify the relationships between all variables by estimating regression paths. The suggested hypotheses were verified using the SEM, which also addressed possible multicollinearity among explanatory variables (Zong et al. 2023). The goodness of fit of the measurement and structural model were evaluated using the chi-squared difference (χ^2 / d*f*), wherein the maximum accepted threshold value should be 5 at most (Roseira et al. 2022). The Tucker–Lewis index (*TLI*), the adjusted goodness of fit index (*AGFI*), the goodness of fit index (*GFI*) and the comparative fit index (*CFI*) were also computed to examine the SEM fit, and the accepted benchmark was ≥ 0.9. We also estimated *AGFI*, and its accepted threshold was ≥ 0.8. Finally, we computed the *R*-squared (R^2) of the two samples.

Table 3 presents the statistical analysis of interviewees' demographic characteristics. The result indicates a relatively similar ratio of men to women in the two sample markets; 51.29% of the Chinese interviewees were women, and 48.71% were men. In Sierra Leone, 54.65% were women and 45.35% were men. The findings also indicated that 73.33% and 75.21% of the Chinese and Sierra Leonean participants fell within the 26–55 age group, which is also referred to as young adults. This class has also been referred to as the main driving force behind buying quality meat.

In terms of education, the respondents in both countries had a similar percentage for all five categories, which is favourable for cross-cultural analysis. According to our findings, 75.54% of the Chinese sample (444 Chinese respondents) had household monthly earnings of USD 1 501 to USD 2 000 or more, reflecting the average income range for Chinese families. Conversely, 261 respondents had a monthly revenue of USD 500 to USD 1 000, representing 63.65% of the sample from Sierra Leone, reflecting the average income of middle-income earners.

Table 3. Socioeconomic profile of the participants

Variables	Category	China (%)	Sierra Leone (%)
Total participants		588	410
Sex	man	48.71	45.35
	woman	51.29	54.65
Age	≤ 25	14.25	13.62
	26–35	47.24	49.86
	36–55	26.09	25.35
	≥ 56	12.42	11.17
Educational level attainment	at most high school	1.73	4.82
	technical / vocational	2.78	12.85
	bachelor's degree	31.93	35.62
	master's degree	46.83	37.47
	doctoral degree	16.73	9.24
Monthly family income (USD)	500–600	6.52	28.73
	601–1 000	8.70	34.92
	1 001–1 500	9.24	17.65
	1 501–2 000	38.58	10.24
	> 2 000	36.96	8.46

Source: Authors's own elaboration

RESULTS

CM purchase frequency in China and Sierra Leone

Figure 2 presents responses to the question: How many times do you normally buy CM for the year? The results indicated that the majority of Chinese participants purchased CM once a week (35.79%), followed by twice a week (28.6%). Only 3.24% of Chinese consumers indicated that they purchased chicken once a year. In Sierra Leone, most of the respondents purchased chicken twice a week (54.04%), followed by once a week (31.39%) and only (1.95%) purchased chicken once a year.

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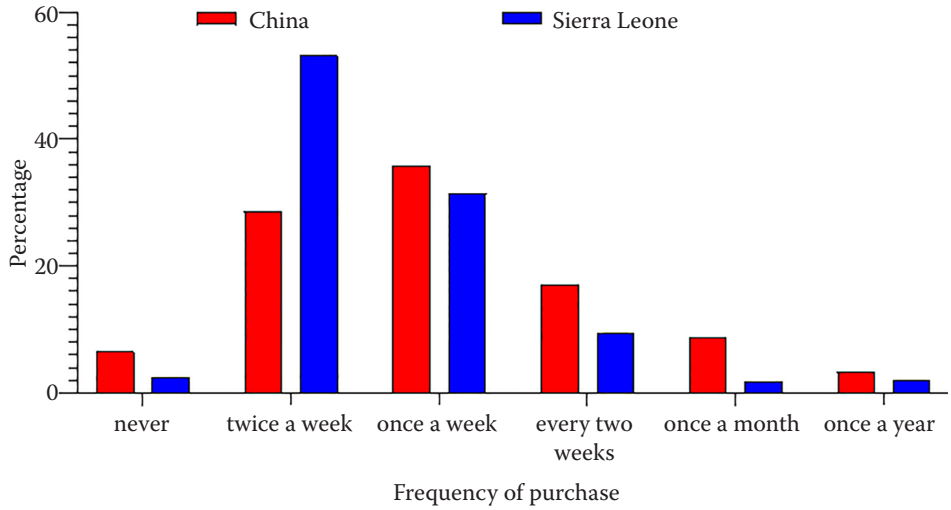

Figure 2. Frequency of purchase of chicken meat

Source: Authors's own elaboration

The results in Figure 3 indicate the major markets from which our respondents purchased CM. About 38.54% of the Chinese respondents purchased CM from supermarkets, followed by small grocery stores (32.5%) and daily retail markets (21.74%). In Sierra Leone, about 49.2% of the respondents bought CM from daily retail markets, followed by cold stores (23.36%) and farm gate markets (13.2%). These were the major markets for chicken in Sierra Leone.

Measurement model for reliability and validity analysis

The initial steps of the research centred on evaluating the internal consistency and reliability of the selected variables. All the constructs were evaluated using Cronbach's α, factor loading, *CR* and *AVE*. Table 4 presents the results of the factor loadings for the two countries, which ranged from 0.831 to 0.911 and were above the recommended threshold (0.5). Similarly, all the computed *CR* and Cronbach's α values for the two sample markets were also greater than the minimum accepted benchmark (0.7), suggesting that the measurement scale was a good fit and reliable. Furthermore, the computed *AVE* values for each construct were higher than the threshold values, implying that the convergent validity is satisfactory (Fornell and Larcker 1981; Hair et al. 2017). Figures 4A and 4B illustrate the measurement models for China and Sierra Leone.

Confirmatory factor analysis and impact factor results. To verify the model, we computed CFA for the total sample using SPSS Amos 23. The model fit showed acceptable values for the primary indicators of the Chinese sample, including χ^2 = 307.62,

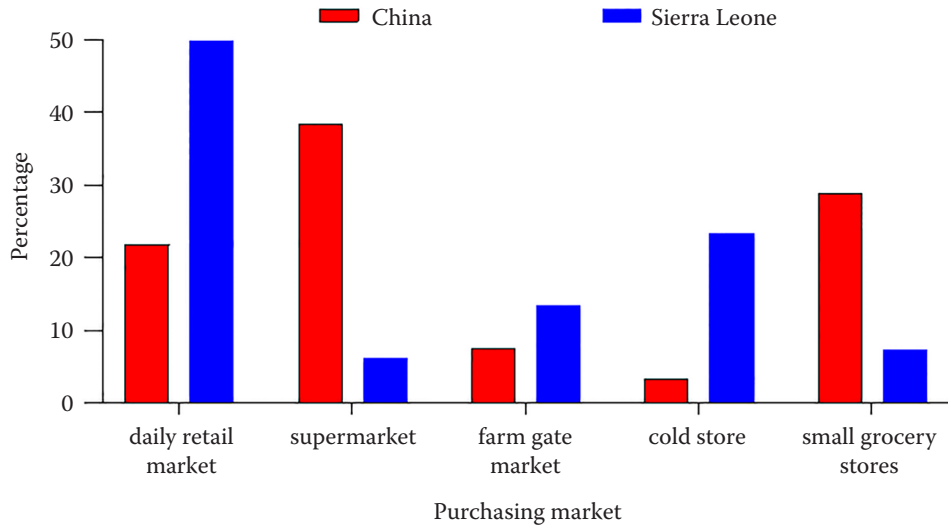

Figure 3. Major markets of purchasing chicken meat

Source: Authors's own elaboration

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Table 4. The psychometric properties of the measurement items

Construct	Item	Chinese sample				Sierra Leonean sample			
		FL	α	*CR*	*AVE*	*LP*	α	*CR*	*AVE*
Buying feature	*BF*1	0.883	0.932	0.940	0.798	0.849	0.862	0.908	0.729
	*BF*2	0.910				0.863			
	*BF*3	0.883				0.831			
	*BF*4	0.901				0.874			
	*BF*5	0.889				0.852			
Behavioural attitude	*BA*1	0.873	0.864	0.898	0.788	0.904	0.886	0.904	0.797
	*BA*2	0.882				0.911			
	*BA*3	0.908				0.863			
Subjective norms	*SN*1	0.893	0.907	0.915	0.815	0.884	0.873	0.895	0.784
	*SN*2	0.912				0.913			
	*SN*3	0.903				0.859			
Behavioural control	*BC*1	0.911	0.862	0.920	0.786	0.893	0.872	0.895	0.742
	*BC*2	0.902				0.874			
	*BC*3	0.863				0.882			
	*BC*4	0.869				0.793			
Purchase intention	*PI*1	0.902	0.868	0.893	0.781	0.902	0.853	0.894	0.782
	*PI*2	0.884				0.910			
	*PI*3	0.864				0.839			
Uncertainty avoidance	*CF*1	0.869	0.769	0.896	0.801	0.873	0.751	0.879	0.761
	*CF*2	0.902				0.881			
	*CF*3	0.913				0.863			
Actual purchase behavior	*APB*1	0.891	0.916	0.928	0.801	0.852	0.904	0.912	0.771
	*APB*2	0.873				0.872			
	*APB*3	0.904				0.910			
	*APB*4	0.912				0.878			

PI – purchase intention; BF – buying feature; BA – behavioural attitude; BC – behavioural control; SN – subjective norms; UA – uncertainty avoidance; APB – actual purchase behavior; α – Cronbach's alpha; *CR* – composite reliability; *FL* – factor loading; *AVE* – average variance expected

Source: Authors's own elaboration

d*f* = 195, χ^2 / d*f* = 1.578, *RMSEA* = 0.046, *GFI* = 0.911, *TLI* = 0.927, *CFI* = 0.942 and *AGFI* = 0.859. In Sierra Leone, the model fit values showed satisfactory values of χ^2 = 288.91, d*f* = 176, χ^2/d*f* = 1.642, *RMSEA* = 0.053, *GFI* = 0.935, *TLI* = 0.948, *CFI* = 0.950 and *AGFI* = 0.884 (Table 5). All indicators' values were within the general thresholds recommended in the pertinent literature (Fornell and Larcker 1981; Hair et al. 2019; Sarstedt et al. 2021).

Discriminant validity. We determined discriminant validity (DV) by comparing the square root of the *AVE* value with the correlation value of the study variables, as shown in Table 6. To verify the DV, the square root of the *AVE*s is shown diagonally across constructs, which were all higher than the correlation with other variables, implying good DV (Fornell and Larcker 1981).

Evaluation of the structural model and proposed hypotheses

After validating the measurement model, this study used SEM to evaluate the suggested hypotheses. Empirical research regarding BA, culture, SN and behavioural intentions has largely adopted SEM for such investigations (Liao et al. 2022; Zayed et al. 2022).

The values for the main indices for the SEM include *CFI* of 0.959 and 0.947, *GFI* values of 0.927 and 0.952,

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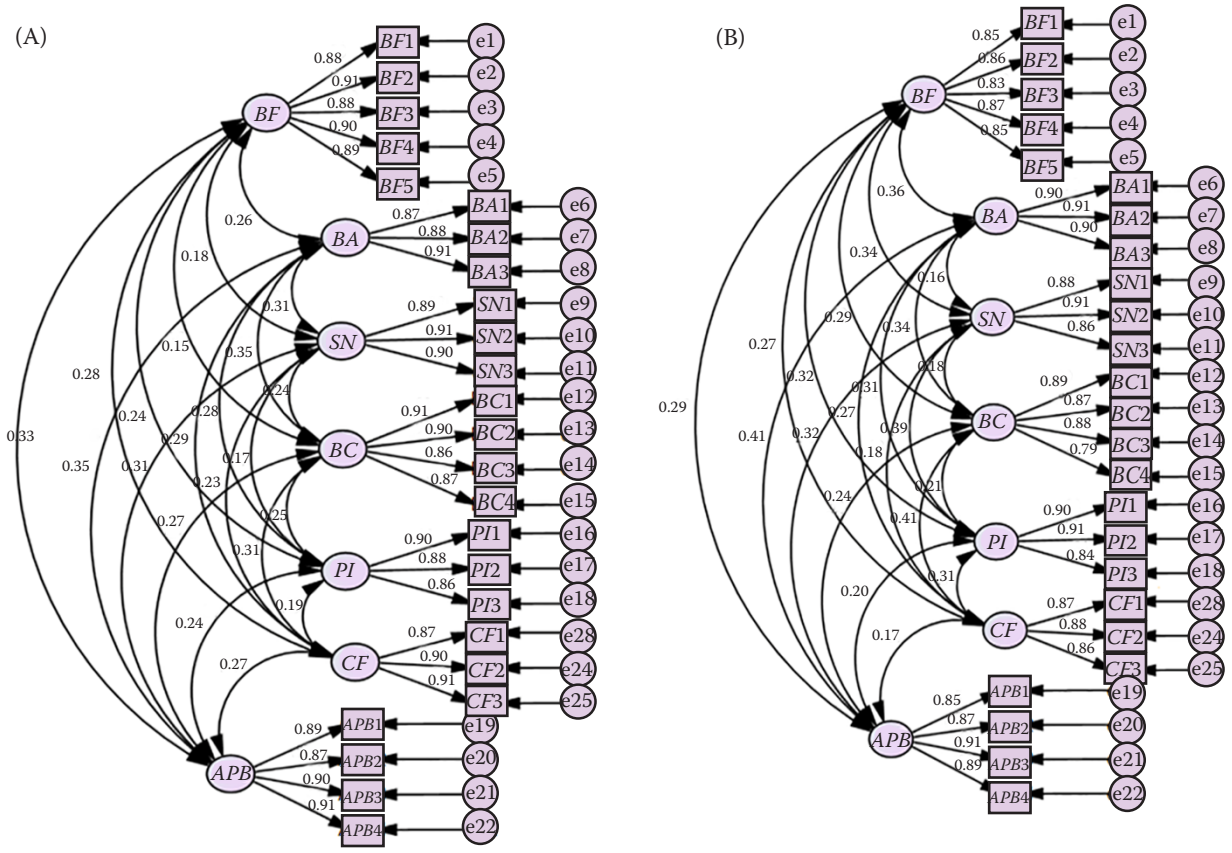

Figure 4. (A) Chinese and (B) Sierra Leonean measurement model

PI – purchase intention; *BF* – buying feature; *BA* – behavioural attitude; *BC* – behavioural control; *SN* – subjective norms; *UA* – uncertainty avoidance; *APB* – actual purchase behavior;
Source: Authors's own elaboration

AGFI of 0.876 and 0.873, *RMSEA* of 0.038 and 0.061 and *TLI* values of 0.933 and 0.926 for China and Sierra Leone, respectively. The χ^2 difference indices for China were $\chi^2_{(215)} = 406.51$ and $\Delta\chi^2 = 1.891$ ($P < 0.0001$), while the χ^2 difference indices for Sierra Leone were $\chi^2_{(194)} = 351.80$, $\Delta\chi^2 = 1.813$ ($P < 0.001$). The critical ratio was determined by dividing the calculated estimate of the regression by the standard error and a matrix was used in questionnaire item evaluation to confirm whether the measurement scale was fit to determine the degree of response of various interviewees. The expected critical ratio was assumed to be significant at the 5% level at most and was estimated using the software SPSS Amos 23. The precise values are provided in Table 7.

The lower section of Table 7 presents the R^2 estimates for each structural model of the two sampled countries. The estimated SEM for the Chinese respondents, the *BF*, *BA*, *SN* and *BC* constructs, explained 87.4% of the variation in chicken meat *PI*. Furthermore, *PI* explained 72.1% of the variation in consumers' *APB* for the same product. For consumers in Sierra Leone,

Table 5. Model fit results of the measurement models

Countries	χ^2	d*f*	χ^2/d*f*	*RMSEA*	*GFI*	*TLI*	*CFI*	*AGFI*
China (588)	307.62	195	1.578	0.046	0.911	0.927	0.942	0.859
Sierra Leone (410)	288.91	176	1.642	0.053	0.935	0.948	0.950	0.884

d*f* – degrees of freedom; χ^2 / d*f* – chi-square difference; *RMSEA* – root mean square error of approximation; *GFI* – goodness of fit index; *TLI* – Tucker Lewis index; *CFI* – comparative fit index; *AGFI* – adjusted goodness of fit index
Source: Authors's own elaboration

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Table 6. Results of discriminant validity and correlation matrix

Country	Constructs	Mean	SD	*BF*	*BA*	*SN*	*BC*	*PI*	*CF*	*APB*
	BF	4.33	0.738	0.893	–	–	–	–	–	–
	BA	4.09	0.613	0.263	0.888	–	–	–	–	–
	SN	4.02	0.901	0.184	0.314	0.903	–	–	–	–
China	*BC*	3.63	0.723	0.149	0.351	0.243	0.886	–	–	–
	PI	4.18	0.748	0.244	0.279	0.171	0.154	0.883	–	–
	CF	3.66	0.662	0.281	0.293	0.234	0.308	0.194	0.895	–
	APB	4.14	0.809	0.332	0.351	0.313	0.273	0.238	0.273	0.895
	BF	4.13	0.738	0.854	–	–	–	–	–	–
	BA	3.51	0.778	0.361	0.893	–	–	–	–	–
	SN	3.97	0.639	0.342	0.163	0.886	–	–	–	–
Sierra Leone	*BC*	4.04	0.904	0.294	0.344	0.182	0.861	–	–	–
	PI	4.04	0.748	0.323	0.309	0.394	0.213	0.884	–	–
	CF	4.21	0.840	0.271	0.274	0.182	0.410	0.314	0.872	–
	APB	4.13	0.807	0.331	0.352	0.312	0.271	0.235	0.274	0.885

BF – buying feature; *BA* – behavioural attitude; *SN* – subjective norms; *BC* – behavioural control; *UA* – uncertainty avoidance; *PI* – purchase intention; *APB* – actual purchase behavior

Source: Authors's own elaboration

Table 7. Hypotheses testing results

Hypothesis	Path	China		Sierra Leone		Confirmed
		estimate	*CR*	estimate	*CR*	
Direct path						
H_1	$PI \rightarrow APB$	0.530***	12.033	0.339***	12.444	yes
H_{2a}	$BF \rightarrow PI$	0.271***	11.353	0.245***	5.563	yes
H_{3a}	$BA \rightarrow PI$	0.195***	7.351	0.083**	2.268	yes
H_{4a}	$SN \rightarrow PI$	0.156***	6.012	0.094**	2.145	yes
H_{5a}	$BC \rightarrow PI$	0.260***	4.899	0.249***	9.614	yes
Mediating relationship						
H_{2b}	$BF \rightarrow PI \rightarrow APB$	0.365***	7.152	0.226***	8.637	yes
H_{3b}	$BA \rightarrow PI \rightarrow APB$	0.240***	7.478	0.079***	5.733	yes
H_{4b}	$SN \rightarrow PI \rightarrow APB$	0.185***	6.012	0.058***	9.093	yes
H_{5b}	$BC \rightarrow PI \rightarrow APB$	0.204***	4.937	0.113***	4.447	yes
Moderating relationships						
H_{6a}	$PI \times CF \rightarrow APB$	0.141	0.625	0.344***	6.781	partial
H_{6b}	$BF \times CF \rightarrow PI$	0.175	0.426	0.276***	8.680	partial
H_{6c}	$BA \times CF \rightarrow PI$	0.124	0.091	0.204***	5.626	partial
H_{6d}	$SN \times CF \rightarrow PI$	0.137	1.332	0.107	0.832	no
H_{6e}	$BC \times CF \rightarrow PI$	0.171	0.835	0.185**	2.930	partial
R^2 values in the direct relationship		*PI*	*APB*	*PI*	*APB*	–
		0.874	0.721	0.815	0.663	–

*,**,*** significant at 10%, 5% and 1% level, respectively; CR – critical ratio; the Sobel test's *z*-values are replaced in the *CR* columns for mediation association; *BF* – buying feature; *BA* – behavioural attitude; *BC* – behavioural control; *SN* – subjective norms; *PI* – purchase intention; *APB* – actual purchase behavior

Source: Authors's own elaboration

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the *BF*, *BA*, *SN* and *BC* variables explained 81.5% of the variation in chicken meat PI. For the structural model of Sierra Leone, 66.3% of the variation in chicken meat *APB* could be explained by selected constructs.

We employed the bias-corrected accelerated bootstrapping technique (5 000 subsamples) at the two-tails stage with a significance threshold of 5% and several-group analysis (Hair et al. 2017; Henseler 2017). We also compared the two countries using the permutation test. According to our findings, all hypotheses except H_{3b} were found to have no significant differences. The two countries had a similar view of *BF*, *BA*, *SN* and *BC* in terms of *PI* and *APB*. However, the effects of these relationships differed between the cultures of the two countries.

We determined that *PI* significantly influenced *APB* in China and Sierra Leone. As such, hypothesis H_1 was validated and supported. The findings revealed that *BF*, *BA*, *SN* and *BC* significantly influenced customers' chicken meat *PI* in China and Sierra Leone, validating H_{2a}–H_{5a}. Chinese consumers were more impacted than their Sierra Leonean counterparts regarding chicken meat *PI*. In both sampled nations, we found significant chicken meat *PI* mediating effects between *BF*, *BA*, *SN*, *BC* and *APB*, supporting hypotheses H_{2b}–H_{5b}.

Moderating effect of uncertainty avoidance on the drivers of chicken purchase intention

Regarding the moderating effects of *UA*, a strong positive interaction was found in Sierra Leone, but it was insignificant in China. In Sierra Leone, moderating effects were significant for all constructs, except for that of *SN* and *UA* on *PI*. Since the moderating effect was significant, this indicates a need for further research to determine the nature of UA's moderation.

The moderating association between *PI* and *UA* on *APB* was also significant for the Sierra Leonean sample. To interpret the moderating effect, we observed the trend of the linear lines of *PI* and *APB* at high and low *UA* levels. The moderating effect of *UA* on *PI* and *APB* is illustrated in Figure 5, demonstrating that *UA* enhances the relationship between *PI* and *APB*. Therefore, H_{6a} was supported for Sierra Leone.

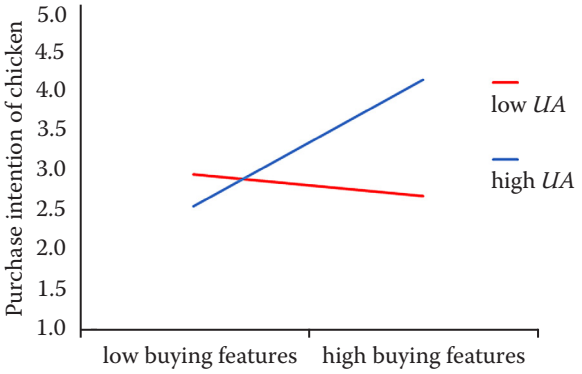

Figure 6. Uncertainty avoidance moderates between *BF* and *PI*

BF – buying feature; *PI* – purchase intention; *UA* – uncertainty avoidance

Source: Authors's own elaboration

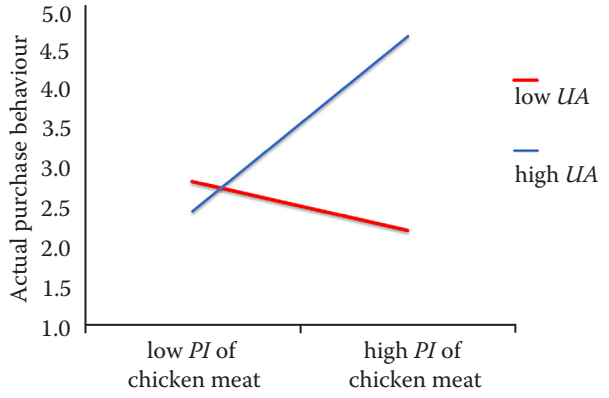

Figure 5. Uncertainty avoidance moderation between *PI* and *APB*

PI – purchase intention; *APB* – actual purchase behavior; *UA* – uncertainty avoidance

Source: Authors's own elaboration

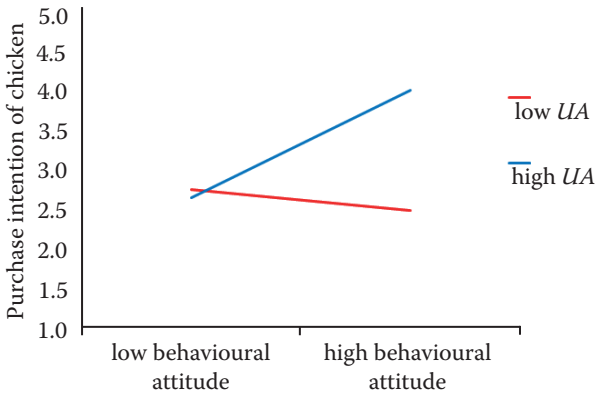

Figure 7. Uncertainty avoidance moderation between *BA* and *PI*

BA – behavioural attitude; *PI* – purchase intention; *UA* – uncertainty avoidance

Source: Authors's own elaboration

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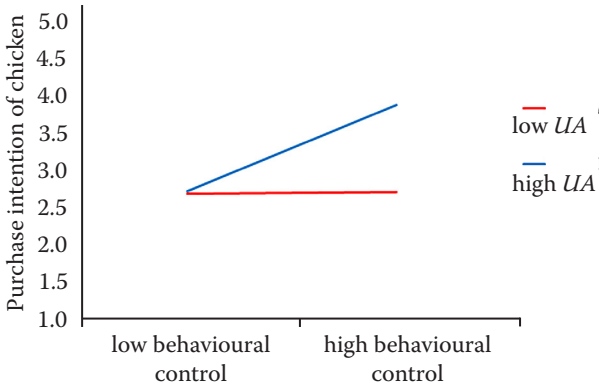

Figure 8. Uncertainty avoidance moderation between *BC* and *PI*

BC – behavioural control; *PI* – purchase intention; *UA* – uncertainty avoidance

Source: Authors's own elaboration

The moderation analysis of *UA* on *BF* and *PI* in Figure 6 revealed a strong positive interaction effect, indicating that *UA* moderates the relationship between *BF* and *PI*. The result in Figure 6 illustrates that *UA* enhanced the relationship between *BF* and *PI*; hence, H_{6b} was confirmed.

The moderation analysis of *UA* on *BA* and *PI* in Figure 7 revealed a strong positive interaction effect, indicating that *UA* moderated the relationship between *BA* and *PI*. The result in Figure 7 illustrates that *UA* enhanced the relationship between *BA* and *PI*; hence, H_{6c} was supported.

The moderation analysis of *UA* on *BC* and *PI* in Figure 8 revealed a strong positive interaction effect, indicating that *UA* moderated the relationship between *BA* and *PI*. The result in Figure 8 demonstrates that *UA* enhanced the relationship between *BA* and *PI*; hence, H_{6e} was supported.

DISCUSSION

This study identified five variables influencing the chicken meat *PI* in China and Sierra Leone. The results of hypotheses H_{2a}–H_{5a} suggest that *BF*, *BA*, *SN* and *BC* were valid indicators that significantly influenced consumers' chicken meat *PI* in both markets. However, the impact of these variables was significantly higher among Chinese consumers than those in Sierra Leone. Our results are consistent with the findings of Li et al. (2021), Roseira et al. (2022) and Sobaih et al. (2023). The impact of these factors on chicken meat *APB* was more noticeable in the Chinese market than in Sierra Leone. This implied that *BF*, *BA*, *BC* and *SN* had a stronger influence on Chinese buyers' purchase decisions. Likewise, the outcome from H_1 indicated that chicken meat *PI* had a substantial effect on consumers' purchase behaviour in the two studied markets. Similar results were found for developing countries by Zayed et al. (2022), which confirmed these findings. We determined that *PI* is a possible indicator that favourably affects chicken meat APB in the two analysed markets.

The findings of the hypotheses H_{2b}–H_{5b} demonstrated that *PI* has an essential role in mediating between *BF*, *BA*, *SN*, *BC* and *APB* towards CM. The mediating effects of *PI* were more apparent in China than those in Sierra Leone, presumably because of high adherence to *BF*, *BA* and the influence of family members and friends (*SN*). Chinese consumers were strongly induced by these factors, which positively influenced their chicken meat *PI*. One study observed that *BF* and *BA* towards purchasing, when used as signals of organic meat *PI*, greatly boosted the meat industry's reputation in Vietnam (Nguyen et al. 2021). Moreover, *BF* has both direct and indirect effects on *CB* (Shahriari et al. 2019). Similarly, *SN* directly and indirectly affects Sierra Leonean and Chinese buyers' behaviour towards CM. These findings are consistent with those of Peña-Garcia et al. (2020), who found that *SN* positively influenced *APB* in Colombia and Spain.

The outcomes of H_{6a-e} revealed a substantial effect of *UA* on Sierra Leonean culture on the predictors of *PI* and *APB*, except for H_{6d}. In contrast, the moderating effect variable (*UA*) of the predictors on *PI* and *APB* was insignificant for China. This indicates that customers from Sierra Leone chose CM to navigate confusing circumstances and prevent uncertainty. This result agrees with Hofstede's rankings, which placed Sierra Leone at 50 points and China at 30 points for *UA*, implying that Sierra Leone and China have high and low *UA* levels. Chinese consumers were more accepting of ambiguity than Sierra Leonean consumers, who preferred to buy CM to avoid uncertainty.

The positive relationships between *PI* and *APB*, *BF* and *PI*, *BA* and *PI* and *BC* and *PI* were strengthened in Sierra Leone by high *UA*, as illustrated in Figures 5–8, while the negative impact of low UA was diminished. Based on the findings, buyers in Sierra Leone with high UA preferred CM over their counterparts in China with low *UA*. The slope of the interactions indicates that further research should be conducted regarding *UA* and premium CM. Therefore, Sierra Leonean consumers' chicken meat *PI* was impacted through *UA*.

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Thus, Chinese consumers purchase CM as a result of attributes associated with the product, such as being free from chemicals, freshness, place of origin, certification, breeding method and other product considerations; therefore, it was observed that Chinese buyers are not impacted by UA when buying CM because of confidence in CM quality.

Implications

Theoretical implications. The conclusions of this research have several theoretical implications. The primary novelty of this study was the expansion of the TPB by incorporating the cultural factor of *UA* and the *BF* construct, which could be significant for future cross-cultural research. The second contribution of this work was building on earlier discoveries on the effect of psychological and cultural variables on consumers' chicken meat *PI* in China and Sierra Leone. Additionally, this study adds to the body of knowledge by including *UA* as a moderator in a proposed model, presenting a unique way to measure *UA* in relation to *PI* and *APB*.

This study also offers insight into the potentially new drivers of consumer PI that are thought to have a significant impact on chicken meat *PI* such as *BA*. The study also revealed how consumer responses to chicken meat PI differed across two different cultural value systems, as the first to compare the prevalence of this phenomenon in Asia and Africa. Subsequently, the study offers empirical support for the idea that *UA* is a significant exogenous variable for the TPB model because it affects multiple factors, as demonstrated.

Practical implications. When buyers are presented with a number of influential attributes that signify quality and safety in food buying decisions, as well as culturally inconsistent factors, it can cause them to become more cognitively stressed, resulting in diminished control over the interaction and a loss of focus. Because perceptions of quality differ between nations, consumers behave differently when making purchases to satisfy individual demands for safety and satisfaction. The primary marketing conclusion of this study is that it offers empirical evidence from the analysed markets that cultural dimensions are a significant factor in meat purchasing decisions, leading to a higher impression of meat quality and efficacy. The research indicates some useful approaches for meat producers and marketers who wish to incorporate attractive elements for such consumers into their products. The study's findings may be helpful to managers in the meat industry, who may reference it to develop strategic marketing tactics for nations with various cultures and those with similar cultures. By concentrating on the link between cognitive evaluation and consumer-perceived quality traits, meat producers can use these insights to improve desired outcomes and boost sales.

The practical implications could extend to commercial poultry firms' alteration of marketing strategies that improve sales across cultures. The findings revealed that consumers in both nations have similar chicken meat *PI*. Because consumers are more interested in the *BF* of chicken, the meat sector must understand the purchasing characteristics consumers consider and how they might influence their *APB*.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the impact of traditional psychological factors (*BA*, *SN* and *BC*), *BF* and *UA* on Chinese and Sierra Leonean chicken meat *APB*. We confirmed that the TPB is a vital framework for predicting and explaining the factors influencing chicken meat *APB* in cross-cultural contexts. We constructed a unique conceptual model incorporating cultural factors, buying features and traditional psychological factors to predict chicken meat *PI* and *APB* in the two distinct markets.

The empirical results revealed that Chinese and Sierra Leonean consumers held a positive attitude towards buying CM because of its quality, low cost and availability. Furthermore, *SN* and *BC* had positive and significant effects on chicken meat *PI* and *APB*. Among the extended constructs, *BF* had a positive impact on chicken meat PI and APB. This is an indication for CM traders to use labelling to highlight various features such as colour, appearance, taste and tenderness that will influence *CB* towards CM consumption. The findings revealed that *BA*, *SN*, *BC* and *BF* had a significant impact on chicken meat *PI* and *APB*; however, the impact of these constructs was more significant in China than in Sierra Leone. Thus, the livestock industry, particularly chicken production, should emphasise the inclusion of *BF* information on packaging. The findings of this study also indicated that *PI* mediated the relationship between the independent constructs and *APB*. Finally, *UA* partially moderated the links between *BF*, *BC*, *SN*, *BA* and *PI* and between *PI* and *APB* in the Sierra Leonean sample. Thus, chicken stakeholders in Sierra Leone, can segment their client base and focus on specific categories with persuasive strategies as a result of the cultural factor.

Limitations and recommendations for further study. Although this article addressed an essential con-

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cept related to the factors that influence *PI* and *APB* for CM, there are some limitations that could be examined in future research. The study was implemented in two distinct countries. We suggest that future research should include more countries to improve the validity and applicability of culture in consumer purchase behaviour. We also suggest that additional cultural dimensions be included in any subsequent research on *PI* and *APB*. Our investigation considered four predictors (*BF*, *BA*, *SN* and *BC*) of *PI* and *APB* towards CM in the analysed countries. Subsequently, future research could include a larger number of predictors, including safety attributes, trust, health, ethical factors and environmental factors, to gain a more comprehensive view of countries' marketplaces and provide a more detailed picture from which stakeholders along the supply chain can develop strategies.

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