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## ปัจจัยที่มีอิทธิพลต่อนักท่องเที่ยวจีนในการซื้อสินค้าไทย

Factors Influencing Chinese Tourists Buying Behavior Toward Thai Products

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#### บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้ทำการสำรวจปัจจัยที่มีอิทธิพลต่อนักท่องเที่ยวจีนในการซื้อสินค้าที่ผลิตในประเทศไทยจากการทบทวนวรรณกรรมได้ระบุสองปัจจัยภายนอกและหนึ่งปัจจัยภายใน โดยปัจจัยภายนอกหมายถึง ประเทศต้นกำเนิดและปัจจัยเชิงสังคม ขณะที่ปัจจัยภายในหมายถึง ปัจจัยเชิงจิตวิทยา โดยได้ทำการสำรวจนักท่องเที่ยวจีน 202 คน เพื่อทดสอบสมมุติฐานและกรอบแนวคิดของงานวิจัยนี้ จากผลการวิเคราะห์พบว่า ปัจจัยภายในประเทศต้นกำเนิดสองปัจจัย ได้แก่ ปัจจัยด้านเทคโนโลยีและปัจจัยด้านมนุษยสัมพันธ์ส่งผลกระทบบระดับกลางกับพฤติกรรมการซื้อของนักท่องเที่ยวจีนต่อสินค้าที่ผลิตในประเทศไทย ( $\text{adj. } R^2 = .308$ ) แต่อย่างไรก็ตาม มีเพียงแค่ปัจจัยด้านเพื่อนและครอบครัวที่อยู่ภายในปัจจัยทางสังคมที่แสดงให้เห็นว่ามีผลกระทบแต่เป็นการคาดการณ์ที่อ่อน ( $\text{adj. } R^2 = .191$ ) ในส่วนของปัจจัยภายในนั้น มีผลต่อการตัดสินใจซื้อของนักท่องเที่ยวจีนที่เข้มข้นที่สุด ( $\text{adj. } R^2 = .633$ ) โดยปัจจัยดังกล่าวนี้ รวมถึงแรงกระตุ้นการรับรู้ความเชื่อและทัศนคติ

**คำสำคัญ :** ประเทศต้นกำเนิด; ปัจจัยเชิงสังคม; ปัจจัยเชิงจิตวิทยา

#### Abstract

This research investigates the factors that influence consumer buying behavior for made in Thailand products by Chinese tourists. Following a review of the literature, two external factors and one internal factor were identified. The external factors included country of origin and social factors. The internal factors were psychological factors. A survey of Chinese tourists ( $n = 202$ ) was used to test the conceptual framework and hypotheses. The results of the analysis showed that two Country of Origin (COO) factors (technology and human factors) had a significant moderate effect on the consumer buying behavior for made in Thailand products ( $\text{adj. } R^2 = .308$ ). However, only family and friends had an effect in terms of social factors, with only a weak predictability ( $\text{adj. } R^2 = .191$ ). The internal factors had the strongest effect ( $\text{adj. } R^2 = .633$ ), with factors including motivation, perception, and beliefs and attitudes, influencing the consumer buying decision.

**Keywords :** Country of origin; Social factor; Psychological factors

#### Introduction

Based on the survey conducted by the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, there is 9,805,753 Chinese tourists visited Thailand in 2017 (Ministry of Tourism & Sports, 2018) and they use 41% of their travel budget

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for shopping, while reserving only 4% for food. From the Statistics of average expenditure of international tourist arrivals, Chinese tourists spend 1945.69 baht for shopping per person per day which means this number will multiply by number of nights they stay, according to statistics, approximately 8 nights. This can be said that Chinese tourists are willing to pay for their shopping 15,560 baht per person.

According to the report of Kasikorn Research Center, in 2018, the number of Chinese tourist is estimated to reach 10.4-10.6 million, gained 6.3-8.4 percent while the total income from Chinese tourist is estimated at around 573,100-584,600 million baht, gained 9.3-11.4 percent from previous year. It's the very important income of Thailand.

This research aims to investigate factors influencing Chinese tourists' purchase decision toward Thai products, in order to improve and enhance more purchasing of Thai products.

## Literature Review

### External Factors Influencing Buying Behavior

#### Country of Origin (COO)

**Government policy.** Government policy is a broad category that includes factors like investment policy and incentives as well as regulation, laws, and other government policies that affect business activities and investment (Wang et al., 2009). There are several types of government policies that could influence tourism decision-making. One of these policies is visa policy, as it has been shown that the ease of arranging visas or other travel permissions influences traveler's intention to visit a location (Han et al., 2011). Tax and duty exemptions on purchases made in-country could also influence tourism decision-making on spending, because they make products cheaper compared to normal prices (Dombrovski & Hodzic, 2010).

**Economic factors.** Economic factors that relate to COO include the general economic situation of the country, especially in comparison to the home country (Sharma, 2011). For example, countries that demonstrate high economic stability and moderate economic growth may be perceived more positively than countries that have weaker or less stable economic conditions. Economic conditions can also influence the perception of whether a product is a luxury good or service; for example, countries with lower economic stability or lower incomes may be perceived to have lower quality and production standards (Ahmed & D'Astous, 2008).

**Technology.** In relation to COO, technology refers to the perception of the country's technological base and how advanced it is. This factor may be particularly important in COO product evaluations. For example, China's industrial technology advancement influenced consumer perceptions about Chinese automobile brands. In this research, technology evaluations including technological research and technology advancement were questioned, as these perceptions have been found to influence consumer perceptions (Wang & Yang, 2008).

**Human factors.** Human factors may be particularly important in tourism because tourism services have a high level of personal contact. The social acceptance and friendliness of the country's people is often identified as one of the factors that influence tourism choices and decisions when selecting a destination (Hall, 2014). Thailand, which has long been marketed as the "land of smiles" based on the friendliness of its people, may have a particularly high role for service quality and friendliness in tourism perceptions of country of origin and subsequent decisions (Boon-Itt & Rompho, 2012).



## Social Influences

**Social role and status.** The individual's perceived social role and status, including class, gender, age, and membership in groups, has long been recognized as one of the factors that influences the consumer's decision for specific purchases (Solomon, et al., 2013). This relationship emerges because consumers perceive specific goods or services to be for or not for them based in part on their social status. Consumers also purchase specific goods, such as brands or products from specific countries, to assert their social status (Khan & Bamber, 2008).

**Celebrities.** Celebrity endorsement of products or services is a marketing practice in which celebrities are used to promote and place products in a way that is visible to the consumer (Pradhan et al., 2016). There are also cases of natural or spontaneous celebrity endorsement, where celebrities wear or promote products without active marketing (Solomon et al., 2013). Celebrities can influence consumer attitudes and purchase decisions, but this is a complex relationship that depends on the celebrity's attractiveness and credibility, the congruence between the brand and the celebrity, and the congruence between the celebrity and the consumer's self-concept (Pradhan et al., 2016).

**Family and friends.** The consumer's family and friends are typically regarded as trusted sources of information about products, which can be perceived in different ways. First, family and friends are the source of direct word of mouth (WOM) or recommendations for or against specific products and services that consumers use to make purchase decisions. Second, family and friends establish subjective or social norms that consumers use to determine what is appropriate in terms of consumption for their social status and class. Because family and friends tend to share social status, their purchase decisions can serve as cues for the consumer when making their own purchase decisions (Solomon et al., 2013). Moreover, Gao et al. (2014) showed that Chinese travelers often relied on their fellow travelers including family and friends when making purchasing decisions, suggesting it is an important factor to Chinese travelers.

## Internal Factors Influencing Buying Behaviour

In addition to external stimuli like those discussed above, internal factors influence consumer purchase decisions (Noel, 2017). This research focuses on psychological factors. There are four psychological factors that could influence the consumer purchase decision, including motivations, perceptions, learning, and beliefs and attitudes.

### Motivations

Motivations in a consumer sense may typically be regarded as stemming from needs or desires, which form in response to environmental conditions. For example, Maslow's hierarchy of needs establishes five levels of basic needs, which people may be motivated by (Noel, 2017). At the bottom levels of physiological and safety needs, consumers are purchasing goods to ensure basic physical needs and security are met. The nature of purchasing the products investigated here suggests that motivations will include belongingness (supporting gifting relationships), esteem (social status), and potentially self-actualization.

### Perceptions

The second internal factor considered here is that of perceptions, or the process by which stimuli are selected, organized or interpreted. Consumers are influenced by their perceptions of the product or service

and its characteristics. For example, some product-related perceptions include product quality (how suitable, durable and well-made the product is, especially compared to similar choices in the market), product value (what the consumer receives in comparison to what they pay), perceived trust (willingness to believe that the product is fit for purpose and/or that the seller will stand by it) and social value (what the product implies socially) (Solomon et al., 2013).

### Learning

The third internal factor that is anticipated to influence the consumer purchase decision is that of learning, or a relatively permanent change in a behaviour as a result of experience. Learning occurs through a process of encountering new experiences and develops over time, and therefore is not immediate (Solomon et al., 2013). The learning process can cause changes in consumer decisions based on what is learned (Noel, 2017).

### Beliefs and attitudes

The fourth factor that is expected to influence the consumer purchase decision is beliefs and attitudes, which can be defined as a lasting, general evaluation of people (including oneself), objects or issues (Solomon et al., 2013). Beliefs and attitudes about consumer decisions tend to be functional (based on evaluation of whether the product is fit for purpose) and social (whether the product is socially acceptable). Beliefs and attitudes from a variety of processes, including social processes (adopting existing attitudes and beliefs from others), cognition and learning experiences (Solomon et al., 2013).

## Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

The literature review was used to formulate a conceptual framework that represents the expected relationships between the study constructs (Figure 1). Hypotheses were also proposed based on the literature review and the factors observed within it.

The first cluster of factors that is considered is the external factors, which are stimuli in the external environment (not including marketing or advertising stimuli). Therefore,

*H1: External factors can positively influence Chinese tourist buying behavior toward Thai products.*

Country of origin (COO) effects are expected to come from tourist perceptions of the government policy, economic, technology, and human factors dimensions of the research, based on existing literature (Elliot & Cameron, 1994; Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999; Truong et al. 2018). The first hypothesis is stated as:

*H1<sub>a</sub>: Country of origin can positively influence Chinese tourist buying behavior toward Thai products.*

The second set of factors considered is the social factors, which include the social role and status (both attributed and self-identified) of the consumer and the effect of reference groups (celebrities and family and friends). These factors have also been shown to influence consumer purchase decisions, including in the population studied (Khan & Bamber, 2008; Gao et al., 2014; Pradhan et al., 2016). The second hypothesis is stated as:

*H1<sub>b</sub>: Social factors can positively influence Chinese tourist buying behavior toward Thai products.*

The third set of factors that is investigated here is internal psychological factors. These factors, which include motivations, perceptions, learning, and attitudes and beliefs, are potentially among the strongest influences on the consumer purchase decision. Previous research has also demonstrated that they are



highly influential (Choi et al., 2008; Lin & Chen, 2009; Hoek et al., 2013; Kumar & Ghodeswar, 2015). These factors also form during the experience of the tourism experience, making it more likely that they will influence purchase decisions. The third hypothesis is stated as:

*H2: Internal factors can positively influence Chinese tourist buying behavior toward Thai products.*

*H<sub>2</sub>: Psychological factors can positively influence Chinese tourist buying behavior toward Thai products.*

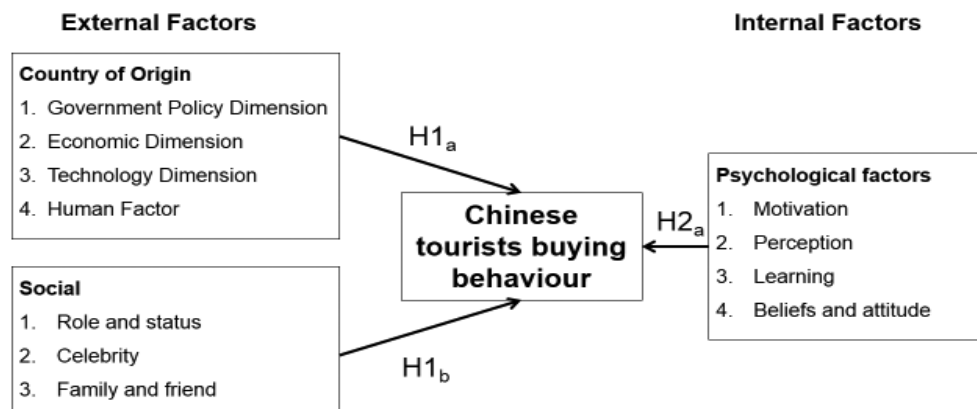


Figure 1 Conceptual framework of the paper

## Research Methodology

This research used a self-administered questionnaire as the research instrument. The self-administered questionnaire was chosen for this study because of its time efficiency; because the participant fills out the form on their own, the researcher can collect several questionnaires simultaneously or collect data over a longer period, which means that more data can be collected (Cooper & Schindler, 2013).

The population being sampled for this study is Chinese tourists to Thailand in 2018, which was estimated at 10.4 to 10.6 million people. This can be considered an infinite population for sampling purposes (McClave et al., 2018). A standard sample calculation for an infinite or large but unknown population is:  $\frac{Z^2 pq}{E^2}$  where  $Z$  = the critical Z-score for the confidence level,  $E$  = margin of error, and  $pq$  = probability of selecting a question (McClave et al., 2018). Using a 95% confidence level, 5% margin of error, and 50% probability, the sample size was:  $\frac{1.96^2 (.50)}{(.50)^2} = 384.16$  Inferential statistical techniques are used to investigate relationships between variables, which can be applied across the population. The inferential statistical tool was linear regression, which is a tool that estimates an outcome variable (dependent variable) from one or more predictor variables (independent variables) (McClave et al., 2018). Questionnaires were distributed online from October to December 2018 and a total of 202 completed questionnaires were returned it represents around 7% margin of error.

## Data Analysis

**Gender.** The sample was composed of slightly more female respondents ( $n = 112, 55\%$ ) than male respondents ( $n = 90, 45\%$ ). While this was slightly unequal, a chi-square test showed that it was not significantly different from a uniform distribution ( $\chi^2 = 2.395, p = .122$ ).

**Monthly income.** Monthly income was calculated in yuan. About half of the sample had a monthly income of 20,001 yuan or above ( $n = 94, 47\%$ ). Another quarter of the sample had income of 15,001 to

20,000 yuan (n = 50, 25%). The remaining portion of the sample had income of 10,001 to 15,000 yuan (n = 25, 12%), 5,001 to 10,000 yuan (n = 21, 10%) or 5,000 yuan or below (n = 12, 6%). Thus, about seven in ten respondents had income of above 15,000 yuan per month. Since average income in China is about 21,597 yuan (Wen & Reinhold, 2018), it can be stated that participants have around average income.

**Education.** The sample was highly educated, with nearly nine in ten having either a Bachelor’s degree (n= 85, 42%), Master’s degree (n = 78, 39%) or higher than a Master’s degree (n = 14, 7%). Only 25 respondents (125) had less than a Bachelor’s degree.

**Hypothesis Testing Results**

**Hypothesis 1 (External Factors)**

There were two sub-hypotheses related to this test, which addressed country of origin (Hypothesis 1a) and social factors (Hypothesis 1b).

**Hypothesis 1a (Country of Origin and Consumer Buying Behavior)**

The results show partial acceptance of H1a. The technology dimension had the strongest effect on consumer buying behavior, followed by human factors. However, government policy and the economic dimension were not significant.

**Table 1** Hypothesis 1a coefficients

(Constant)	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
G	.091	.084	.089	1.080	.281
ED	-.130	.100	-.113	-1.300	.195
TD	.380	.071	.349	5.367	.000
HF	.327	.071	.370	4.596	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer Buying Behavior

R<sup>2</sup> = .322

Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = .308

p value = .000

F = 23.398

**Hypothesis 1b (Social Factors)**

Based on this finding, H1b was partially accepted. The only dimension that was significant was family and friend, while role and status and celebrity were not significant.



Table 2 Hypothesis 1b

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Role and status	.011	.061	.013	.186	.853
Celebrity	.033	.054	.042	.621	.536
Family and Friend	.397	.065	.431	6.073	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer Buying Behavior

$R^2 = .203$

Adjusted  $R^2 = .191$

p value = .000

F = 16.846

### Hypothesis 2 (Internal Factors)

Hypothesis 2 can be accepted. Three out of four of the internal factors dimensions identified were significant, and the model had strong predictability. It can be stated that perception, motivation, and beliefs and attitudes were significant predictors of consumer behavior.

Table 3 Hypothesis 2 coefficients

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Motivation	.282	.058	.276	4.842	.000
Perception	.509	.077	.459	6.604	.000
Learning	-.006	.040	-.007	-.145	.885
Beliefs and attitude	.195	.067	.176	2.909	.004

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer Buying Behavior

$R^2 = .640$

Adjusted  $R^2 = .633$

p value = .000

F = 87.582

### Conclusion And Discussion

#### Country of Origin (COO) effects (Hypothesis 1a)

The findings showed that there were positive COO effects of the technology and human factor dimensions on the consumer choice of Made in Thailand products, with a moderate effects size. However, the government policy and economic dimensions were not significant in the consumer buying decision. These findings were generally consistent with the body of historic research, which has shown that COO effects can influence consumer attitudes, perceptions, and buying intentions for choosing different products (either positively or negatively) (Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999).



There are explanations from the literature that can help explain why some factors were or were not significant. Technology perceptions of the COO, for example, are known to affect purchase decisions especially for technology-based products such as automobiles (Wang & Yang, 2008). For example, consumers may choose technology products from countries that have a high perception for their technology base. Human factors are known to influence tourist decisions particularly strongly (Hall, 2014). For Thailand, which is positioned as the ‘land of smiles’, friendliness and welcoming may be particularly important (Boon-Itt & Rompho, 2012). Thus, it is reasonable that these two factors had a positive effect on consumer buying decisions. In contrast, government policy and economic factors may be more important for other types of decisions such as investment decisions, although there are some policies like tax and duty exemptions that reduce the apparent cost of goods (Dombrovski & Hodzic, 2010).

### **Social factors (Hypothesis 1b)**

Social factors included the effect of social norms as indicated by reference groups including social role and status, family and friends, and celebrities. The literature review had suggested that each of these reference groups or social influences could have a significant effect, but only family and friends had a significant (though weak) effect on the consumer buying decisions.

The consumer’s family and friends had a significant positive effect on their buying decisions for Made in Thailand products. There are many reasons why family and friends are important for the consumer decision. Family and friends provide WOM and product recommendation, but importantly, they are the source of social (or subjective) norms that establish what kinds of consumption choices are appropriate (Solomon et al., 2013). These findings are consistent with previous studies, which have shown that Chinese tourists rely on fellow travelers including family and friends to make their purchase decisions (Gao et al., 2014).

The insignificant effect of celebrities on the consumer purchase decision is also not surprising. This is because celebrity endorsements have an inconsistent effect on consumer purchase decisions (Pradhan et al., 2016). These inconsistent effects depend on the characteristics of the celebrity, the brand, and the congruence between them. Given the wide variety of potential celebrity inputs and lack of active celebrity endorsement programs, it is not surprising that there was no detectable effect. The lack of effect from social role and status was more surprising, given that consumers do purchase at least some goods as a tool to reinforce their social status. One possibility for this finding is that Thailand as a country of origin is not high profile enough to trigger social status concerns (Khan & Bamber, 2008). Thus, consumers would be purchasing Made in Thailand based on their personal preferences and the characteristics of the goods rather than their COO perceptions. This study was not designed to examine the interaction of COO and social factors in the purchase decision, but this could be a good opportunity for further research.

### **Psychological factors (Hypothesis 2)**

The second hypothesis investigated the effect of psychological factors, including motivations, perceptions, learning, and beliefs and attitudes, on the consumer purchase decision for Made in Thailand products. The findings showed that motivation, perception, and beliefs and attitudes had a significant, strong positive effect on the consumer purchase decision, although learning did not have a significant effect.



The perception, motivation, and beliefs and attitudes factors were supported by the literature. For example, one motivation that is known to influence buying behavior is the intent to gift products purchased, which plays into meeting social belonging (esteem) and self-actualization needs (Choi et al., 2008). Thus, the value of the product as a gift would depend on factors like recipient preferences and novelty. Similarly, perceptions of the product could influence the purchase decision (Lin & Chen, 2009). While Lin and Chen (2009) investigated green perceptions, in this case the relevant perception could be authenticity – the product being a “real” souvenir from Thailand would have authenticity value for the recipients. Previous studies have also shown that beliefs and attitudes about the product or service influence the purchase decision (Hoek et al., 2013; Kumar & Ghodeswar, 2015; Noel, 2017). For example, consumers’ environmental beliefs influence the willingness to pay for green products (Hoek et al., 2013). Thus, the findings in this research are consistent with the previous studies, which have shown that consumers are influenced by their internal psychological status when they make purchase decisions. These findings added to the literature by showing that the effect of perception was stronger than that of motivation or beliefs and attitudes. These factors have not been compared directly in the context of consumer decisions for souvenirs previously.

The only factor that was not significant was learning. This was surprising given that learning has been shown to be a factor in tourist purchase decisions (Kumar & Ghodeswar, 2015). However, it is relevant that the previous study was based on repurchase decisions for a tourist service, rather than for goods. This difference could be why learning was not significant for the consumer buying behavior.

### Recommendation

This study showed that country of origin, social factors, and psychological factors affected the purchase decision for Made in Thailand souvenirs. Of these factors, the strongest effect was seen for psychological factors, suggesting that individual psychology rather than external factors are the most important factors for consumer purchase decisions.

Two recommendations stem from the effect of the external factors studied here. The first recommendation is that the marketing of Made in Thailand should emphasize the human factors dimensions of the Thai country of origin perception, and the technology dimension where appropriate. These two factors were the significant factors in the purchase decision, with human factors being more important. The role of technology is not likely to be important in marketing of non-technology products, but it could be highly relevant for technology products. However, the human factors dimension, incorporating the culture and friendliness of Thai culture, is highly relevant for the desirability of non-technology souvenirs. The role of family and friends in product selection should also be considered as it could be used to promote products. For example, referral programs that encourage previous customers to recommend specific products or services and provide incentives such as coupons for future purchases could be an effective way to promote products.

Another recommendation comes from the internal factors. Marketers could use these factors as a way to promote products. For example, understanding the motivation of gift giving could help marketers position products made in Thailand as appropriate, thoughtful gifts for specific participants. Furthermore, perceptions, beliefs and attitudes could be influenced through practices like consumer education. For example, sellers

of “Made in Thailand” products could promote their products by highlighting the makers and manufacturing process, introducing human interest and knowledge about how products are made.

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