

# International Marketing: Local consumer perception of the purchase decision of Chinese goods

Marketing Internacional: Percepción del consumidor local en la decisión de compra de bienes chinos

 <https://doi.org/10.21803/adgnosis.13.13.725>


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## Cómo citar este artículo:

Bustamante; H. y Vargas; J. (2024). International Marketing: Local consumer perception of the purchase decision of Chinese goods. *Ad-gnosis*, 13(13). e#725. <https://doi.org/10.21803/adgnosis.13.13.725>

## Abstract

**Introduction:** In recent years, local consumers have experienced a significant change in their purchasing preferences because of economic opening and market globalization. This change reflected the demand for international products to which companies needed to meet the needs of consumers, **objective:** This research was to analyze the perception of the local consumer and influence on the decision to purchase goods from China. **Methodology:** implemented in this project had a descriptive quantitative approach, where a questionnaire was designed and validated with closed questions rated on a Likert scale addressed to (109) local importers, the data were analyzed by SPSS version 29 software to ensure its feasibility and reliability. **Results:** The findings show that the behavior in the purchase process depends on preferences, motivations and consumption trends. Finally, **Conclusion:** the existence of factors that influence the perception and purchase decision regarding goods made in China related to quality and the pre-existence of experiences of other consumers in international trade.

**Keywords:** *China; Consumer; Influence; International trade; Perception; Purchasing decision.*

JEL Classification: M16, M30, M31, F20

## Resumen

**Introducción:** En los últimos años el consumidor local ha experimentado un cambio significativo en sus preferencias de compra surgido de la apertura económica y la globalización del mercado. Este cambio refleja la demanda de productos internacionales a la cual las empresas necesitaron satisfacer las necesidades de los consumidores, **Objetivo:** la presente investigación fue analizar la percepción del consumidor local e influencia en la decisión de compra de bienes procedentes de China. **Metodología:** implementada fue de enfoque cuantitativo de tipo descriptivo, donde se diseñó y validó un cuestionario con preguntas cerradas valoradas en una escala Likert dirigida a (109) importadores locales, los datos fueron analizados por el software SPSS versión 29 para garantizar su viabilidad y confiabilidad, **Resultados:** los hallazgos evidencian que el comportamiento en el proceso de compra depende de preferencias, motivaciones y tendencias de consumo, **Conclusiones:** la existencia de factores que influyen en la percepción y decisión de compra respecto a los bienes elaborados en china relacionadas con la calidad y la preexistencia de experiencias de otros consumidores en el comercio internacional.

**Palabras clave:** *China; Comercio internacional; Consumidor; Decisión de compra; Influencia; Percepción.*

Clasificación JEL: M16, M30, M31, F20

## Introduction

Over the years, there has been a commercial and diplomatic relationship between China and Colombia which has allowed a flow of Chinese goods in the local Colombian market; however, challenges have arisen in terms of unfair competition and protection of the local industry, leading to ethnocentrism regarding the perception of the local consumer towards products from Chinese origin, resulting in the implementation of trade protection policies, which is evident in the imposition of tariff barriers and restrictions on Chinese goods. Studies on international marketing have demonstrated a relevant aspect of consumer perception at the time of purchase that affects the competitiveness of the markets (Bustamante Matoma, Sánchez Méndez & Agudelo Ruiz, 2022).

Due to the above, the relevance of delving into the real needs and desires of consumers which allows entrepreneurs to generate significant experiences before, during and after the purchasing process, thus influencing the behavior and habits of the consumer in the different markets at the international level; this was called by Barrera et al. (2022) 'consumer neuroscience' on the stimuli at the time of making a purchase decision. The latter with the intention of identifying opportunities for improvement in the goods offered in global trade in anticipation of the future needs of consumers.

Actually, the objective of this research was to analyze the local consumer's perception and influence on the purchase decision of goods from China. Likewise, in the Colombian case, imports of Chinese goods have led to generating tension in the products that are negotiated, which directly impacts the trade balance in multiple productive sectors, realizing the magnitude of understanding the realities that local consumers face and having to adapt to market demands and trends (Bustamante Matoma, Sánchez Méndez, Agudelo Ruiz & Merchán, 2022). Therefore, this scenario brings with it challenges that local and international entrepreneurs must assume to promote economic development through competitive strategies to remain in the market. This is explained by Ayala et al. (2022), the development of tactical marketing plans as an added value of their competition, which implies guaranteeing consumer demands, including technological advances, improving customer expectations, which translates into a greater added value for organizations.

Consequently, the commercial relationship between Colombia and China consists of a scenario of mercantilism, presenting a path of economic opportunities for both nations, framing a learning object defined by market studies in the business sector (Jeong & Lee, 2021).

Within this context, emerges an understanding on which the problem arises when identifying variables that alter and influence the local consumer at the time of purchase of imported goods from the Chinese market and their expectations related to price quality. Therefore, this research aims to answer the question: What are the perspectives of the local consumer and influence on the decision to purchase Chinese goods? In this regard, it is necessary to understand bilateral relations as trade agreements between China and Colombia and finally to establish the notions of local consumers of imported goods. This article has 5 sections, as follows: introduction, theoretical framework, methodology, results and discussion, and finally conclusions.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Over time, consumer perception has evolved drastically due to various factors such as the advancement of technology, access to instant information and globalization. These changes have led consumers to become more demanding and more informed about the products and services they purchase. Furthermore, as the years go by, aspects such as sustainability, corporate social responsibility and the purchasing experience in general become more relevant. Taking the above into account, this section presents relevant aspects of the reference framework that supports this study.

### ***NEOCLASSICAL CONSUMER THEORY***

The neoclassical theory of the consumer emerges as an economic theory which focuses on the perception of the consumer as an indispensable axis in the decision-making process in the purchase, maximizing their satisfaction. This premise provides the cost-benefit relationship that consumers have before making a decision (Gallegos-Daniel & Taddei Bringas, 2022).

Moreover, this assertion is further supported by Thaler (1980), who describes consumers' responsibility to engage with economic theory by exercising self-control through information-seeking, and how these perceptions influence the decision-making process when satisfying their preferences. In pursuit of this objective, marketing strategies are directed.

In this way, the diversity of variables that affect the perception of goods and services is observed; In this way, the diversity of variables that affect the perception of goods and services is observed. This research is based on what Chilán Regalado (2022), about the optimization of resources for the acquisition of goods and services efficiently taking into account quality, price, as consumer satisfaction according to their preferences.

This formulation has enabled to recognize the significance of considering the desires and needs of each consumer within their local and international context, thereby achieving a balance for responsible and sustainable consumption (Hartley-Ballester, 2021).

### ***CONSUMER PURCHASING DECISION PROCESS***

The consumer's purchasing decision process is a one that seeks to respond precisely to their desires or needs. Likewise, this process must be supported by the tastes, trends and demands of the market, as well as the notions of consumer expectations; Gonzales Sulla (2021), supports this idea, expressing that the market dynamics with largely informed and demanding consumers as a result of globalization and inclusion of the digital transformation in society. However, organizations must consider the stimulus in the purchasing decision to generate ties between the organization and customers.

Likewise, according to Ávila Castañeda & Chaparro Guevara (2021), marketing is a process of exchange between buying and selling by measuring the purchasing process that includes the recognition of the need, the collection of information, the evaluation of alternatives, decision making, and finally the post-sales moment to effectively achieve consumer satisfaction. This is due to market segmen-

tation and the generation of value that contribute to both consumers and organizations managing long-lasting relationships, obtaining a balance with sustainable goods (Hein, 2022).

Adding to the above, the consumer in the purchasing process, for Gonzales Sulla (2021), ratifies the relevance of the brand's reputation as a variable in the final decision making at the time of making the purchase, because the consumer will take into account factors suggested in the value proposition. In the case of international trade, trust must be generated in one's own and foreign markets, in that sense the country brand image influences the comparative advantages and specific productive sectors that affect the purchasing decision of the consumers (da Silva et al., 2010).

Furthermore, for Camacho et al. (2020), the effect of xenocentrism in local consumers of imported goods on the perception of quality arises, widely discussed in the specialized literature of both ethnocentrism and xenocentrism and their role in the scenario of local economic development.

### ***COLOMBIA – CHINA TRADE RELATIONS***

Trade relations between Colombia and China have experienced a significant change, with China being one of the main trading partners in terms of exports and imports, marked by bilateral relations of diplomacy; for Ahcar Olmos & Osorio Medina (2008), this confirms that these trade relations have been increasingly seen as a sign of the potential of the economies to meet the needs of the consumers of both nations. Therefore, the perception of local and foreign consumers is relevant and it is used as a tool that has promoted commercial exchange and bilateral relations. However, the outlook for Torres Rojas (2021), is that Colombian foreign policy must be strengthened with the Asia-Pacific area thanks to its privileged position in the Pacific Ocean, as it reflects a reduced interaction with Asian markets, having in mind that I can compete on equal terms with added value, innovation and research in goods and services offered to other countries.

Furthermore, the above context reflects on the evolution of cross-border trade based on the premise of new ways to strengthen international trade relations, taking advantage of cooperation and integration agreements of technology, science and sustainable development to compete, contributing to optimal and varied scenarios for the consumer, opening doors to new markets (Paipa Bolaños, 2021).

On the other hand, according to Ortiz-Zarco et al. (2019), they suggest trade asymmetries of the member countries of the Pacific Alliance with China which can cause damage to Latin American economies, which envisions strategic approaches for trade exchange.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This research process is framed into a quantitative approach, allowing numerical data for statistical processing such as obtaining measurable results (Muñoz Cuchca & Solís Trujillo, 2021), the research was of a non-experimental nature through a descriptive scope, achieving a scope of the per-

ception of Colombian consumers on imported Chinese goods and their influence on the purchasing process. Regarding the methodological design used, it was deductive, which starts from the general and progresses to the particular, as referenced by Espinoza-Freire (2023), starting from a logical sequence from the analysis of the purchasing process to the identification of variables that influence the decision making. The data collection technique implemented was through a closed questionnaire evaluated under a Likert scale parameterization, made of 3 dimensions: product quality, negotiation with suppliers, brand image. It was applied to local importers under a non-probabilistic convenience sampling. 99 local importers. For the analysis of the data, they were processed by the SPSS software version 29 through the Cronbach's Alpha reliability test of .907, which guarantees the validity and supports the results.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For the Colombian market, China represents a commercial power with a wide variety of products, exposing challenges for entrepreneurs, government and local consumers, and thus affecting economic viability. According to Pérez Martínez et al. (2023), this relationship with China represents implications for productive units due to the drastic change in production, since greater inputs are required to carry out global trade; In this way, opportunities for improvement are presented in terms of cultural adaptation, competitiveness and international standards to identify and address the needs of the Chinese community by the business sector in Colombia. The list below breaks down the main goods exported to the Chinese market during 2022. (See table 1).

**Table 1.**

*Main goods exported to China 2022*

Tariff Heading	Description	Value
2709000000	Crude petroleum or bituminous mineral oils.	2.577.762.742,93
7202600000	Ferronickel.	258.308.683,22
2701120010	Thermal coal.	192.405.545,63
2603000000	Copper ores and concentrates.	91.227.986,87
7404000010	Copper waste and scrap, with a weight content equal to or greater than 94% copper.	87.364.450,14
2713110000	Non Calcined petroleum coke.	82.980.270,80
0901119000	Other unroasted, undecaffeinated coffees.	47.277.120,16
2701120090	Other bituminous coal.	47.267.231,66
2616901000	Gold minerals and their concentrates.	34.886.003,32
7404000090	Other waste and scrap of copper.	30.439.186,55

*Note:* Sistema de Inteligencia Comercial de Legiscomex (2022)

According to the previous table, the Colombian national territory supplies commodities to the Asian country, representing a great opportunity given its comparative advantages, among which stands out; crude petroleum or bituminous mineral oils with tariff heading 2709000000 with a value of \$2,577,762,742.93, followed by Ferronickel under tariff heading 7202600000 with an amount of \$258,308,683.22. From these data, it can be inferred that the country has a great capacity to export raw materials, presenting a high value in the Asian market. Thus, for Escobar-Espinoza & Romero-Torres (2020), this represents an evolution of foreign trade, facilitating the circulation of goods and services as a source of economic development for Colombia. On the other hand, the panorama of imports of the national territory from China during 2022 is presented below. (See table 2).

**Table 2.**  
*Main goods imported from China*

Tariff Heading	Description	Value
8517120000	Mobile phones (cell phones) and those on other wireless networks.	1.465.888.627,95
8471300000	Automatic machines for data treatment or processing. Laptops, weighing less than or equal to 10 kg, consisting of at least a central processing unit, a keyboard and a display.	910.804.760,35
8517622000	Carrier current telecommunications devices or digital telecommunications.	338.044.409,87
7225500090	Other flat-rolled products of other alloy steel, of a width greater than or equal to 600 mm, simply cold-rolled.	246.120.281,13
9801100000	Motorcycles with a cylinder capacity less than or equal to 185 cm <sup>3</sup> .	212.199.147,73
8541401000	Photovoltaic cells assembled in modules or panels.	141.475.749,41
4011101000	New radial rubber tires (pneumatic rims) of a kind used on passenger cars (including station wagons and racing cars).	116.333.660,32
8471490000	Other automatic machines for data processing or processing, presented in the form of systems.	113.709.042,81
8529909010	LCD or plasma liquid crystal panels	96.400.341,94
4011201000	New radial rubber tires (pneumatic tires) of the type used on buses or trucks.	94.317.168,99

*Note:* Sistema de Inteligencia Comercial de Legiscomex (2022)

As stated in the previous table, Colombia carries out the process of purchasing finished goods that includes the process of transformation and generation of added value in China, directly affecting the trade balance between both nations. Among the imported goods, there are; Mobile phones (cell phones) and those of other wireless networks with their tariff item 8517120000, with a value of \$1,465,888,627.95. Likewise, there are automatic machines for data processing or processing, portable, weighing less than or equal to 10 kg, which consist of at least a central processing unit, a keyboard and a visu with heading 8471300000 with an amount of \$910,804,760.35. This shows a high purchase of technology and electronic products for local consumers, this is reaffirmed by Licona et al., (2019) who state that economic and commercial integration must be promoted to increase trade and investment.

In regards to the questionnaire that was applied, out of the total sample under study (109), 54.5%

were male while 45.5% were female, 58.2% were between 31 and 45 years old. Below is a summary of the data processing obtained by SPSS. (See table 3).

**Table 3.**  
*Data processing*

Case Processing Summary			
		N	%
Case	Valid	109	100,0
	Excluded	0	,0
	Total	109	100,0

**a. List elimination is based on all variables in the procedure.**

*Note:* Authors' own elaboration (2024).

According to the previous table, it is evident that the total (109) of the collected data by the participants were valid, none were excluded. Likewise, to guarantee the viability of the questionnaire, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was interpreted, which according to Ponce Renova et al. (2021) express that it estimates a percentage of error in the result of a test; similarly, an Alpha close to 1.0. indicates good reliability of the test. (See table 4).

**Table 4.**  
*Cronbach's alpha reliability test*

Reliability statistics		
Alpha of Cronbach	Alpha of Cronbach based on standardized items	number of elements
,907	,906	15

*Note:* Authors' own elaboration (2024).

The result of (.907) obtained is considered an excellent result to measure the perceptions of the local consumer in the decision to purchase Chinese goods. A total of (15) questions were delved into, valued in a range of 1-5 using the following categories: completely disagree; quite disagree; neither disagree, nor agree; quite agree; completely agree. (See table 5).

**Table 5.**  
*Results for each of the questions*

ITEM	(1) Completely disagree	(2) quite disagree	(3) neither disagree, nor agree	(4) Quite agree	(5) Completely agree
1. How would you rate the quality of the Chinese product compared to other similar products in the local market?	4	7	40	51	7
2. How satisfied are you with the quality of the Chinese product you purchased?	3	6	24	36	40

ITEM	(1) Completely disagree	(2) quite disagree	(3) neither disagree, nor agree	(4) Quite agree	(5) Completely agree
3. How important is the quality of the Chinese product to you when making a purchase?	4	4	30	49	22
4. Would you recommend the Chinese product to other people based on its quality?	3	6	15	35	50
5. Would you be willing to pay a higher price for a higher quality Chinese product compared to other similar products in the local market?	6	9	17	28	49
6. How satisfied are you with the waiting time when purchasing a product of Chinese origin?	4	7	22	57	19
7. How would you rate the ability of Chinese suppliers to resolve product or delivery related issues?	5	5	30	54	15
8. Please quick your level of agreement with the question: How often do you receive timely and helpful assistance when purchasing products of Chinese origin?	4	6	52	36	11
9. Please pick your level of agreement with the question: Do products imported from China respond to market demand?	4	8	29	50	18
10. Please pick your level of agreement with the question: How often have you experienced delays in the delivery of Chinese products?	4	5	30	57	13
11. Do you believe the country's trade agreements are decisive when purchasing merchandise?	3	8	16	61	21
12. Brand image influences my purchasing decision for Chinese products.	7	5	12	57	28
13. The warranty offered by Chinese brands is an important factor in my purchasing decision.	3	6	20	43	37
14. The perception of Chinese products has improved, demonstrating innovation and technological advances in recent years.	4	2	16	42	45
15. The opinion of other customers about Chinese products influences my purchasing decision.	4	5	14	36	50

*Note:* Authors' own elaboration. (2024).



Among the findings, it is evident in the previous table that the scales with the highest rating in each of the questions correspond to: (3) Neither disagree nor agree, (4) quite agree and (5) Completely agree. This mostly represents that local consumers are satisfied with the Asian products. According to the quality of the goods imported by the sample, question number 1, 51 of the participants which represent 46.79% indicated that they quite agree with the perception of the quality received. Similarly, with regard to the question 3, 49 of the participants consider quality as influential in the purchasing process; It can be inferred that goods imported into the national territory are valued by their benefit-quality relationship. This is reaffirmed by Valenzuela-Pérez et al. (2021) who express that if organizations fulfill their promise of value to customers and consumers such as: promises in deliveries, provision of good service, competitive prices, this can generate greater satisfaction in making the purchase decision. In this sense, for Bustamante Matoma & Agudelo Ruiz (2024) they analyze the migration policies and bilateral relations between Colombia and China exposing a strengthening in terms of diplomacy, cultural and commercial exchange highlighting local conditions and opportunities in integration.

Moreover, when analyzing the negotiation with suppliers, question 8, with 52 participants representing 47.71% state that they neither disagree nor agree with the technical assistance of imported goods. Likewise, question 10, 57 participants, equivalent to 52.29% of the total sample, highlight that they are quite in agreement that there have been delays in orders placed in the Chinese market; This implies that there are opportunities to improve for organizations in customer services and after-sales to strengthen commercial relations between both nations. According to Ordoñez & Zaldumbide (2020), good relationships and service with clients, consumers and suppliers generate competitive advantages to increase their commercial activity.

Finally, in regards to the image of the brand as an influence on the process of purchasing Chinese goods, the findings show that question 12, with 57 participants which is 52.29% of the answers, represent that they are quite in agreement with the ideas that the image of the brand influences the purchasing decision making. Question 15, with 50 records representing 45.87%, people state that they feel influenced by the opinions of previous consumers; for Pérez Martínez et al. (2023), marketing strategies influence the purchasing decision of the target audience. Finally, the summary of the scale statistics of the processing of the results is presented. (See table 6).

**Table 6.**  
*Scale Statistics Summary*

Reliability statistics			
Average	Variance	Standard deviation	Number of elements
57,19	94,268	9,709	15

*Note:* Authors' own elaboration (2024).

Additionally, the data present an average of 57.19 and a standard deviation of 9.709 of the total of 15 elements; Therefore, these data suggest that most values are close to the average, however some may vary by a relatively high standard deviation.

## CONCLUSIONS

In Colombia, there is a great discussion about a growing interest in strengthening commercial relations with the People's Republic of China; On the one hand, it refers to commercial opportunities for entrepreneurs in the national territory, and on the other, it refers to challenges for local entrepreneurs to compete in international markets for economic development. It is here where the fulfillment of the objective proposed in this research lies and it allows identifying the perspectives of local consumers on the goods imported from the aforementioned country, with the purpose of providing an overview of the acceptance between supply and demand of the national market and the factors taken into account that influence the consumer purchasing process to address commercial strategies that satisfy the needs, tastes and preferences of consumers, as well as increasing their competitiveness in global markets.

In general, this research identified 3 perspectives of local consumers; among these: quality, management with suppliers, brand image as an influence on the purchasing process. In relation to the first perspective about quality, notions have changed, perceiving more elaborate goods that include technology processes for quality assurance. Likewise, in reference to the second, opportunities for improvement were presented in customer service; for example, physical distribution to improve the delivery of goods by international suppliers as after-sales support. Finally, about the third one, local consumers expressed greater confidence in recognized or widely structured brands with marketing strategies as an influence on the purchase decision.

Therefore, the relationship between Colombia and China in terms of trade presents important challenges and opportunities for Colombian businessmen, the government and consumers, affecting the economic viability of the country. China's commercial power exposes a wide range of products, which requires Colombian companies to adapt culturally, competitively and in terms of international standards to meet the needs of the Chinese community in Colombia. The main products exported to China in (2022) include crude oil, ferronickel, coal, copper, coke and coffee, among others, representing an important opportunity for Colombia due to its comparative advantages.

Finally, the results of the survey indicate that there are opportunities for improvement in the areas of technical assistance and delivery times of imported products. With 47.71% of participants neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the level of technical assistance provided, and 52.29% reporting delays in their orders from the Chinese market, it is clear that there is room for improvement in customer service and after-sales support to strengthen trade relations between the two nations. In addition, the importance of brand image and consumer opinions in the purchasing decision making process highlights the potential impact of marketing strategies on consumer behavior.

To conclude, a limitation of the present study worth highlighting was the representativeness of the population under study since the size of the sample was not what was expected. Future studies are suggested based on this presentation on the commercial relations between both nations.

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