



The Factors Influencing Chinese Consumers' Durian Purchase Decisions: The Mediating Role of Country-of-Origin Image

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Abstract

Background and Aim: The objective of this article is to present the knowledge gained from the literature review of Country-of-Origin Image, aiming to explain its meaning, components, and the relationships among variables related to Country-of-Origin Image. Through the literature review, it was found that the popular variables studied about Country-of-Origin Image include Product Attitude, Country Attitude, Product Attributes, and Purchasing Decision Process.

Materials and Methods: A structured questionnaire and in-depth interviews were used to survey consumers in major cities across five regions of China. Stratified sampling was employed to cover the country's five major economic zones (e.g., East China and South China). In each region, two first-tier or new first-tier cities (e.g., Shanghai, Guangzhou, Chengdu, Wuhan, Beijing) were selected to ensure that the sample represented different levels of economic development. A total of 440 questionnaires were distributed using convenience sampling, and 418 valid responses were collected, resulting in a response rate of 95%. In-depth interviews were conducted with six key participants, including two consumer representatives, two import fruit retailers, and two import fruit wholesalers. Stepwise regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses.

Results: Findings - Consumers' attitudes toward durian, attitudes toward the country, and durian attributes all have significant positive effects on Country-of-Origin Image and the purchase decision process, and all have significant indirect effects on the purchase decision process through Country-of-Origin Image. Country-of-Origin Image also has a significant positive impact on the purchase decision process.

Conclusion: The limitations of this study are that the sample has regional and other limitations. It can be applied to research of Chinese consumers, but it is difficult to promote globally. The significance of this study is to reveal the mechanism by which product attitudes, country attitudes, and product attributes affect the purchase decision process through Country-of-Origin Image, enrich the theory, and provide a new perspective and basis for the study of the cross-border marketing of durian origin countries. The practical significance of this study is that durian practitioners can use this to enhance the image of products and countries of origin to promote sales, help the country create a product business card to promote durian trade.

Keywords: Country-of-Origin Image; Product Attitude; Country Attitude; Product Attributes; Purchasing Decision Process

Introduction

With the rapid development of China's economy and the significant rise in residents' income levels, the demand for fruits has increased steadily, especially for tropical fruits, which have seen remarkable growth in consumption. According to a report by CNBC on September 13, 2023, HSBC indicated that global durian demand has surged by 400% year-on-year, largely driven by Chinese consumers' growing preference for the fruit. The Chinese market now accounts for approximately 90% of global durian demand, making China the world's largest durian consumer. Currently, China purchases the majority of the durian traded on the international market. In recent years, durian has transformed from a niche fruit into a widely popular commodity in China, with consumption expanding rapidly nationwide. Many provinces and cities have listed durian as the highest-value imported fruit. According to the General Administration of Customs of China, the country imported 1,425,885.232 tons of fresh durian in 2023, with a total import value of USD 6.7209 billion. Given China's enormous market demand and minimal domestic production, the country is expected to remain in a state of durian supply shortage for the foreseeable future. Imported durians will continue to be the primary source to meet domestic needs.

(1) China is rapidly becoming the world's largest durian consumption market

According to the United Nations Commodity Trade Statistics Database, China's durian imports account for 82% of the global total. As living standards rise and consumption structures upgrade, durians—





known for their rich nutrition and unique flavor—are increasingly favored by Chinese consumers. In fruit specialty stores, durians are considered a premium category; in the baking industry, durian-based ingredients often carry the highest prices and enjoy strong popularity. From 2010 to 2019, the average annual growth rate of durian consumption in China exceeded 16%. Although the pandemic led to a temporary decline in 2020, consumption rebounded sharply in 2021, approaching the one-million-ton mark. Given China's massive population, the long growth cycle of durian, and the lack of large-scale commercial plantations, the country's durian market will rely heavily on imports in the long term. The durian trade deficit is expected to continue widening.

In 2021, China imported 821,600 tons of fresh durian, with a total import value of USD 4.205 billion, representing an increase of 266.16% and 661.78%, respectively, compared to 2017 (597,200 tons and USD 3.653 billion). Notably, of the 2,104,900 tons of fruits China imported from Thailand in 2021, fresh durian accounted for 39.03% (821,500 tons), representing approximately 63.75% of Thailand's total durian production that year.

However, the countries of origin of durian include Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia, and other places where durian is grown include Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Myanmar, India, etc. Why do Chinese consumers buy durian? Which countries of origin do they like to buy durian from? What factors affect the purchasing behavior? People will have many questions. The countries of origin of durian and durian practitioners are also curious about Chinese durian consumers. Therefore, it is very important to study the purchase motivation of Chinese consumers and the decision-making process of buying durian. Studying the factors that consumers consider when choosing to buy durian, such as origin, price, quality, and image of the country of origin, can help durian-producing countries better understand and respond to the needs of the Chinese market.

(2) There is a systematic gap in research on Chinese consumers' durian purchase decisions.

The core of the market is consumers. Consumers determine the survival and development of organizations. Understanding consumer behavior is the basis for organizations to formulate marketing strategies and carry out marketing activities (Li, 2010), especially for China's durian market. Many durian planting and sales companies that explore or want to enter the Chinese market have the same questions: How do Chinese consumers consume durian? Which durians do Chinese consumers like? What factors affect their durian purchase decision process? These questions are also concerns of Chinese fruit dealers and fruit importers, but there are not many studies on Chinese consumers' durian purchasing behavior. And the existing research is often only descriptive and lacks systematic analysis.

At present, the research on Chinese consumers' durian purchasing behavior is still in its infancy. Existing research is limited and not comprehensive enough. Existing research often uses convenient sampling and descriptive methods. Taking consumers in some regions as an example to research fruit purchasing behavior or consumption behavior (Qiu et al., 2007; Zhang et al., 2014; Chen, 2021). There has been no in-depth and systematic research on the durian purchase decision-making process of Chinese consumers and the factors affecting durian purchases. Therefore, research in this area is becoming more and more important, and China has a vast territory. The population is large. The differences in economic levels and cultural backgrounds in various regions lead to differences in consumer consumption behaviors (Yu, 2013; Li, 2015; Wang & Zhang, 2018), so it is necessary to study the consumption behavior of Chinese consumers. Through research, marketers in durian origin countries and Chinese fruit distribution companies can have a deeper understanding of Chinese consumers' purchasing behavior and determine appropriate marketing strategies.

From the literature review, there is no research involving the impact of the image of durian origin on purchasing behavior. This study uses Systems Theory to develop and study the variables that influence durian purchasing behavior. The researchers believe that the results of this study will provide important insights for durian origin countries and durian practitioners. Including enriching theoretical research in academia, scholars, researchers, and students can use these research results for further integration and academic research. Existing research primarily focuses on developed markets, with insufficient exploration of the mediating role of country-of-origin image in consumption scenarios unique to China, such as the



durian category. This study fills this theoretical gap by applying systems theory for the first time to the analysis of durian purchase decisions.

In conclusion, this study not only holds significant academic value but also provides practical guidance for the global development of the durian industry, fostering a win-win situation for durian-producing countries and the Chinese market.

Objectives

1. Explore the causal factors that affect the image of the country of origin and the durian purchasing decision process of Chinese consumers.
2. Explore the impact of factors that affect the image of durian's country of origin on the durian purchasing decision process of Chinese consumers.
3. Establish a causal factor model for the impact of the image of durian's country of origin on the durian purchasing decision process of Chinese consumers.

Literature review

1. Theoretical Basis of Country-of-Origin Image (COI)

Country-of-Origin Image (COI) refers to the overall impression consumers have of products from a particular country or region, encompassing economic, cultural, and technological dimensions (Diamantopoulos et al., 2011; Schooler, 1965). Research indicates that COI significantly influences consumers' product evaluations and purchasing decisions (Wang & Chen, 2008; Zhao & Wang, 2012). For instance, Wang et al. (2012) found through meta-analysis that the impact of COI on consumer purchase intentions is consistent across different cultural contexts. Additionally, COI not only directly affects consumer behavior but also mediates the relationship between product-related factors and purchasing decisions (Zhang & Li, 2010; Lee & Lockshin, 2012).

2. The Impact of Product Attitude on COI and Purchasing Decisions

Product attitude refers to consumers' overall evaluation of a product, including perceptions of quality, performance, and brand (Keller, 2012). Studies show that positive product attitudes can significantly enhance COI, thereby influencing purchasing decisions (Gurhan-Canli & Maheswaran, 2014; Zhang & Li, 2014). For example, Keller (2012) noted that consumers' perception of high product quality can strengthen brand image, thereby enhancing the country-of-origin image. Moreover, product attitude indirectly affects the purchasing decision process through COI (Chen, 2021).

3. The Impact of Country Attitude on COI and Purchasing Decisions

Country attitude refers to consumers' overall impression of a country, including perceptions of its economy, culture, and politics (Steenkamp & Geyskens, 2013). Research indicates that positive attitudes toward a country of origin can significantly enhance COI, thereby increasing purchase intentions (Li, 2015; Wang et al., 2012). For instance, Kapferer (2015) pointed out that a country's economic and cultural image are key factors in shaping COI. Additionally, country attitude indirectly influences the purchasing decision process through COI (Wang & Zhang, 2018).

4. The Impact of Durian Properties on COI and Purchasing Decisions

Durian Properties refer to attributes such as quality, taste, and nutritional value, which directly influence consumers' purchasing decisions (Chen, 2021). Studies show that positive evaluations of durian Properties can significantly enhance COI, thereby increasing purchase intentions (Zhao & Wang, 2012). For example, the alignment between Product Attributes and country-of-origin image is a crucial factor influencing consumer behavior. Moreover, durian Properties indirectly affect the purchasing decision process through COI (Zhang & Li, 2014).

5. Theoretical Framework of the Purchasing Decision Process

The purchasing decision process refers to the entire process from need recognition to final purchase, including information search, alternative evaluation, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior (Li, 2010; Johnson & Lehmann, 2016). Research indicates that COI plays a key role in the purchasing decision process, not only directly influencing consumer purchase intentions but also indirectly affecting purchasing

behavior through product attitude, country attitude, and Product Attributes (Diamantopoulos et al., 2011; Wang & Chen, 2008).

6. Research Gaps and Future Directions

Although extensive research has explored the impact of COI on consumer behavior, several gaps remain. First, existing studies predominantly focus on developed markets, with relatively limited research on Chinese consumer behavior (Chen, 2021). Second, research on the mediating role of COI in specific product categories such as durian is limited (Zhang & Li, 2010). Future research could further explore the mechanisms of COI in different cultural contexts and introduce additional mediating or moderating variables (such as social media influence or personal values) to enrich the theoretical framework (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 2022).

Conceptual Framework

In this study, we constructed a research model to explore how product attitude, country attitude, and Product Attributes influence Chinese consumers' purchasing decision-making process through the country-of-origin image. The purchasing decision-making process includes need recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior. The independent variables in this study are product attitude, country attitude, and Product Attributes; the mediating variable is the country-of-origin image, and the dependent variable is the purchasing decision-making process (Figure 1).

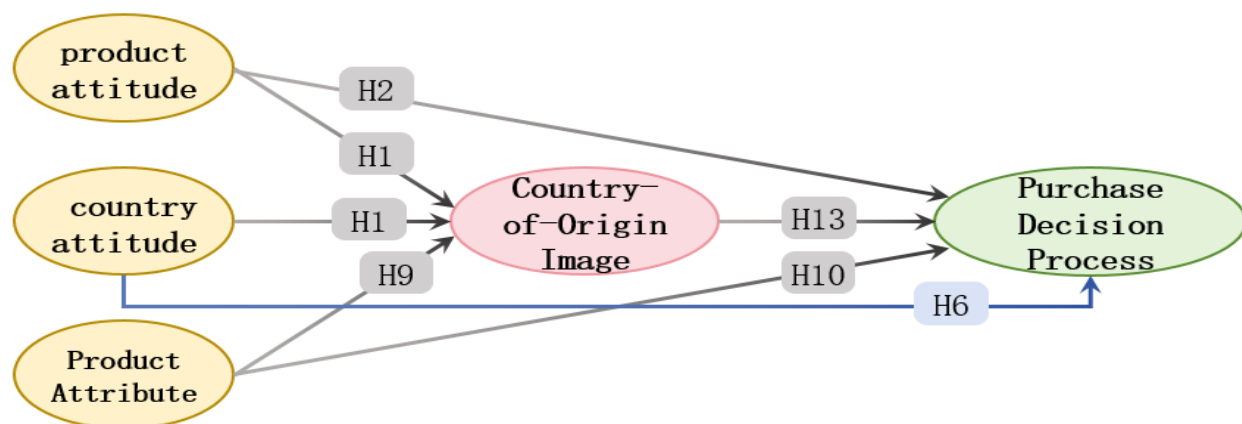


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework
Note: Constructed by the researcher

Methodology

This study collected data through a questionnaire survey, with the sample consisting of durian consumers in major cities in China. A total of 440 questionnaires were distributed, and 418 valid responses were received. The questionnaire design was based on a literature review and measured various variables using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

After collecting secondary data, we process it using econometric software (SPSS or AMOS), primarily including descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, multiple regression analysis, and mediation effect testing.

Data Processing and Analysis

The collected data was first preprocessed, including data cleaning, handling missing values, and detecting outliers. Subsequently, the data analysis was conducted through the following steps:

1. Descriptive Statistical Analysis: Basic statistical descriptions, such as mean and standard deviation, were performed on demographic variables and key research variables.

2. Reliability and Validity Testing: Cronbach's Alpha was used to test the reliability of the scale to ensure data consistency, while the KMO test and Bartlett's test of sphericity were conducted to assess the validity of the scale.

3. Correlation Analysis: Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to examine the relationships between variables.

4. Multiple Regression Analysis: The direct effects of independent variables (product attitude, country attitude, and Product Attributes) on the dependent variable (purchasing decision-making process) were analyzed.

5. Mediation Effect Testing: The Bootstrap method was applied to test the mediating effect of the country-of-origin image, examining whether it plays a mediating role between the independent and dependent variables.

6. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) Analysis: Further validation of model fit was conducted to ensure the rationality and explanatory power of the research model.

Results

1. The Impact of Product Attitude, Country Attitude, and Product Attributes on Country-of-Origin Image (COI)

1.1 The Impact of Product Attitude on COI

The results show that consumers' attitudes toward durian (including knowledge about durian, liking, health awareness, and brand awareness) have a significant positive impact on the country-of-origin image (COI).

Specifically, consumers' knowledge about durian (Product Knowledge) and health awareness (Health Awareness) have the most significant impact on COI, with mean scores of 3.43 and 3.42, respectively (on a 5-point scale).

This indicates that consumers' understanding of durian and their recognition of its health value significantly enhance their evaluation of the country-of-origin image.

1.2 The Impact of Country Attitude on COI

Consumers' attitudes toward the country of origin (including perceptions of the country's culture, economy, and politics) also have a significant positive impact on COI.

Among these, consumers' evaluation of the country's economic image (Economic Image) is the highest, with a mean score of 3.44, indicating that consumers have a high level of recognition for the economic development of the country of origin.

Additionally, consumers' evaluation of the country's international relations image (International Relationship Image) is also high, with a mean score of 3.42, suggesting that consumers believe the country's performance in international affairs positively influences its image.

1.3 The Impact of Product Attributes on COI

The Properties of durian (including quality, labels, and price) also have a significant positive impact on COI.

Among these, the quality (Quality) and labels (PDO and Labels) of durian have the most significant impact on COI, with mean scores of 3.37 and 3.42, respectively.

This indicates that consumers' recognition of durian's quality and origin labels significantly enhances their evaluation of the country-of-origin image.

2. The Impact of Country-of-Origin Image on the Purchasing Decision Process

2.1 The Direct Impact of COI on the Purchasing Decision Process

The results show that COI has a significant positive impact on consumers' purchasing decision process.

Specifically, consumers' recognition of the country's economic image and durian image significantly enhances their purchase intention.

The standardized path coefficient of COI on the purchasing decision process is 0.264, indicating that COI plays an important role in consumers' purchasing decisions.



2.2 The Mediating Role of COI

COI partially mediates the relationship between product attitude, country attitude, Product Attributes, and the purchasing decision process.

Specifically, product attitude, country attitude, and Product Attributes indirectly influence the purchasing decision process by enhancing COI.

For example, consumers' positive attitude toward durian indirectly enhances their purchase intention by improving COI.

3. The Direct Impact of Product Attitude, Country Attitude, and Product Attributes on the Purchasing Decision Process

3.1 The Direct Impact of Product Attitude on the Purchasing Decision Process

Consumers' attitude toward durian has a significant positive impact on the purchasing decision process.

Specifically, consumers' liking (Pleasure) and brand awareness (Brand Awareness) of durian have the most significant impact on the purchasing decision process, with mean scores of 3.37 and 3.34, respectively.

This indicates that consumers' liking and brand recognition of durian directly enhance their purchase intention.

3.2 The Direct Impact of Country Attitude on the Purchasing Decision Process

Consumers' attitude toward the country of origin also has a significant positive impact on the purchasing decision process.

Among these, consumers' social beliefs (Country Beliefs) and public affect (Public Affect) toward the country have the most significant impact on the purchasing decision process, with mean scores of 3.35 and 3.37, respectively.

This indicates that consumers' recognition of the country's social culture and public image directly enhances their purchase intention.

3.3 The Direct Impact of Product Attributes on the Purchasing Decision Process

The Properties of durian also have a significant positive impact on the purchasing decision process.

Among these, the quality and price of durian have the most significant impact on the purchasing decision process, with mean scores of 3.37 and 3.34, respectively.

This indicates that consumers' recognition of durian's quality and price directly enhances their purchase intention.

4. Descriptive Statistical Analysis Results

4.1 Sample Description

Table 1 Sample Description

Category	Details	Percentage/Number
Total Questionnaires	Distributed	440
	Valid Responses	418 (95% recovery rate)
Gender	Male	214 (51.2%)
	Female	204 (48.8%)
Age Group	31-40 years	37.8%
Occupation	Full-time employed	73.9%
Education Level	Undergraduate	40.2%
Monthly Income	10,001-15,000 yuan	126 (30.1%)
	15,001-20,000 yuan	112 (26.8%)
Residential Area	Eastern Region	44.1%
	Southern Region	19.7%
Marital Status	Married	76.6%
Durian Consumption	Have eaten Thai durian	376 (90.1%)
Monthly Durian Spending	201-300 yuan	178 (42.6%)



Category	Details	Percentage/Number
Purchase Frequency	1-2 times per month	Majority
Purchase Channels	Fruit shops	24.9%
	Supermarkets	22.2%
Purchasing Motivation	Buy for themselves	210 (50.2%)
Information Channels	Media reports	32.1%
Recent Purchase Choice	Thai durian	46.3%
	Thailand	51.9%
Favorite Durian Source	Vietnam	20.9%
	Malaysia	15.4%

A total of 440 questionnaires were distributed in this study. After excluding 22 invalid responses, 418 valid questionnaires were collected, yielding an effective response rate of 95%. The sample covers information on gender, age, occupation, education level, income, residential area, marital status, and durian consumption habits. Below is an analysis of the sample results:

Gender: 214 males (51.2%) and 204 females (48.8%), consistent with the national gender ratio in 2020 (51.24% male, 48.76% female).

Age: The highest proportion is among those aged 31-40 (37.8%).

Occupation: Full-time workers account for 73.9%.

Education Level: Undergraduate degree holders make up 40.2%.

Monthly Income: Primarily concentrated in the ranges of 10,001-15,000 yuan (30.1%) and 15,001-20,000 yuan (26.8%).

Residential Area: Mainly from the eastern region (44.1%) and southern region (19.7%).

Marital Status: Married individuals account for 76.6%.

Durian Consumption:

90.1% of respondents have consumed Thai durian, indicating its high popularity in the Chinese market.

42.6% of respondents spend 201-300 yuan on durian monthly.

Most respondents purchase durian 1-2 times per month, primarily from fruit shops (24.9%) and supermarkets (22.2%).

50.2% of respondents purchase durian for themselves, and 32.1% obtain durian-related information through media reports.

Among recent purchase choices, Thai durian is the most popular (46.3%), and Thailand is the most favored durian source country (51.9%), followed by Vietnam (20.9%) and Malaysia (15.4%).

4.2 Consumers' Durian Consumption Habits

90.1% of respondents reported having consumed Thai durian, indicating that Thai durian is very popular in the Chinese market. Most respondents spend 201-300 yuan on durian each month, accounting for 42.6%.

Respondents mainly purchase durian from fruit shops and supermarkets, accounting for 24.9% and 22.2%, respectively.

5. Reliability and Validity Analysis Results

5.1 Reliability Analysis

The Cronbach's Alpha values for all research variables exceed 0.8, indicating high internal consistency of the questionnaire.

For example, the Cronbach's Alpha value for product attitude is 0.885, for country attitude is 0.853, and for Product Attributes is 0.865.



Table 2 Reliability Analysis Results

Variable	Component	Cronbach's α
Product Attitude	Knowledge about Durian	0.885
	Pleasure	0.911
	Health Awareness	0.894
	Brand Awareness	0.881
Country Attitude	Country Beliefs	0.853
	Public Affect	0.869
	International Cooperation	0.851
Durian Properties	Quality	0.865
	Labels	0.903
	Pricing	0.962
	Durian Image	0.956
Country-of-Origin Image	Economic Image	0.925
	People Image	0.858
	International Relations Image	0.827
	Need Recognition	0.871
Purchase Decision Process	Information Search	0.888
	Alternative Evaluation	0.888
	Purchase Decision	0.913
	Post-Purchase Behavior	0.888

5.2 Validity Analysis

Table 3 Model Fit of the Measurement Model for Attitudes Toward Durian

Fit Indices	Standard	Fitted Values
χ^2/df	1-3	1.345
GFI	>0.8	0.945
NFI	>0.8	0.952
TLI	>0.8	0.985
CFI	>0.8	0.987
SRMR	<0.08	0.030
RMSEA	<0.08	0.029

Through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM), all fit indices meet acceptable standards, indicating good model fit.

For example, the GFI (Goodness of Fit Index) is 0.945, the CFI (Comparative Fit Index) is 0.987, and the RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation) is 0.029.

6. Path Analysis Results

6.1 Direct Effect Analysis

Table 4 Results of Direct Effects

Hypothesis	Pathway Relationship	b	β	SE	T	P
H1	Product Attitude -> Country-of-Origin Image	0.340	0.309	0.100	3.383	0.001
H2	Product Attitude -> Purchase Decision Process	0.220	0.200	0.087	2.523	0.012
H5	Country Attitude -> Country-of-Origin Image	0.203	0.231	0.070	2.885	0.004
H6	Country Attitude -> Purchase Decision Process	0.206	0.235	0.062	3.348	0.001



Hypothesis Pathway Relationship		b	β	SE	T	P
H9	Durian Properties -> Country-of-Origin Image	0.323	0.327	0.091	3.547	0.000
H10	Durian Properties -> Purchase Decision Process	0.279	0.283	0.081	3.447	0.001
H13	Country-of-Origin Image -> Purchase Decision Process	0.264	0.264	0.074	3.557	0.000

The direct effects of product attitude, country attitude, and Product Attributes on COI and the purchasing decision process are all significant.

For example, the standardized path coefficient of product attitude on COI is 0.309, the standardized path coefficient of country attitude on COI is 0.231, and the standardized path coefficient of Product Attributes on COI is 0.327.

6.2 Mediation Effect Analysis

Table 5 Mediation Analysis Results

Hypothesis Pathway Relationship		ES	SE	T	P
H3	Product Attitude -> Country-of-Origin Image -> Purchase Decision Process	0.082	0.040	2.031	0.042
H7	Country Attitud -> Country-of-Origin Image -> Purchase Decision Process	0.061	0.031	1.995	0.046
H11	Durian Properties -> Country-of-Origin Image -> Purchase Decision Process	0.086	0.040	2.168	0.030

COI partially mediates the relationship between product attitude, country attitude, Product Attributes, and the purchasing decision process.

For example, the indirect effect of product attitude on the purchasing decision process through COI is 0.082, the indirect effect of country attitude on the purchasing decision process through COI is 0.061, and the indirect effect of Product Attributes on the purchasing decision process through COI is 0.086.

7. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) Analysis Results

Table 6 Model Fit Indices of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

Fit Indices	Standard Value	Fitted Value
χ^2/df	1-3	1.163
GFI	>0.8	0.961
NFI	>0.8	0.955
TLI	>0.8	0.992
CFI	>0.8	0.993
SRMR	<0.08	0.027
RMSEA	<0.08	0.020

The SEM analysis results show that the model has a good fit, with χ^2/df of 1.163, GFI of 0.961, CFI of 0.993, and RMSEA of 0.020. This indicates that the research model can well explain the data and supports the theoretical hypotheses.

Summary

The results show that product attitude, country attitude, and Product Attributes have a significant positive impact on the country-of-origin image (COI), which in turn significantly influences consumers' purchasing decision process. Additionally, COI partially mediates the relationship between product attitude, country attitude, Product Attributes, and the purchasing decision process. These findings provide important marketing insights for durian-exporting countries, emphasizing the importance of enhancing COI and product quality.





Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that product attitude, country attitude, and Product Attributes significantly influence the country-of-origin image (COI), which in turn affects consumers' purchasing decisions. This aligns with previous research (e.g., Diamantopoulos et al., 2011; Schooler, 1965), which suggests that COI plays a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors. However, this study extends the existing literature by demonstrating that COI not only directly impacts purchasing decisions but also mediates the effects of product-related factors, such as product attitude and Properties, on consumer behavior.

The significant positive impact of product attitude on COI highlights the importance of consumers' perceptions of durian quality, taste, and brand reputation. This finding is consistent with Keller's (2012) brand equity theory, which posits that positive product experiences enhance brand image and, by extension, the image of the country of origin. Similarly, the influence of country attitude on COI underscores the role of national stereotypes and cultural perceptions in shaping consumer preferences, as suggested by Wang et al. (2012).

From a practical perspective, these findings offer valuable insights for durian-exporting countries and businesses. For instance, countries like Thailand and Malaysia can enhance their COI by promoting their cultural heritage, economic stability, and high-quality agricultural practices. Additionally, businesses can leverage these findings to develop targeted marketing strategies that emphasize the unique attributes of their durian products, such as taste, nutritional value, and origin labels.

Despite its contributions, this study has some limitations. First, the sample was primarily drawn from major cities in China, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to rural areas or other countries. Future research could expand the scope to include diverse regions and cultural contexts. Second, the cross-sectional design of the study limits the ability to infer causal relationships. Longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into how COI evolves and influences consumer behavior. Finally, future research could explore additional mediating or moderating variables, such as social media influence or personal values, to develop a more comprehensive understanding of consumer decision-making.

Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the influence of the country-of-origin image (COI) on Chinese consumers' durian purchasing decisions, with a focus on the mediating role of COI in the relationship between product attitude, country attitude, Product Attributes, and the purchasing decision-making process. The findings demonstrate that product attitude, country attitude, and Product Attributes all have a significantly positive impact on COI, which in turn significantly influences consumers' purchasing decisions. Moreover, COI partially mediates the effects of these factors on the purchasing decision process, highlighting its critical role in consumer behavior.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in its extension of the COI theory, particularly in the context of durian consumption in China. By incorporating product-related factors and demonstrating their indirect effects through COI, this study provides a more nuanced understanding of how consumers evaluate and choose imported products. Additionally, the findings offer practical implications for durian-exporting countries and businesses, suggesting that enhancing COI through cultural promotion, quality control, and targeted marketing can significantly boost consumer purchase intentions.

However, this study is not without limitations. The sample was limited to major cities in China, and the cross-sectional design may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Future research could expand the scope to include rural areas and other countries, employ longitudinal designs to track changes in COI over time, and explore additional variables that may influence consumer behavior. By addressing these limitations, future studies can further enrich our understanding of the complex dynamics between COI and consumer decision-making.

Recommendation

1. Recommendations Based on Research Findings



1.1 Enhancing the Country-of-Origin Image of Durian

Durian-exporting countries should strengthen their national branding to build a positive image in terms of economy, culture, and product quality. This can be achieved through initiatives such as organizing international food exhibitions and promoting cultural events to enhance global awareness and recognition of the country.

1.2 Improving Product Quality and Brand Marketing

The research findings indicate that product attitude significantly influences the country-of-origin image. Therefore, durian-producing countries should focus on quality control to enhance overall consumer satisfaction. Additionally, brand marketing should be strengthened to ensure that consumers can easily recognize and trust brands from the country of origin.

1.3 Strengthening International Cooperation to Increase Consumer Trust

Country attitude has a significant impact on the country-of-origin image, demonstrating that consumers do not only focus on the product itself but are also influenced by international relations and cross-country collaborations. Therefore, durian-exporting countries can improve their national perception by collaborating with the Chinese government, signing trade agreements, and promoting tourism and cultural exchanges, which can indirectly boost durian sales.

1.4 Targeted Marketing and Precise Market Segmentation

Consumers in different regions may have varying sensitivities toward the country-of-origin image. Businesses should develop marketing strategies tailored to the market research results of each area. For example, in regions where consumers are highly sensitive to the country-of-origin image, the focus should be on building a strong national image. In markets where consumers prioritize product quality, marketing efforts should highlight key durian attributes such as variety, taste, and nutritional value.

2. Recommendations for Future Research

Although this study confirms the influence of the country-of-origin image (COI) on consumer purchasing decisions, there are still some research limitations. Future research can further expand in the following areas:

2.1 Expanding the Scope of the Sample

The data in this study primarily comes from consumers in major cities in China. Future research could extend to other regions in China, particularly medium-sized and small cities as well as rural areas, to explore how different local cultures affect the perception of the country-of-origin image and consumer purchasing behavior.

Applying a Longitudinal Study Approach

2.2 This study relies on cross-sectional data. In the future, a longitudinal study could be conducted to track long-term changes in consumer perceptions of the country-of-origin image of durians. This would also allow researchers to examine the effects of different policies and marketing strategies on consumer purchasing behavior over time.

2.3 Exploring Other Mediating or Moderating Variables

This study focuses on the mediating role of the country-of-origin image. Future research could explore additional factors that may influence purchasing decisions, such as consumers' cultural backgrounds, personal values, or the impact of social media, to develop a more comprehensive model of consumer decision-making.

2.4 Cross-Cultural Comparative Research

Future research could extend beyond China to other countries, such as Japan, South Korea, or European markets, to examine how the country-of-origin image influences the purchasing behavior of imported fruits like durians in different cultural contexts. This would help generate more comprehensive and globally applicable conclusions.

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