

# Perceptions of Consumers in Thailand Towards Purchasing Products Made in China: An Empirical Study of an International University in Thailand

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## Abstract

The proliferation of Chinese products around the world is a phenomenon that merits academic inquiry as to consumer receptivity in respective nations. The purpose of this study was to assess such receptivity in the Kingdom of Thailand where substantive research on this subject has been lacking. Specifically, the perception factors of country-of-origin, consumer nationalism, price sensitivity, product quality, and product type purchased as per demographic variables were examined. The inquiry also looked at differentials between Chinese Thais and non-Chinese Thais regarding the purchase of goods made or assembled in China. Null hypotheses were tested for consistency in this study's presentation due to the variability of statistical significance found in the literature review regarding the factors under examination. The study found that there were statistically significant differences between Thai purchasers and non-purchasers of Chinese products regarding the factors of consumer nationalism, price sensitivity, and perception of quality. It also found mixed results regarding Chinese product types purchased by demographic groups as well as mixed differentials between Chinese Thais and non-Chinese Thais. Suggestions for future research are presented to enhance utilitarian benefits for importers, wholesalers, retailers, and marketers.

**Keywords:** China, Chinese Products, Consumer Nationalism, Country-of-Origin, Ethnocentrism, Price Sensitivity, Product Quality, Product Type, Thailand

## 1. Introduction

During the past thirty years, China experienced the fastest growing major economy in the world and now stands as the second-largest economy in the world as measured by purchasing power parity (Central Intelligence Agency, 2015). Though China is currently facing a gradual slowdown and the need to address overcapacity (Cashin, Mohaddes, & Raissi, 2016; World Bank, 2016), it remains a global hub for manufacturing and is the largest trading nation in the world as well as the largest exporter of goods (Brandt & Rawski, 2008; Golley & Song, 2011; Knight & Ding, 2012; Liu, 2016; Santasombat, 2015; Sornarajah & Wang, 2010).

China is consistently found among the top five trade partners of members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), of which Thailand is a member (Saidjanova & Koch-Weser, 2015). Chinese imports to Thailand totaled close to \$38 billion in 2013 making up approximately 15% of all imports to the country (World Bank data cited in Saidjanova & Koch-

Weser, 2015). The implementation of the China-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) in 2010 bolstered Sino-Thai economic relations, allowing for growth in Chinese imports of computer and electrical equipment, chemicals, manufactured goods, and other products (Gao & Zhang, 2016; Hongfang, 2013; Jarvis & Welch, 2011; Lijun, 2007). Almost \$9 billion fell under the category of consumer goods, including apparel and household appliances (Saidjanova & Koch-Weser, 2015). Indeed, the economic nexus between the two nations has become significant, with model estimates that a one percent decline in China's gross domestic product would lower Thailand's overall economic output by 0.2 percent (Klyuev, Yoneyama, & Kashiwase, 2016).

A growing body of scholarly inquiry has focused on customer perception of Chinese products. Prior studies have primarily focused on country-of-origin ("made in") perceptions and consumer ethnocentrism (Ioanas & Alea, 2012; Karami, Siahpoush, & Olfati, 2013; Lew & Sulaiman, 2013; Lyden, Backe, & Ahman, 2005; Sarwar, Azam, Haque, Sleman, & Nikhashemi, 2013; Schniederjans, Cao, & Olson, 2004; Schniederjans, Cao, Schniederjans, & Gu, 2011; Srivastava, 2015; "The Image," 2015; Ulgado, Wen, & Lee, 2011), with none looking at all the factors of price sensitivity, product quality, and type of product. This study seeks to expand on the existing body of this very specific analysis of consumer behavior by examining Thai consumers, a group that has yet to be studied in a nation which has experienced a significant and growing presence of Chinese products. The originality of this study is not only in focusing on Thai consumers but also any distinctions between non-Chinese Thais and those of Chinese ancestry (identified as first or second generation). The study is also the first to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the perceptions of Chinese products by Thai consumers, examining the factors of country-of-origin, consumer nationalism, price sensitivity, product quality, and product type purchased by the demographic variables of age, gender, ethnicity, employment status, and monthly income. None of the above cited studies focused specifically on Chinese products and no research has been conducted that examined the impact of the stated demographic variables on purchases of Chinese goods by product type.

## **2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development**

### ***Country-of-Origin***

Country-of-origin (or "made in" image) refers to where a product was manufactured and the connotation associated with that. Nagashima (1970, p. 68) first elaborated on a country-of-origin as "...[an] image [based on] the reputation, the stereotype that businessmen and consumers attach to products as of a specific country." Nagashima argued that the "made in" image rested on variables such as "representative products, national characteristics, economic and political background, history, and traditions" (p. 68). Most country-of-origin studies have focused on the impact of "made in" imagery regarding products from around the world. (Ahmed & d'Astous, 1996; Ahmed, Johnson, Xia, & Chen, 2004; Bilkey & Nes, 1982; Chan, Yonggu, & Byeong-Joon, 2001; Chinen, Sun, & Ito, 2014; De Wet, A. G., Pothas A-M, & De Wet, J. M., 2001; Fetscherin & Toncar, 2010; Hong & Toner, 1989; Inch & McBride, 1998; Lielefeld, 1993; Li & Wyer, 1994; Lin & Kao, 2004; Listiana, 2015; Lyden, Backe, & Ahman, 2005; Maheswaran, 1994; Yang, Wang, & Zhong, 2015).

The bulk of the studies that examined consumer perceptions of Chinese products have focused exclusively or primarily on the impact of country-of-origin. The majority found that country-of-origin was significant in influencing consumer decision-making with "Made in China" associated with inferior design, manufacturing, cheap pricing, and low quality (Chinen et al., 2014; Karami, Siahpoush, & Olfati, 2013; Kim, Choi, Kim, & Liu, 2015; Lyden et al,

2005; “The Image,” 2015; Ulgado, Wen, & Lee, 2011), with other studies finding it was not (Ioanas & Aldea, 2012; Narang, 2016; Sarwar et al., 2013; Srivastava, 2015).

**H<sub>1</sub>. *There will be no significant difference in mean country-of-origin domestic preference factor scores for purchasers versus non-purchasers of Chinese products.***

### ***Consumer Nationalism***

The construct of consumer ethnocentrism has been used as a predictor for the preference of domestic products (Banyopadhyay, 2014; Shimp & Sharma, 1987; Siamagka, & Balabanis, 2015; Zeugner-Roth, Zabkar, & Diamantopoulos, 2015). Sumner (1906), in exploring ingroup and outgroup behavior, first provided a sociological understanding of ethnocentrism as the view of things in which one’s own group is the center of everything, whereas all other groups are scaled and rated with reference to it. This construct evolved to have psychosocial implications (Levine & Campbell, 1972) where ethnocentrism came to represent the proclivity for people to view “[t]he symbols and values of one’s own ethnic or national group [as] objects of pride and attachment, whereas symbols of other groups may become objects of contempt” (Shimp & Sharma, 1987, p. 280). From a consumer behavior and marketing perspective, consumer ethnocentrism is a predictor as to the degree in which individuals are influenced by the appropriateness and morality of purchasing foreign-made products including perceived losses to the domestic economy (Shimp & Sharma, 1987). For example, under the influence of consumer ethnocentrism, an American would choose a domestic wine of similar value over a French equivalent even if the consumer was conscious that, generally speaking, French wines have a better reputation as to quality and taste.

A review of a 17-item instrument, CETSCALE, created by Shimp and Sharma (1987) to measure ethnocentric influence on purchasing foreign products indicates that the items focused primarily on nationalist concerns of supporting domestic products and companies, protecting the domestic economy, and guarding against foreign economic threats. These represent aspects of and empirical support for patriotism (Han, 1988; Klein & Ettenson, 1999; Mihalyi, 1984; Shankarmahesh, 2006; Sharma, Shimp, & Shin, 1995). CETSCALE was designed to examine the purchase of foreign versus American-made products. No specific symbols or values of any specific ethnicity were represented. This is logical because the United States is a heterogeneous amalgam of strong, internal ethnocentric identifications with contrasting values. Therefore, using pertinent questions adapted from the American consumer-focused CETSCALE, this study will test any relationship between domestic preference and consumption of foreign products from a *nationalist* perspective where patriotism transcends all perspectives based on ethnicity or race, or social group affiliation.

**H<sub>2</sub>. *There will be no significant difference in mean domestic preference factor (DPF) consumer nationalism scores for purchasers versus non-purchasers of Chinese products.***

### ***Price Sensitivity***

The price affordability of a product is a core factor in the determination of decision-making to consume since, in general, the higher the price of a commodity, the less likely it will be consumed if there is competition (given that all other factors remain constant). Research has indicated that consumers are generally price-sensitive regarding Chinese products, choosing to take advantage of lower prices over other factors (Sarwar et al, 2013; Srivastava, 2015).

**H<sub>3</sub>. *There will be no significant difference in mean DPF price sensitivity scores for purchasers versus non-purchasers of Chinese products.***

***Product Quality***

Perception of quality of a product is a key factor influencing purchase intention. Chinese products have suffered from a reputation for inferior quality as to material, design, manufacturing, and assemblage. (Midler, 2011; Zhang, Bai, Lohmar, & Huang, 2010; Zhang & Byron, 2007). Schniederjans, Cao, and Olson (2004) found that U. S. consumers perceived products from China to be of low quality. A replication of that study (Schniederjans et al, 2011) found that consumer perception in the United States essentially remained the same and had not experienced a downward trend. Much of the research on the quality of Chinese products showed consistency in consumer perceptions of inferiority in comparison to domestic products or the imported products of other nations (Ioanas & Aldea, 2012; Sarwar et al, 2013; Srivastava, 2015; Ulgado, Wen, & Lee, 2011).

**H4. *There will be no significant difference in mean DPF quality perception of Chinese product scores for purchasers versus non-purchasers of Chinese products.***

***Type of Product Purchased as per Demographic Variables***

Product identification or classification is essential in customers' decision-making as to potential consumption. Analysis by type of product should not be confused with selection based on brand identification (Ulgado et al, 2011). The research literature reveals a dearth of studies that focus on perception of Chinese products by type, with only one study, Schniederjans et al. (2011) providing a comprehensive listing of product items (61 in total).

Very limited research has been conducted regarding the impact of demographic variables on the factors of country-of-origin, consumer nationalism, price sensitivity, product quality, and type of product. Hong and Toner (1989) found no significant difference between males and females regarding foreign products, although none of the products originated from China. Studies on consumer nationalism (or consumer ethnocentrism) mostly found that older people, women and those with lower educational degrees were more nationalistic in their consumer decision-making (Balabanis, Diamantopoulos, Melewar, & Mueller, 2001; Erdogan & Uzkuurt, 2010; Josiassen, Assaf, & Karpen, 2011; Mockaitis, Salciuvienė, & Ghauri, 2013; Shimp & Sharma, 1987).

However, other studies found men to be more nationalistic (Bannister & Saunders, 1978; Ramsaran-Fowdar, 2010; Shankarmahesh, 2006) while McLain and Sternquist (1991), Caruana (1996) and Maina (2016) found no significant relationship regarding gender. Bannister and Saunders (1978) and Schooler (1971) were in the minority in their findings that younger people were more nationalistic than older ones regarding consumer decision-making.

None of the above cited studies focused specifically on Chinese products and no research has been conducted that examined the impact of the demographic variables of age, gender, ethnicity, employment status, and monthly income on the factors indicated in the previous hypotheses that addressed perception of Chinese products. Therefore the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H5. *There will be no relationship between type of Chinese product purchased and consumer demographics.***

Because of the cultural specifics involved in the dynamics of this study, a specific inquiry will be made as to any differentiations between non-Chinese Thais and Thais of Chinese parents (i.e., 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Chinese Thais).

**H6. *There will no significant difference in DPF mean scores between non-Chinese Thais and Thais of Chinese parents.***

### 3. Research Design

#### *Sample Population*

The persons in the population being examined are ethnic Thai students and Thais of Chinese ancestry (first and second generations) at an international university in Thailand. This population consisted of 260 students (55%) of the total population of 470 (100%). As per Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table for sample size tabulation, a sample from the population numbering 155 was obtained consisting of 64 males (41.3% of total) and 91 females (58.7% of total). This approximated the university's enrollment figures of 45% for males and 55% for females. Of these, 47 of the respondents (or 30.3% of the total) were Thais of Chinese ancestry (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation) and 108 (or 69.7%) were non-Chinese Thais. There was no university institutional data as to this ethnic breakdown. Thais of Chinese ancestry make up about 14% of the country's population (West, 2009).

However, strong anecdotal feedback from the preponderance of the faculty at this institution have substantiated that Chinese Thai make up 25% to 33% of the total Thai student population in their respective classrooms. In Thailand, Chinese Thai comprise a disproportionately higher percentage of participation in institutions of higher education due to their higher socio-economic level and familial educational attainment (Franco, 2015).

#### *Research Instrument and Data Collection*

A self-administered questionnaire, consisting of a 4-point, forced Likert-scale, was given to the respondents in classroom settings during a three-month period. The questionnaire also contained open-ended questions with each Likert-scale close-ended question in order to allow for more elaboration on the inquiry. Three close-ended questions were asked for each of the five factors examined: country-of-origin, consumer nationalism, price sensitivity, product quality, type of product, and impact of demographic variables. A listing of product types was also included for which respondents were to indicate if they made purchases of Chinese products in the given product categories. All scales had a Cronbach alpha internal reliability score over .92, indicating consistency and high internal reliability (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; Sekaran, 2000).

The questionnaire was translated into Thai and the Thai version was translated back (using a second translator) to assure accuracy (Behling & Law, 2000; Domyei & Taguchi, 2009). The Likert scale was forced with four points ("strongly agree to strongly disagree") to avoid a neutral option (e.g., "not sure") since Thai culture inhibits expressions of personal opinion with a strong hierarchical structure with high power-distance and *kreng jai* – which is the cultural practice of avoiding the display of emotion as well as asserting one's opinion (Holmes, Tangtontavy, & Tomizawa, 2003; Suntaree, 1990). Cross-national studies regarding Pacific Rim respondents (Chen, Lee, & Stevenson, 1995; Peterson, Rhi-Perez, & Albaum, 2014) and specifically Thais (Calderon, Angulo, O'Mahony, & Wichchukit, 2015), verified difference in responses measurements based on culture.

### 4. Data Analysis, Research Findings and Discussion

The first five hypotheses asserted that there would be no differences in mean Domestic Preference Factor (DPF) scores for product Country-of-Origin (COO), consumer nationalism, price sensitivity, or consumer perception of Chinese product quality for purchasers versus non-purchasers of Chinese products. Subjects were assigned to one of two groups based upon a self-report of whether they had purchased Chinese products in the 30 days prior to completion of the survey. Descriptives for the two groups are provided below in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Mean DPF Scores for Chinese Product Purchasers vs. Non-Purchasers\*

Purchas e Group	Statistic	Country of Origin	Consumer Nationalism	Price Sensitivit y	Quality Perception
Purchas e	Mean	2.31	1.99	3.15	2.48
	SD	.558	.692	.639	.587
Non- Purchas e	Mean	2.36	1.73	2.64	2.79
	SD	.472	.486	.742	.573
Total	Mean	2.32	1.93	3.04	2.55
	SD	.540	.661	.692	.596

\*Where 1 = Lowest DPF score and 4 = Highest DPF Score

In order to test the initial four hypotheses a MANOVA was first conducted to determine if mean scores for the four DPF factors were significantly different for purchasers versus non-purchasers of Chinese products as a test of the hypothesis. A Box's test of equality of covariance matrices produced a Box's M score of 14.903 associated with a  $p$ -value of .165. Therefore the covariance matrices between the two groups were assumed to be equal for purpose of the MANOVA. A statistically significant MANOVA effect was obtained, Pillais' Trace = .119,  $F(4, 150) = 5.047$ ,  $p = .001$ . The multivariate effect size was estimated at .119, indicating that 11.9% of the variance in purchase category was determined by the four domestic preference factors. Since the MANOVA was significant the analysis proceeded with tests of the individual hypotheses.

Prior to conducting a series of follow-up ANOVAs, it was necessary to test the homogeneity of variance assumption for the four domestic preference factors. This was done using a series of Levene's  $F$  tests (See Table 2). The homogeneity of variance assumption was considered to be satisfied even though one of the four Levene's  $F$  tests was statistically significant ( $p = .04$ ). Although the Levene's  $F$  test suggested that the variance associated with the Country of Origin factor was not homogenous examination of the standard deviations provided in Table 1 revealed that none of the largest standard deviations were more than four times the size of the corresponding smallest, suggesting that the ANOVA would be robust (Howell, 2009).

**Table 2:** Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Variable	$F$	$Df1$	$Df2$	$p$
Country-of-Origin	4.310	1	153	.040
Consumer Nationalism	2.871	1	153	.092
Price Sensitivity	1.522	1	153	.219
Quality Perception	.889	1	153	.347



Hypothesis 1 stated that there would be no significant difference in mean country-of-origin DPF scores for purchasers versus non-purchasers of Chinese products. In order to test this, a one-way ANOVA was performed. As shown in Table 3 below, results indicate that there was no statistically significant difference between the mean scores for these two groups,  $F(1, 153) = .241, p = .624$ . Hypothesis 1 is therefore supported.

**Table 3:** Comparison of COO DPF Scores for Chinese Product Purchasers vs. Non-Purchasers\*

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Between Groups	1	.071	.071	.241	.624
Within Groups	153	44.800	.293		
Total	154	44.871			

\*Where 1 = Lowest COO DPF score and 4 = Highest COO DPF Score

The second hypothesis proposed that there would be no significant difference in mean DPF consumer nationalism scores for purchasers versus non-purchasers of Chinese products. The results of this one-way ANOVA used to test this hypothesis are presented in Table 4. As indicated below, there are statistically significant differences between the mean scores for consumer nationalism between the purchasers and the non-purchasers,  $F(1, 153) = 3.986, p = .048$  with purchasers having higher mean consumer nationalism ( $\bar{X} = 1.98$ ) than non-purchasers ( $\bar{X} = 1.72$ ). Hypothesis 2 is not supported.

**Table 4:** Comparison of Consumer Nationalism DPF Scores for Purchasers vs. Non-Purchasers\*

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Between Groups	1	1.707	1.707	3.986	.048
Within Groups	153	65.513	.428		
Total	154	67.219			

\*Where 1 = Lowest Consumer Nationalism DPF score and 4 = Highest Consumer Nationalism DPF Score

Hypothesis three states that there would be no significant difference in mean DPF price sensitivity scores for purchasers versus non-purchasers of Chinese products. Results for the one-way ANOVA conducted to test the hypothesis for these differences are presented in Table 5 below. Price sensitivity mean DPF scores are significantly higher,  $F(1, 153) = 15.503, p < .001$ , for purchasers of Chinese products ( $\bar{X} = 3.15$ ) as compared with non-purchasers ( $\bar{X} = 2.64$ ). Based upon these findings, Hypothesis 3 is not supported.

**Table 5:** Comparison of Price Sensitivity DPF Scores for Chinese Product Purchasers vs. Non-Purchasers\*

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Between Groups	1	6.787	6.787	15.503	< .001
Within Groups	153	66.981	.428		
Total	154	67.219			

\*Where 1 = Lowest Price Sensitivity DPF score and 4 = Highest Price Sensitivity DPF Score

As stated in Hypothesis 4, no significant difference in Chinese product quality perception scores is proposed to exist between purchasers and non-purchasers of Chinese products. Once again a one-way ANOVA was performed to test this hypothesis. As shown in Table 6, significant differences were found to exist between the perceptions of Chinese product quality in purchasers versus non-purchasers of Chinese products  $F(1, 153) = 7.238$ ,  $p = .008$ . Purchasers were found to have a lower mean perception of quality score ( $\bar{X} = 2.48$ ) when compared to non-purchasers ( $\bar{X} = 2.79$ ).

**Table 6:** Comparison of Perception of Chinese Product Quality DPF Scores for Chinese Product Purchasers vs. Non-Purchasers\*

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Between Groups	1	2.470	2.470	7.238	.008
Within Groups	153	52.214	.341		
Total	154	67.219			

\*Where 1 = Perception of Low Quality DPF score and 4 = Perception of High Quality DPF Score

The next analysis explored the types of Chinese products purchased by respondents. Respondents were presented with a list of product types. They were then requested to indicate the types of products where they had purchased Chinese products in the past. Table 7 reports those percentages for the product types included in the survey.



**Table 7:** Percentage of Respondents Reporting Purchase by Product\*

Product Type	Percentage Purchased	Percentage Not Purchased
Clothing	63.2	36.8
Shoes	37.4	62.6
Electronics	37.4	62.6
Medicine	28.4	71.6
Food/ Drinks	27.7	72.3
Toys	27.7	72.3
Computer/ Printer	13.5	86.5
Cell Phone	12.3	87.7
Jewelry	7.1	92.9
Furniture	6.5	93.5
Cleaning Products	3.9	96.1
Watches	3.2	96.8
Toiletries	1.3	98.7

\*Presented by descending order in terms of percentage purchase

Hypothesis 5 suggested that there would be no differences in Chinese products purchased by different demographic groups. In order to examine this, a Chi Square analysis was performed on those product items reported to be purchased by respondents and the corresponding demographic groups to which the respondents belong in order to test this hypothesis. Results of this analysis are presented in Table 8 below. Numbers provided in the table are  $X^2$  and  $p$ -values. Significant differences are indicated by an asterisk (\*). Results for Hypothesis 5 were mixed. Outcomes varied by product type with differences found in one or more of the demographic categories for all product types except Furniture, Watches and Toiletries. Differences in three demographic categories occurred in the product types of Cell Phones, Food/Drinks, Toys, and Electronics.

**Table 8:**  $X^2$  and  $p$ -Values for Product Type by Demographic Category for Purchased Products

	Demographic Category					
Product Type	Gender	Age <sup>1</sup>	Thai/ Thai	Chinese	Employed	Income <sup>2</sup>
Clothing	$X^2 = 1.374$	$X^2 = 5.389$	$X^2 = 11.320$	$X^2 = .052$	$X^2 = 6.083$	
	$p = .241$	$p = .068$	$p = .001^{**}$	$p = .820$	$p = .108$	
Product Type	Gender	Age <sup>1</sup>	Thai/ Thai	Chinese	Employed	Income <sup>2</sup>
Shoes	$X^2 = 2.783$	$X^2 = 7.154$	$X^2 = .045$	$X^2 = .004$	$X^2 = 9.577$	
	$p = .095$	$p = .028^*$	$p = .832$	$p = .950$	$p = .023^*$	
Computer/ Printer	$X^2 = 4.258$	$X^2 = 3.024$	$X^2 = .035$	$X^2 = 2.805$	$X^2 = 6.468$	
	$p = .039^*$	$p = .220$	$p = .851$	$p = .094$	$p = .091$	
Cell Phone	$X^2 = 1.149$	$X^2 = 11.105$	$X^2 = .881$	$X^2 = 4.992$	$X^2 = 8.191$	
	$p = .284$	$p = .004^*$	$p = .348$	$p = .025^*$	$p = .042^*$	
Food/ Drinks	$X^2 = 1.872$	$X^2 = 21.873$	$X^2 = .633$	$X^2 = 11.961$	$X^2 = 20.883$	
	$p = .171$	$p < .001^{**}$	$p = .426$	$p = .001^*$	$p < .001^{**}$	
Toys	$X^2 = 12.634$	$X^2 = 4.494$	$X^2 = 3.867$	$X^2 = 16.618$	$X^2 = 4.155$	
	$p < .001^{**}$	$p = .106$	$p = .049^*$	$p < .001^{**}$	$p = .245$	
Furniture	$X^2 = 1.999$	$X^2 = 1.995$	$X^2 = .539$	$X^2 = .456$	$X^2 = 2.501$	
	$p = .157$	$p = .369$	$p = .463$	$p = .500$	$p = .475$	
Medicine	$X^2 = 1.923$	$X^2 = 2.706$	$X^2 = 6.659$	$X^2 = 1.890$	$X^2 = 4.170$	
	$p = .166$	$p = .258$	$p = .010^*$	$p = .169$	$p = .244$	
Electronics	$X^2 = 9.312$	$X^2 = 1.890$	$X^2 = 7.166$	$X^2 = 4.219$	$X^2 = .250$	
	$p = .002^*$	$p = .389$	$p = .007^*$	$p = .040^*$	$p = .969$	
Cleaning Products	$X^2 = 1.561$	$X^2 = 2.251$	$X^2 = .551$	$X^2 = 4.219$	$X^2 = 13.680$	
	$p = .211$	$p = .324$	$p = .458$	$p = .013^*$	$p = .003^*$	
Watches	$X^2 = 3.634$	$X^2 = 1.340$	$X^2 = 2.248$	$X^2 = .194$	$X^2 = 4.873$	
	$p = .057$	$p = .512$	$p = .134$	$p = .660$	$p = .181$	
Jewelry	$X^2 = 5.064$	$X^2 = 5.795$	$X^2 = 826$	$X^2 = 4.698$	$X^2 = 6.406$	
	$p = .024^*$	$p = .055$	$p = .363$	$p = .030^*$	$p = .093$	
Toiletries	$X^2 = .063$	$X^2 = .378$	$X^2 = .882$	$X^2 = 2.000$	$X^2 = 2.339$	
	$p = .801$	$p = .828$	$p = .348$	$p = .157$	$p = .505$	

<sup>1</sup> Three age groups were involved: 18-22, 69 persons; 23-25, 62 persons; and 26+, 24 persons

<sup>2</sup> Four income groups were involved: < 15,000 Baht, 57 persons; 15,000 to 30,000 Baht, 35 persons; 30,001 to 50,000 Baht, 37 persons; and 50,001 or more Baht, 26 persons

\* Significant at  $p = .05$ , \*\* Significant at  $p < .001$

The next hypothesis examined possible cultural differences in DPF scores for the four factors. Hypothesis 6 stated that there would be no significant differences in DPF mean scores between non-Chinese Thais and Thais of Chinese parents. Descriptive statistics for the two groups on the four DPF variables are presented in Table 9 below.

**Table 9:** Mean DPF Scores for Thais and Thais of Chinese Parents\*

Purchase Group	Statistic	Country of Origin	Consumer Nationalism	Price Sensitivity	Quality Perception
Chinese Thai	Mean	2.26	1.70	3.02	2.87
	SD	.487	.648	.571	.726
Non-Ch Thai	Mean	2.35	2.03	3.05	2.40
	SD	.561	.644	.741	.466
Purchase Group	Statistic	Country of Origin	Consumer Nationalism	Price Sensitivity	Quality Perception
Total	Mean	2.32	1.93	3.04	2.55
	SD	.540	.661	.692	.596

\*Where 1 = Lowest DPF score and 4 = Highest DP Score

Prior to conducting the ANOVA to test this hypothesis, it was necessary to test the homogeneity of variance assumption for the four domestic preference factors with this grouping variable. As before, this was done using a series of Levene's *F* tests depicted in Table 10. The homogeneity of variance assumption was considered to be satisfied even though one of the four Levene's *F* tests was statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ). Although the Levene's *F* test suggested that the variance associated with the Perception of Quality in Chinese Products factor was not homogenous, examination of the standard deviations provided in Table 9 revealed that none of the largest standard deviations were more than four times the size of the smallest, suggesting that the ANOVA would be robust (Howell, 2009).

**Table 10:** Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Variable	<i>F</i>	<i>Df1</i>	<i>Df2</i>	<i>p</i>
Country-of-Origin	.847	1	153	.359
Consumer Nationalism	.028	1	153	.867
Price Sensitivity	3.096	1	153	.080
Quality Perception	22.651	1	153	< .001

The results of the analysis are presented in Table 11 below. As the numbers indicate, significant differences were found for two of the four Domestic Preference Factors for Thais with Chinese parents versus Thais of non-Chinese parents. These included Consumer Nationalism  $F(1, 153) = 8.335, p = .004$  and Perception of Quality in Chinese Products  $F(1, 153) = 23.276, p < .001$ . Chinese Thais had significantly lower Consumer Nationalism scores ( $\bar{X} = 1.70$ ) as compared to Thais ( $\bar{X} = 2.03$ ) but Chinese Thais had higher Quality Perception scores ( $\bar{X} = 2.87$ ) as compared to Thais of Thai parents ( $\bar{X} = 2.40$ ).

The remaining two DPF categories, Country-of-Origin,  $F(1, 153) = .741, p = .391$  and Price Sensitivity  $F(1, 153) = .043, p = .837$  were found to have no significant differences in the means across the two groups. Therefore Hypothesis 6 received mixed support.

**Table 11:** Comparison of Perception of Chinese Product Quality DPF Scores for Chinese Product Purchasers vs. Non-Purchasers\*

Variable	Source	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Country of Origin	Between Groups	1	.216	.216	.741	.391
	Within Groups	153	44.655	.292		
	Total	154	44.871			
Variable	Source	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Consumer Nationalism	Between Groups	1	3.473	3.473	8.335	.004
	Within Groups	153	63.746	.417		
	Total	154	67.219			
Price Sensitivity	Between Groups	1	.021	.021	.043	.837
	Within Groups	153	73.747	.482		
	Total	154	73.768			
Perception of Product Quality	Between Groups	1	7.221	7.221	23.276	< .001
	Within Groups	153	47.463	.310		
	Total	154	54.684			

A summary of the findings of this study are provided below in Table 12. In this study, significant differences were found to exist in mean Domestic Preference Factor scores for purchaser versus non-purchaser groups for three of the four factors. Only Country-of-Origin DPF scores were not significantly different between the two groups. In examining reported purchases of Chinese products, purchases varied across all demographic groups and for all but three product types explored.

Finally, when the mean DPF scores of Thais of Thai parents were compared with Thais of Chinese parents two factors exhibited statistically significant mean differences (Consumer Nationalism and Perception of Chinese Product Quality) while two did not (Country-of-Origin and Price Sensitivity).

**Table: 12:** Summary of Study Findings

Hypothesis		SS
H <sub>1</sub>	No Differences Country-of-Origin DPF by Purchasers vs. Non-Purchasers	Supported
H <sub>2</sub>	No Differences Consumer Nationalism DPF by Purchasers vs. Non-Purchasers	Rejected
H <sub>3</sub>	No Differences Price Sensitivity DPF by Purchasers vs. Non-Purchasers	Rejected
Hypothesis		SS
H <sub>4</sub>	No Differences Quality of Chinese Product DPF by Purchasers vs. Non-Purchasers	Rejected
H <sub>5</sub>	No Differences in Chinese Product Types Purchased by Demographic Groups	Mixed
H <sub>6</sub>	No Difference in Mean DPF by Thais of Chinese Parents vs. Thais of Thai Parents	Mixed

The self-administered questionnaire used in this study allowed for open-ended responses for further articulation of the factors examined. Of the 155 respondents, only 23 provided additional feedback with open-ended commentary. Most of the remarks merely reinforced their choice on the 4-point Likert scale choices without providing any substance. Regarding the five factors examined, there was almost no commentary as to country-of-origin. Regarding price, comments were primarily uniform along the lines of:

“I buy based on the cheapest price.”

“Chinese products usually have the lowest price.”

As to product quality, respondents who were purchasers provided non-substantive commentary that merely equated the quality of Chinese products to others. However, those averse to purchasing Chinese products provided most of the commentary, indicating perceptions or prior purchasing experiences regarding low quality and fakery.

“Chinese products are of bad quality and break down.”

“Poor manufacturing and packaging.”

“Most are cheap, counterfeit products.”

“Chinese products usually have low quality.”

“Bad quality material in the products.”

“Chinese food products are harmful because they contain chemicals.”

“I had the choice to buy a game console from China and Japan – same price. I chose the Japanese one because of quality.”

“Sometimes no warranty on Chinese products.”

“Chinese products are fake and counterfeit.”

As to type of product, many expressed the experience of not having many choices in purchasing within Thailand and of being forced to accept Chinese products. This was particularly true of those who were seeking herbal or organic medication.

“Chinese products are everywhere and easy to find.”

“Everywhere in Thailand you can buy these products.”

“No other choices available for what I wanted.”

“I’m always sick and can only find Chinese traditional medicine that is effective.”

“I like ingredients only in traditional Chinese medicines.”

“China is the best producer of tea and herbs. I only buy from that country.”

The factor of consumer nationalism provided substantive commentary from questions that inquired, in a variety of ways, if Thais who purchased products from Thailand over China believed they were more patriotic or “loved Thailand” more than those who did not. While consumer nationalism was a significant factor in this study, the responses consisted almost exclusively of commentary by those with lower consumer nationalism scores who rejected the assertion.

“We are in a globalized world. Buying from other countries is not unpatriotic.”

“Patriotism is one thing. But in the end, quality and price are more important.”

“I don’t think buying Thai products is showing love of country.”

“I don’t think Thais really care about that. Are we nationalists?”

“All Thai people love Thailand. Chinese products are chosen because they are cheaper.”

“People don’t think about this when they buy products.”

“Thai people may buy Chinese products because they like them more, not because they do not love their country.”

“Globalization does not make this question relevant.”

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations for Future Research

The results of this study indicate that price and perception of quality were significant in the determination to purchase Chinese products which supports the findings of prior studies (Sarwar et al, 2013; Srivastava, 2015; Midler, 2011; Zhang, Bai, Lohmar, & Huang, 2010; Zhang & Byron, 2007). The factor of consumer nationalism was also significant, even though a higher mean score was calculated for the actual purchasers. The major contribution of this study was not to provide additional support for relationships previously identified in the literature. Instead it was to expand knowledge to additional relationships. This study found that purchase of product type varied for the variables of age, gender, income, and employment. Ethnocentrism was determined between Chinese Thais and non-Chinese Thais with those of Chinese ancestry disregarding the factor of consumer nationalism but not perception of quality, which was higher for Chinese Thai. Country-of-origin and price sensitivity generated similar scores between Chinese Thais and non-Chinese Thais.

This study’s literature review, revealing differences in factor results based on the nation examined, clearly shows there is no homogeneity as to perception or anticipated receptivity for Chinese products. Therefore, the business community of any given nation should not commit the mistake of disregarding cultural or national context by relying on studies conducted in another nation. They should conduct their own. Studies of this nature are vital to importers, exporters, wholesalers, retailers, and marketers who deal with goods that are manufactured or assembled in China since the proliferation of such products will continue into the future.

The limitations in this study allow for suggestions for future research. The respondents in this study were graduate students in an MBA program at an international university in Bangkok. Therefore, they represent a segment of Thailand that is more highly educated, affluent, cosmopolitan, and at least bilingual (i.e., Thai and English). Also, the representation of respondents who are Chinese Thai (30.3%) is significantly higher than the country’s overall percentage of about 14%. Future studies should incorporate a broader representation of socio-economic levels since the low prices of Chinese products may be particularly enticing to those with lower purchasing power. A study that also looks beyond Bangkok and other metropolitan areas would be useful since half of Thailand’s population can be found in non-urban locations.



This study sought to re-define consumer ethnocentrism as *consumer nationalism* since it argued that many countries have distinct ethnic preferences, domestically, due to a variety of reasons including mass migration of groups in this current era of globalization. This study's findings regarding differences between Chinese Thais and non-Chinese Thais suggest this to be the case in Thailand. Further studies should continue this refinement. As to future studies about Thai culture, researchers should consider distinguishing between Chinese Thais and non-Chinese Thais to determine significant differences and the dynamics at play if such differences do exist.

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