

A STUDY ON CONSUMERS' PERCEPTION ABOUT CHINESE PRODUCTS AND THEIR WILLINGNESS TO BUY

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, the People's Republic of China has become a huge centre of manufacture. Many of the products circulating in global markets are manufactured by China. Such products, which reach very big sizes in quantity, can be bought for very fair prices. Involving a range of many different prices and qualities, Chinese products are used by consumers in conscious or unconscious ways. The purpose of this study is to determine the general opinion, attitude and behaviour of consumers regarding Chinese products that are widely used in our day. The influence of the country of origin on buying behaviour is also addressed by the study. For this purpose, a questionnaire was administered to 319 consumers. A frequency percentage analysis was used to assess the data collected, and the t-test, variance analysis and cross tabulation were utilised to study the approach towards Chinese products by the participants according to their characteristics. The results showed that a majority of consumers have a negative attitude against Chinese products, that they do not want to buy these products, and that country of origin has a significant influence on their buying preference.

Keywords: Country of origin, Chinese products, Made in China.

INTRODUCTION

Trade volume is growing every day in the globalising world. This growth in economy influences businesses, increasing the importance of macro environmental factors. In this new period, businesses face greater competition and they adjust their activities to this new situation. Consumers, on the other hand, get better quality products and services for a fair price in the globalising world and they get what they demand faster. This commercial environment that evolves constantly in favour of consumers strains businesses in terms of competitiveness. Businesses have started to produce their products abroad in order to manufacture high quality cheaply. In this way, companies are trying to achieve cost advantage. Beginning to expand to international markets, and attach importance to free market especially after 1980s, China has become the first country that businesses turn to for achieving cost advantage. Many companies around the world have shifted their production to China. Besides, counterfeit products that find ample place in the Chinese market have begun to spread to world markets. With the 21st century, the production of both the highest-quality brands and also the worst quality products in the market has begun to take place in China. This situation has influenced consumers' attitude towards Chinese products. In general, products made in China are approached negatively by people (Andersson, 2015: 81). However, the fact that the most valuable brands of the world are also manufactured in China leads to confusion among consumers.

The main purpose of the study was to determine the attitudes of consumers towards products originated or made in China, and to understand the influence of the country of origin on consumers. How demographic factors shape the perception of brand and country image is another subject that is addressed by the study.

In this context, the perspectives of consumers about Chinese products were examined. Especially the relation between brand value and the image of country of origin was dealt with. The approach of consumers towards products originated or made in China was analysed through cross tabulations.

CONCEPTUAL FRAME AND LITERATURE SEARCH

Today, companies are in a race to produce quality products at low costs in order to get a good place in the market. Although the competition for low price seems to be advantageous for consumers, it comes at the expense of compromises in quality, which in turn bothers the customer. In particular, the products that global brands manufacture outside their own countries are perceived to be of inferior quality. This makes a product's country of origin important. The country of origin is defined as "the country which a brand belongs to as perceived by its customers", "the homeland of a company", or "the country to which a brand belongs" (Akın, et al., 2009: 491, Öztürk and Çakır, 2015: 325). Production origin, on the other hand, identifies the country in which a given product is actually manufactured. Therefore, the country of origin and production origin are different concepts. So, production origin is used to identify where a product is manufactured regardless of the country which a given brand belongs to. For example, Apple belongs to the USA as its country of origin although China is its main production origin.

The price-quality perception of consumers may vary according to the country of origin and production origin. The influence of the country of origin on consumer preferences is not new. In order to punish Germany, which had been defeated as a result of World War I, and to ensure that its products could be sold more difficultly in the European market, the Allied Powers made it mandatory to mark the expression “Made in Germany” on products originated in Germany. This turned out to favour Germany in the following years as products of German origin began to be perceived as more valuable on the market over time (Senir, 2014: 52-53). It is not easy to determine the origin of any product in our time when the borders are vanishing and production has spread all over the world. This is because products pass through many different stages of production until they are launched in the market (Bozkurt, 2011: 149).

Products produced by various countries are generalised by consumers according to their strengths and weaknesses. If consumers have positive opinions about a country, they will approach positively to all the products produced by that country, otherwise they will perceive all the products of that country to be of poor quality (Bahar, 2011: 41). In both cases, consumers are influenced by the country of origin in the process of buying. The reasons for the influence of the country of origin on the consumer decision process are listed below (İşler, 2013: 99):

- i. Along with the increasing globalisation, consumers perceive brand name and origin as a quality indicator.
- ii. Information on the country of origin is perceived by consumers as a standardisation indicator and is regarded as a feature that distinguishes a product from others.
- iii. Information on the country of origin and brand name provide marketing advantages to some international businesses when entering a new market.
- iv. As a result of globalisation, consumers have begun to have positive feelings about foreign products.

Consumers who do not have any information about a certain product check the origin of the product to decide if the product they buy is of good quality. For instance, a Korean brand they have never heard of can be perceived as a technological and durable product just because of the country of origin. Besides, country images can also change according to different product categories. While Japanese technology products are perceived to be high quality by consumers, Japanese food products can be assumed to be low quality, for example. In addition, some countries are recognised as more specialised about certain products. Hence, French perfumes and German cars are perceived as better (Arı ve Madran, 2011: 17). Therefore, the influence of the country of origin has become an important brand component that can be used in international competition. Marketers interested in creating global brands need to carefully examine the positive and negative aspects of the country of origin influence (<http://economist.com>, 2013).

Today, many brands are produced at different places from their origin. Apple, for instance, have most of its assemblies made in China, and it uses 30 different countries as suppliers (<http://mertbulan.com>, 2016). Sony,

a Japanese company, has its products manufactured in Singapore due to cost advantage. Therefore, although the country of origin and the place of production have different meanings, many consumers evaluate product quality based on the country of origin and do not know the region where products are produced. According to a study carried out in 1996, only 8% of consumers knew that Volkswagen Fox was manufactured in Brazil. Most of the participants of the study believed that this car model was manufactured in Germany (Ari, 2007: 8).

Countries' development levels can also be influential in consumer preferences. The products exported by countries which are considered to be developed are perceived to be higher quality, while the products of underdeveloped or developing countries are approached with a more negative view by people (Khanna, 1986, pp. 29-38). From this point of view, the country of origin influence means a cognitive process that shows the attitudes of people towards producer countries. These beliefs include negative factors such as prejudices, stereotypical behaviour, and distrust, or positive attitudes such as confidence, trust, and faith (Erickson et al., 1984: 694-699). Some studies on the influence of country of origin analysed the emotional and symbolic behaviour patterns that consumers display in the process of product evaluation such as nationalism, national culture, pride, status, etc. (Verlegh and Steenkamp, 1999: 521-546). So, product evaluation by consumers is not always related to product performance. The term "consumer ethnocentrism" as used especially in the marketing literature means that when people evaluate any product, they pay attention to the country in which it is produced and prefer products made in their own country (Shimp, 1984: 285-290). In this sense, consumer ethnocentrism can be explained as the tendency of people to prefer to buy domestic products. Consumers with a lower tendency of ethnocentrism attach more importance to the price of products and value of use, while those with a higher tendency assign more value to the origin of products (Han, 1989: 222-299, Güngör, 2016: 43). Consumers with a high ethnocentrism tend to think that buying imported goods will harm their country, weaken the economy, cause unemployment and that they would be betraying their countries in a sense. According to this approach, the origin of products gains importance, and the preference for domestic products increases (Yoo and Donthu, 2005: 12).

In the Turkish marketing literature, there are many studies examining the influence of the country of origin on consumers. According to a study carried out by Nart in 2008, English consumers tend to prefer German products to Turkish products. The country of origin has a significant influence on this preference. In a study by Çakır (2009), the concepts of country origin and production origin were compared and it was concluded with that production origin had a more significant influence on consumers. This is why Çakır (2009) claimed that "Made in Turkey" emphasis could be a more effective marketing method than the "One hundred percent domestic production" motto. According to a study by Cengiz (2009), the country of origin makes a significant influence on buying behaviour. When Turkish consumers are to choose between import and domestic products, they decide according to product quality, price and brand rather than origin. Armağan and Gürsoy (2011) investigated consumer ethnocentrism in four different product categories, and concluded that this attitude may vary depending on demographic factors. In their study on Bulgarian consumers, Yılmaz et al.

(2013) suggest that emotional components have an important place in the country of origin influence. Some political disagreements between Bulgaria and Turkey in the past years have led Bulgarian consumers to assume a negative attitude towards Turkish products. In 2015, Öztürk and Çakır made a study on Turkish consumers and concluded that the people prefer domestic or foreign products independently of the image of Turkey. According to another study carried out by Toksarı and Senir (2015), consumers believe that technical products they buy should belong to a developed country. In the same study, those consumers who believed that a brand is an indicator of the country of origin decided by considering the country of origin in their buying decisions.

Although China's rapid growth is one of the most important economic facts of our time, the fact that the country has a growth rate of around 10% in the manufacturing sector (except for some periods) is an ongoing situation for almost 100 years. Therefore, it is not enough to look only at recent years to understand China's economic growth (Brandt et al., 2016: 2). The planned economy, which started in the time of Mao Zedong (1893-1976), the founder of the People's Republic of China, raised the GDP for a certain period of time. After Mao's death, the State began to switch to the "Socialist market economy" from 1978 onwards. During this period, China continued to grow. Attaching importance to growth especially after 2003, the nation has become an important production centre by achieving an average annual growth rate of around 10% despite the economic stagnation that was suffered in almost all parts of the world (<https://tr.wikipedia.org>, 2016).

Today, China has become the factory of the globalising world. The most important reason for this is undoubtedly the low production costs. While the average hourly wage for an individual working in the manufacturing sector in China is \$2.1, the average hourly wage for a worker in the same sector in the US is \$35.7 (<http://www.dunya.com>, 2016). Many brands have shifted their production to China for this reason. Due to low costs and counterfeit products entering the market in the past, consumers perceived Chinese products to be poor quality. However, since the country of origin and the production place are different concepts, the fact that any product is manufactured in China does not mean that it is a brand of Chinese origin. Iphone cell phones, for example, are manufactured largely in China and it is stated on the back of the phones, "Designed by Apple in California. Assembled in China". Apple is a company of US origin. The phone's parts are produced in 14 different factories in China (<http://mertbulan.com>, 2016). The fact that its production is made in China does not mean that Iphone is of poor quality, and consumers do not have such a perception either. In this case, the brand value of the product reduces the influence of the country of origin (Karanfil, 2015: 244). However, the "Made in China" label is generally associated with cheap, poor quality, flimsy products by people. For example, an Italian furniture company produced its products in China and suffered a great loss from it. Although the Italian furniture sector is leading in the world, the production in China gave consumers the impression that the products were of Chinese origin. If companies are producing in China, it is certainly necessary for them to specify the brand's homeland. Otherwise, the "Made in China" label can be damaging for firms (Tuzcuoğlu, 2012: 33). Additionally, businesses of Chinese origin have begun to take their place among the most important brands in the world today. Forbes' "The World's 25 Most

Valuable Companies" rank seven companies based in China (<http://www.forbes.com>, 2016). Moreover, the Chinese government has implemented the "Made in China 2025" strategy to dissipate the negative impression created by Chinese goods on global consumers and to change the consumer perception. According to the plan, in the coming years, China will try to increase trust in Chinese products by launching innovative and qualified products (<http://turkish.cri.cn>, 2016).

Some of the studies carried out abroad are concerned with how consumers perceive Chinese products. According to a study by Schniederjans et al. (2011), consumers perceive products of Chinese origin to be of lesser quality than others. According to the same study, the average quality of Chinese products is scored 2 out of 10 (Khan and Ahmed, 2012: 121). Only 17% of consumers in the US are interested in products imported from China. The main reason for this low interest is the low quality values of Chinese brands. Also, the label "Made in China" damage products (Ulgado et al 2011: 3). Wang, and Gao (2010) reported that European consumers mind the brand name more than the "Made in China" label and consider this when they evaluate a product. In the same study, many consumers did not recognise Chinese brands. According to another study in the US, 65% of consumers tend to buy Chinese products less frequently. Moreover, 12% of these consumers had not ever bought any Chinese goods (Shen, 2012: 10).

As in many parts of the world, products made in China constitute a significant portion of the market in Turkey as well. According to a study carried out by the Ankara Chamber of Commerce, 50% of the technological products, 80% of the mobile phone accessories, 100% of the leathercraft products, 80% of the toys, 50% of the computers, 50% of the ready-to-wear products, 80% of the medical equipment, 50% for medical equipment, 30% of the stationery products and 20% of the souvenir products sold in the market are made in China and this rate is increasing day by day. According to Chinese manufacturers, the reason for the perceived poor quality of Chinese products in Turkey is Turkish importers. According to them, Turkish importers lean towards the cheapest products in China and launch the cheapest products in the Chinese market to the Turkish market in order to make profits up to 300% (Nacaroglu, 2008: 163).

Although there are many economic and commercial studies on China that were conducted in Turkey, very few studies are available on how Turkish consumers perceive Chinese products. In the study carried out by Kurtuluş and Bozbay (2008), the influence of country of origin and brand quality on consumer preferences was examined. According to the results, in the case the brands that were perceived to be high quality were produced in a developed country, then they were readily preferred by people. In the case the same product was also produced in China, consumers stated that they could buy that product. However, the willingness to buy is not as high as in the case of a developed country. In a study by Develi (2010), the approach of Turkish consumers towards German and Chinese products was examined. According to the results obtained, consumers' attitudes towards Chinese products began to change. While German products are considered to be more valuable, 48% of the participants said they could buy Chinese products as well. In another study by Kurtuluş and Bozbay (2011), China and Japan were compared in terms of country images. According to the

results of the study, consumers believe that Japan possesses a more positive value than China in terms of product quality perception and country image.

METHOD

Research Methodology

This research, which attempted to determine consumer approaches towards Chinese products, is a positivist research due to such reasons as adoption of the deductive method, use of quantitative data, and performance of objective evaluations. It is also a questionnaire survey as it implemented a questionnaire on users (Altunışık et al., 2010: 62-70).

Research Purpose, Scope and Limitations

The competition increasing in parallel to globalisation has begun to encompass all product-related processes. In addition to the classic marketing mix elements, international trade has made the images of the countries where products are produced important in brand choice. Known as the country of origin influence, this situation influences consumers in many aspects from brand awareness to brand value. One of the most important commercial events of our time is that China emerges as a big producer on the world stage and Chinese products spread to all markets. This rapidly developing process has enabled the China brand to reach consumers effectively. However, the rapid spread of Chinese products that were not known much in the past years, the cheap labour and low quality replacement products have raised question marks people's minds about Chinese products.

The current study examined the influence of the country of origin on purchasing behaviour and especially addressed the attitudes of consumers towards Chinese products. Other goals of the study were to determine the attitudes of questionnaire respondents towards Chinese products and their awareness of Chinese brands. In this context, a questionnaire was administered to 319 people living in Turkey.

Limitations of the study include the fact that the questionnaire was administered only to 319 people, that it failed to provide sufficient questions by product category, and that sufficient comparisons by brands were not made.

Sample

The "Convenience Sampling Method" was applied as sampling method in the research. When determining the sample size, the sampling formula which is used for quantitative variables and considered for unlimited populations or populations of unknown volume was used, and the threshold limit of 300 persons was exceeded (Özdamar, 1999: 260). Thirty-one questionnaires filled in by the participants were excluded for being incomplete or faulty, and 319 questionnaires were analysed.

Data Collection Tools

As a data collection tool, the study utilised the questionnaire method, which is a quantitative method. The 5-point Likert scale was used. The answer categories for the statements in the scale used included (1) I certainly don't agree, (2) I don't agree, (3) I'm hesitant, (4) I agree, and (5) I certainly agree. The questionnaire questions were formulated drawing upon a study by Ulgado, Wen and Lee's (2011) entitled "Country Image and Brand Equity Effects of Chinese Firms and Their Products on Developed-Market Consumer Perceptions". After the questionnaire form was finalised, a pilot application was made on 30 consumers. After the results were evaluated, their reliability and validity were tested, and the questionnaire was created.

The questionnaire consisted of 3 parts in itself. In the first part, the participants were asked a single reminding question about which brands of Chinese origin they remembered. In the second part, the attitudes of the respondents towards Chinese products were examined in terms of the brand / place of production relation, and 11 questions were directed to them in this context. In the last part, there were 7 questions about the participants' demographics. A total of 19 questions were asked in the questionnaire.

Research Questions

Consumption of Chinese products, which have become an important part of international trade, is increasing day by day. The positive and negative experiences of their users have spread by word of mouth and resulted in a general opinion among consumers about Chinese products. Although products of Chinese origin and products produced in China are different concepts, "Made in China" has become a general qualification among the participants as a certain quality / price indicator (Karanfil, 2015: 243). Therefore, the concept of "Made in China" indicates not a brand's country of origin but its place of production. The attitude towards goods made in China can be considered as an indication of the importance that consumers attach to the origin of production. When people choose goods or services, they look at where a given product is produced to understand its quality. Sometimes, this situation influences consumers' decision making and shapes their buying attitude. However, in today's world where many changes occur in all areas, factors such as differences between generations, gender, income status, education, etc. can change consumers' opinions on product origin.

Within the scope of the research, some questions are addressed about how product origin influences the process of consumers' decision-taking on buying. These questions include:

Question 1. Does the origin of production influence the process of consumers' decision-taking on buying?

The first question of the study examines the influence of consumers' attitude towards Chinese products on buying. Today, a great many products are produced in China, and most consumers use these products. So,

the first question is about the reaction of consumers to the label “Made in China” in terms of their willingness to buy.

Question 2. Does the origin of production influence consumers' attitudes towards a product?

In the second research question, the general attitudes of consumers towards Chinese products are examined.

Question 3. Do demographic factors influence consumers' attitudes about the origin of production?

The third research question relates to how demographic factors influence the approach to Chinese products. Thus, answers are sought for questions like “Which demographic factors change or shape attitudes towards Chinese products?” and “What is the predictive value of demographic factors about the approach to Chinese products?”

Data Analysis

The data collected by the questionnaire method in the research were described by calculating frequency-percentage distributions, arithmetic mean, standard deviation values and comparative analyses. Cronbach Alpha Coefficient analysis was used to measure reliability. Analyses were performed with the SPSS 18.0 software.

FINDINGS

Validity and Reliability Analysis

In the reliability analysis, the Alpha Model (Cronbach Alpha Coefficient) calculated by the internal consistency method was taken into consideration. The alpha coefficient is expressed as the average weighted standard deviation obtained by proportioning the total variances of the expression k in the scale to the general variance. When calculating the reliability of the scale, the alpha coefficient is assessed according to the below rating (Özdamar, 1999: 513-522).

$0.00 \leq \alpha < 0.40$ The scale is not reliable,

$0.40 \leq \alpha < 0.60$ Low reliability,

$0.60 \leq \alpha < 0.80$ The scale is reliable,

$0.80 \leq \alpha < 1.00$ The reliability of the scale is high.

According to Table 1, the questionnaire used in the study is a highly reliable scale with 0.80.

Table 1. Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.800	20

Descriptive Information about the Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Table 2 shows the demographic characteristics of the questionnaire participants. According to the table, 53.6% of the participants were male and 46.4% of them were female. Besides, 38.2% of them were in the age range of 20 to 30, and 37.6% of them had an undergraduate or associate degree. The monthly income of about 70% of the participants was less than 2000 TL. The rate of married participants was 61.8% and the rate of singles was 38.2%.

Table 2. The Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

	N	Percentage	Variable	N	Percentage
Gender			Educational Status		
Male	171	53.6	Elem. School	36	11.3
Female	148	46.4	Sec. School	41	12.9
Total	319	100.0	High School	108	33.9
Age			Ugrd./Assoc. Deg.	120	37.6
20 and below	20	6.3	Post Graduate	14	4.4
21-30	122	38.2	Total	319	100.0
31-40	80	25.1	Income Level		
41-50	48	15.0	0-1000	124	38.9
51 and Above	49	15.4	1001-2000	102	32.0
Total	319	100.0	2001-3000	56	17.6
Marital Status			3001-4000	15	4.7
Single	122	38.2	4001 and Above	22	6.9
Married	197	61.8	Total	319	100.0
Total	319	100.0			

The Perceptions and Attitudes of Participants about Chinese Markets

Table 3 shows the participants' recall rates of Chinese brands. According to the table, about 95% of the surveyed people do not remember brands of Chinese origin. This shows that Chinese brands fail to stick to the minds of a large majority of consumers. Lenovo is the most remembered Chinese brand. However, it is known by only 2% of consumers.

Table 3. Recall Rates for Products of Chinese Origin

	Frequency	Percentage
Lenovo	7	2.2
Huawei	1	.3
Chery	3	.9
Chelly	3	.9
Other	3	.9
No answer or Wrong answer	302	94.7
Total	319	100

Table 4 examines the influence of the country of origin where a product is manufactured on consumers' product quality perceptions and buying decisions. To determine this, 3 Chinese brands were identified, and consumers' approaches to these products were investigated.

When Chery automobile, a Chinese brand, is manufactured in the United States, about 43% of consumers would want to buy the car, while only 33% of people would want to buy it when it is produced in China. Likewise, when the Lenovo branded laptop is manufactured in America, about 54% of consumers would want to buy it, compared with 44% when the same product is produced in China. As for the Huawei phone, 39% of consumers would want to buy the product when it is manufactured in the United States, while only 35% prefer the Chinese production phone.

Although it changes depending on the specific product, there is a higher consumer willingness to buy those produced in the US. Brand value and recognition influence the willingness to buy a product. However, the place where Chinese products are produced also influences consumer buying decisions. Thus, the first question of the research, "Does the origin of production influence the process of consumers' decision-taking on buying?" is answered. The origin of production does influence the buying process of consumers.

Table 4. The Influence of the Country in Which a Product Is Produced on the Buying Decision

I would want to buy	I certainly don't agree (%)	I don't agree (%)	I'm hesitant (%)	I agree (%)	I certainly agree (%)	Average	Standard deviation
Chery car produced in the US	13.8	15	28.2	28.8	14.1	3.14	1.241
Huawei phone produced in the US	17.2	16.3	27.9	20.4	18.2	3.06	1.336

Lenovo Laptop produced in the US	12.2	11.9	21.9	30.4	23.5	3.41	1.300
Lenovo Laptop produced in China	19.7	16.3	19.7	28.5	15.7	3.04	1.367
Huawei phone produced in China	24.8	19.1	20.7	21.6	13.8	2.81	1.385
Chery car produced in China	28.2	16.6	22.3	16.6	16.3	2.76	1.436

Table 5 shows the general approach of consumers to Chinese products. According to the table, about 66% of consumers find the products produced in China useless and inferior. Also, 72% of consumers consider products produced in China to be harmful to health. According to these ratios, the most negative attitude of those who participated in the questionnaire towards Chinese products is about health. Approximately 57% of the respondents stated they did not want to buy products made in China. Thus, consumers do not trust Chinese products and find them useless. When the arithmetic averages in the study are evaluated, it is seen that the production origin has an important influence on buying. Accordingly, Table 5 answers another question of the research, "Does the origin of production influence consumers' attitudes towards a product?" As consumers develop an attitude towards a product, they pay attention to its origin, and perceive Chinese products to be of poor quality.

Table 5 shows that a significant part of the participants do not want to buy Chinese products. This result supports Table 4. China, which is the origin of production in the research, has a significant influence on the process of consumers' buying decision.

Table 5. The Perceptions of the Participants about Products Produced in China

Products Produced in China	I certainly don't agree (%)	I don't agree (%)	I'm hesitant (%)	I agree (%)	I certainly agree (%)	Average	Standard deviation
I find them useless.	6.3	11	16.3	30.7	35.7	3.79	1.218
I find them to be of poor quality.	4.7	9.7	17.6	29.2	38.9	3.88	1.169
I think they are harmful in terms of health and safety.	3.4	7.2	17.2	27	45.1	4.03	1.107
I don't want to buy them.	7.8	15.7	19.4	25.7	31.3	3.57	1.289
I don't want to buy them even if they are cheaper	10.7	13.5	21.9	24.1	29.8	3.49	1.327

Comparison of Participants' Attitudes towards Products Produced in China

The study provides comparative tables in order to better understand the influence of the country of origin and to learn about the strength of this influence by demographic factors. These analyses include age, gender, income status, education level, and demographic characteristics such as marital status. According to the results obtained from the study, factors such as age, gender, educational status influence attitudes towards Chinese products, while marital status and income status have no such influence. For this reason, these two variables are not included in the research results.

Table 6 shows the t-test results that compare participants' attitudes towards Chinese products by gender. According to Table 6, the gender of consumers influences their attitudes towards Chinese products. The participation rate in the fourth aspect, "I don't want to buy products produced in China", is higher in males ($\chi=3.75$). In this aspect, there is a statistically significant difference between these two groups ($p = .02 < p = .05$). Accordingly, compared with women, more men do not want to buy Chinese products.

Table 6. The T-Test Results That Compare Participants' Attitudes Towards Chinese Products By Gender

Statements	Gender	n	\bar{X}	s.d.	t	p
Products Produced in China....	Female	148	3.77	1.243	-.327	.743
	Male	171	3.81	1.192		
I find them useless.	Female	148	3.93	1.176	.855	.393
	Male	171	3.82	1.161		
I find them to be of poor quality.	Female	148	4.04	1.127	.065	.948
	Male	171	4.03	1.088		
I think they are harmful in terms of health and safety.	Female	148	3.42	1.332	-2.330	.020
	Male	171	3.75	1.217		
I don't want to buy them.	Female	148	3.47	1.321	-.222	.825
	Male	171	3.51	1.338		

Table 7 contains the results of the variance analysis comparing the participants' opinions on Chinese products by educational status. There is a significant difference in the level of consumer attitudes towards products made in China ($p = .035 < p = .05$). According to the table, the higher the education level, the less the tendency to find products made in China useless. Primary school graduates find Chinese products more useless than all other consumers ($x = 4.36$). Education status also influences the quality perception about Chinese products ($p = .020 < p = .05$). More primary school graduate consumers perceive products made in China to be of inferior quality ($x = 4.50$). As many products that can be considered as reputed brands today are produced in China, educated people's attitudes towards Chinese products can be a little more positive. People with less education have a more negative view of Chinese products. This may be due to the fact that educated people know that many products that can be considered as reputed brands are produced in China.

Table 7. The Results of the Variance Analysis Comparing the Participants' Opinions on Chinese Products by Educational Status

I find Chinese products useless.	N	Average	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	F	Significance
Elem. School	36	4.36	1.073	.179	.878	.035
Sec. School	41	3.80	1.346	.210		
High School	108	3.74	1.218	.117		

Ugrd./Assoc. Deg.	120	3.63	1.188	.108		
Post Graduate	14	3.93	1.141	.305		
Total	319	3.79	1.218	.068		
I find Chinese products to be of poor quality.	N	Average	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	F	Significance
Elem. School	36	4.50	.655	.109		
Sec. School	41	3.83	1.202	.188		
High School	108	3.81	1.185	.114		
Ugrd./Assoc. Deg.	120	3.78	1.212	.111	.010	.020
Post Graduate	14	3.79	1.251	.334		
Total	319	3.88	1.169	.065		

Table 8 is a cross tabulation that compares opinions about the health and safety drawbacks of Chinese products by the age variable. According to the table, compared with other groups, those who are 51-year-old or above find Chinese products to be more objectionable in terms of health (85%). The group which considers these products to be least objectionable is the 31-40 age group (65%). Also when assessed from the viewpoint of all the consumers in all age groups, Chinese products are often considered to be unhealthy.

Table 8. The Cross Tabulation That Compares Opinions about the Health and Safety Drawbacks of Chinese Products by Participant Age

		I Think That Products Produced in China Are Objectionable in Terms of Health and Safety					
		20 Age and Below	21-30	31-40	41-50	51 and Above	Total
I don't agree at all	% in Age	.0%	3.3%	3.8%	4.2%	4.1%	3.4%
I don't agree	% in Age	5.0%	4.1%	13.8%	8.3%	4.1%	7.2%
I'm hesitant	% in Age	20.0%	22.1%	17.5%	14.6%	6.1%	17.2%
I agree	% in Age	40.0%	28.7%	20.0%	29.2%	26.5%	27.0%
I completely agree	% in Age	35.0%	41.8%	45.0%	43.8%	59.2%	45.1%
Total	% in Age	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 9 shows a cross tabulation that compares the willingness to buy Chinese products by age. According to the table, 65% of the consumers in the age range of 0 to 20 do not want to buy Chinese products even if they are cheaper. The fact that this group, which is called Generation Z (<http://www.acikbilim.com>, 2013), attaches importance to brands and that they are more sensitive about their personal image might have

distanced them from Chinese products. It is seen when the table is examined in general, however, that people in all age groups display a negative attitude towards Chinese products.

Table 9. The Cross Tabulation that Compares the Willingness to Buy Chinese Products by Age

		I don't want to buy products produced in China even if they are cheaper.					
		20 Age and Below	21-30	31-40	41-50	51 and Above	Total
I don't agree at all	% in Age	.0%	11.5%	7.5%	14.6%	14.3%	10.7%
I don't agree	% in Age	15.0%	17.2%	16.3%	8.3%	4.1%	13.5%
I'm hesitant	% in Age	20.0%	20.5%	16.3%	29.2%	28.6%	21.9%
I agree	% in Age	40.0%	19.7%	26.3%	29.2%	20.4%	24.1%
I completely agree	% in Age	25.0%	31.1%	33.8%	18.8%	32.7%	29.8%
Total	% in Age	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 10 shows the willingness to buy Iphone branded phones produced in China by consumer age groups. According to Table 10, about 37% of consumers want to buy an Iphone phone even if it is produced in China. This ratio can be seen as a little low when the brand value of Iphone cell phones is considered. The consumers between the ages of 0 and 20 want to purchase the Iphone phone produced in China the least (30%). The group that wants to buy it the most is those aged 51 and over (41%). When Tables 9 and 10 are evaluated together, it is seen that especially younger people have a more negative attitude towards Chinese products.

It is seen when Tables 6, 7, 8, and 10, which compare consumers by demographic factors, are evaluated together that characteristics such as gender, educational status and age change consumers' attitudes toward the country of origin. According to these findings, demographic factors were found to influence consumers' attitudes towards the origin of production. Thus, the third question of the research found an answer.

Table 10. The Cross Tabulation Comparing the Willingness to Buy the iPhone Branded Telephone Produced in China by Participant Age

The Cross Tabulation Comparing the Willingness to Buy the iPhone Branded Telephone Produced in China by Participant Age							
		20 Age and Below	21-30	31-40	41-50	51 and Above	Total
I don't agree at all	% in Age	25.0%	27.0%	26.3%	33.3%	32.7%	28.5%
I don't agree	% in Age	25.0%	16.4%	23.8%	22.9%	8.2%	18.5%
I'm hesitant	% in Age	20.0%	17.2%	15.0%	8.3%	18.4%	15.7%
I agree	% in Age	20.0%	22.1%	15.0%	20.8%	18.4%	19.4%
I completely agree	% in Age	10.0%	17.2%	20.0%	14.6%	22.4%	17.9%
Total	% in Age	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study investigates the influence of production origin on consumer behaviour. The research questions were based on this subject. The answer to the first question of the research, "Does the origin of production influence the process of consumers' decision-taking on buying?", is yes. According to Table 4, when products are produced in different countries, the buying intentions of the respondents vary, and the production origin influences the buying decision process. It was attempted in Table 5 to find the answer to the second question of the research, "Does the origin of production influence consumers' attitudes towards a product?" According to this table, the participants assume a negative approach if a product is produced in China. It follows, then, that production origin influences consumer attitudes towards a given product. Variables such as age, gender and educational status were compared with the influence of production origin to find the answer to the third question of the study, "Do demographic factors influence consumers' attitudes about the origin of production?", and Tables 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 referred to this issue. When the tables are taken together, it was seen that demographic factors influence the attitudes towards the origin of production.

Consumers pay attention to the country where a product is produced when buying goods or services. It is observed in this study that the products which are made in China, in particular, are less preferred by people. In Turkey, these products are considered to be low quality and unhealthy. Consumers evaluate the goods or services they buy according to the origin of production and make their buying decisions accordingly. However, this attitude can change depending on the characteristics such as age, gender, educational status of consumers. Younger consumers want to use Chinese products less than other consumers. The most important reason for this can be the fact that young people identify the products they use with their own image. However, consumers with a higher education level tend to use "Made in China" products more. The

reason for this conclusion can be considered to be that educated people are more conscious that not every product produced in China is inferior.

CONCLUSION and DISCUSSION

The acceleration of international trade and finance movements has led to globalisation. In today's world, trade volume reached 13 trillion US dollars (<http://www.tdv.org/statistics.html>, 2016). This huge volume stems from the easy circulation of goods and services among countries. The switch of commerce to a global scale has intensified the competition among companies. This competition occurs in terms of cost as well as quality and usage.

When it became possible to manufacture useful products at lower prices, this led entrepreneurs to the regions where they could gain price advantage. Especially after the 2000s, China has become the centre of cheap production. Thousands of enterprises started to produce their products in China instead of their own country. This situation has rendered China the world's factory. As the country grew rapidly and became a production centre, many of the world's markets began to fill up with products of Chinese origin. China's production that is suitable to the economy of scale led to the emergence of products at various quality levels in the market. A considerable portion of consumers consider Chinese products to be insufficient in terms of health and safety because of their low cost. However, there are many products of different quality levels in the country, which is a huge centre of production. Even the most prestigious brands of the world are producing in China today. Therefore, products of Chinese origin and products made in China should be differentiated. Consumers who can not make this distinction can get into a flawed tendency to see all the products produced in China as poor quality. Besides, not all the products produced outside of China are of good quality. Also, some products that many people currently use and regard as an important brand are of Chinese origin.

In this study, the influences of the country of origin on the product quality perception were evaluated within the context of Chinese products. The results obtained in this study are as follows;

i. 95% of consumers do not recognise Chinese products. Therefore, the awareness about Chinese brands is very low in society. Promotion activities through advertising and publicity will lead to the recognition of Chinese brands. Thus, over time, consumers will start to realise that not all Chinese brands are of inferior quality (Table 3).

ii. A significant proportion of the participants find products produced in China to be objectionable and threatening for health. In addition, the rate of those who consider Chinese products to be low quality is 66%. Nearly half of consumers do not want to buy Chinese products (Table 4). When all these results are evaluated together, it is seen that a significant part of the participants have a negative view towards Chinese products. China's image is very poor in terms of production. The reason for this may be the low-quality products that

have been being imported from China for a long time or that China has become a centre of imitation and counterfeit products.

iii. According to the study, the country where a given product is manufactured influences the consumer purchasing decision. When the same product is produced in different countries, its value changes for the consumer (Table 5). The production of products of Chinese origin in a developed country such as the United States increases brand value.

iv. The attitudes of men, young people and those with lower education levels towards Chinese products are more negative. It can be said, accordingly, that demographic factors influence the approach towards Chinese products (Table 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10). The fact that younger people attach more importance to image than product durability may have influenced their attitudes towards Chinese brands. Furthermore, educated people may have a more positive view of Chinese products because they know that many important brands are also produced in China. The fact that educated people are more positive towards Chinese products is an indication that the attitude towards Chinese brands may change over time.

According to the results obtained in the study, it can be argued that consumers tend to have more negative thoughts about Chinese products. The participants did not recognise Chinese brands and they did not want to buy products made in China. When products of Chinese origin are produced in an advanced country like the USA, the willingness to purchase them rises. Therefore, the country of origin has an influence on the decision to buy. This influence is diminished in products with high brand value. For example, Iphone manufactures its products in China. In the study, 47% of the participants stated, "I don't want to buy the product when Iphone produces it in China." Since the brand value is an indication of quality from the viewpoint of consumers, it removes the influence of the country of origin. This result is in line with the study carried out by Kurtuluş and Bozbay (2008). Consumers tend to prefer products made in a developed country to products made in China, but products made in China have also begun to be preferred by consumers. In the study made by Develi (2010), 48% of the consumers stated that they could buy products made in China. In the current study, the rate (24%) was much lower. The most important reason why such a result is obtained is that consumers had been asked questions by product categories in Develi's (2010) study. In the current study, too, when the questionnaire participants were asked the question, "Would you want to buy Chinese products?" directly, most of them answered negatively, but when the same question was asked naming any Chinese brand, most of them mentioned they would want to buy the products produced in China. So, although the "Made in China" label has a negative impression in the consumer mind, a brand name can eliminate this effect.

Similar to the studies carried out in different times by Nart (2008), Cengiz (2009), Yılmaz et al. (2013), Toksari and Senir (2015), this study also shows that the origin country and production origin have a significant influence on consumers' buying behaviour. According to the results obtained from different studies such as

Armağan and Gürsoy's (2011) study, demographic differences have a significant influence on the origin of production. Consumers do not exhibit homogenous attitudes against Chinese products. Personal characteristics lead to significant variations in product evaluations. Especially in recent years, the attitude towards Chinese products has been shifting from negative to positive.

Çakır's study in 2009 found that the origin of production is more important than the country of origin. In the same study, it is suggested to use the motto "Made in Turkey" rather than "one hundred percent domestic production". According to the results obtained from the current study, on the other hand, although there is a significant influence of the production origin on consumers' decision making mechanisms, the brand value factor can overcome this influence. Therefore, in order to decrease the country of origin influence for exported Turkish products, it is absolutely necessary to care for branding. The "Quality Brand" understanding should be developed instead of the motto "Made in Turkey", and positioning efforts should be taken accordingly.

SUGGESTIONS

Major companies around the world continue to manufacture their products in China due to the cost advantage involved. Companies that want to be successful in competition should protect their cost advantage and attach importance to branding. While it is not a sufficient competition strategy to achieve cost advantage only, it is also not always appropriate for companies to keep production costs high when creating brand value. Businesses operating on a global scale should make brand investments by keeping a high product quality and realise this with minimum cost. Businesses capable of doing this will thrive more, and attain an advantageous position in the global competition.

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