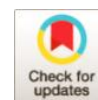




Investigating the Effect of the Quality of Chinese Products on Iranians' Mental Image of China's Nation Brand

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Received: 16 July, 2025

Revised: 22 August, 2025

Accepted: 15 September, 2025

Published: 25 September, 2025

ABSTRACT

The quality of the export products of a country and services directly impacts the perception and mentality of the consumers in the customer country about the manufacturing country. In the past, this was not looked at from a strategic point of view, but with the emergence of nation branding; the quality of a country's export products and services has become more and more important. Therefore, in this research, the quality of Chinese products and services in the Iranian markets and the image of these products in the public opinion of the Iranian people have been investigated. The statistical sample for this research is made of 384 citizens of Districts 5 and 6 of Tehran, and the information was collected using a mode questionnaire. Descriptive statistics and correlation methods were used to analyze the results. According to the results, the low quality of Chinese products and goods has reduced the trust of Tehran's consumers in Chinese products and goods and also a minor preference is seen towards Chinese products over the other foreign brands. Also, the low quality of Chinese goods and products available in the Iranian market has damaged the brand of the Chinese nation in the public opinion in Iran.

Keywords: Nation Brand, Nation Image, Products and Services, Nation Branding, Brand of China

Introduction

In today's world, the values and culture of a country are transported through the exported goods and services of that country. The "Made in Germany" mark on electronics, or the "Made in Italy" mark on fashion and clothing items transfer the values that are created in the mind of the consumer in the form of an image of that country and remain permanent. This issue is referred to as the country of origin effect. Several studies have confirmed the effect of the country of origin on the customer's purchase decisions. For example, Morán (2021) [1], Dinnie (2022) [2], hasan (2023) [3] and Achabou et al (2023) [4] indicated that Country of Origin has a significant Influence on consumer's Purchasing Decisions. Despite the importance of this issue, unfortunately, some governments have not paid enough attention to it yet. The manufacturing and supplying companies only care about making more profit, and they sacrifice national considerations for their financial

interests. Based on this, governments must take action on this issue and by comprehensive and targeted planning, turn their export products and goods into tools to improve the public opinion of the people of the consuming countries. This can happen with the brand and nation branding. The concept of Nation Branding was early defined as 'the systematic process of aligning the actions, behaviors, investments, innovations and communications of a country around a clear strategy for achieving a strengthened competitive identity' [5-6].

Ying Fan [7] pointed out, the 'brand' of the nation exists, with or without conscious efforts in nation branding, as every country has a current image in the international audience, 'whether strong or weak, clear or vague' [6-7]. Various factors affect the nation branding, one of which is the export of products and services of that country. The quality of goods and products of a country affects the image of that country in the public opinion of the people of the customer country. Imagine a country that you have never traveled to or heard about, but you have



been using a product made in that country for a while. Your ideas of that country will be summarized in that product or service. If you have a good and amazing experience with that product, you filter the name of that country and everything that comes to your mind about that country in a good way, and if you experience bad quality and services about a product, the opposite of this will happen. Therefore, the governments must improve their executive and legal moves for exporting products and services with intelligence and planning, and also adopt a nation branding approach in this regard. So, to investigate real problems, the impact of the quality of Chinese products and goods on the mental image of Iranian consumers from these two countries has been investigated in this research.

Methodology

The statistical sample of this research is made up of 384 citizens of Districts 6 and 5 of Tehran, who were randomly selected. The mode questionnaire was prepared by the researcher and provided to the statistical sample. For data analysis and testing the hypotheses, Pearson's correlation test was performed.

Findings

Descriptive Statistics

First question: How would you rate Chinese products based on your personal experiences from one to seven? The results are illustrated in figure 1

Second question: If similar products and goods were available in the market by another country, how much would you prefer Chinese products and goods over those?

Figure 2 illustrate the results.

Third question: Regarding the quality of Chinese products and goods available in the Iranian market, overall, how much would you trust products and services from China?

The results are illustrated in figure 3

Fourth question: How much has the quality of Chinese products and goods affected the image of this country in your mind?

The results of the answer to this question are illustrated in the following diagram.

Figure 4 illustrate the results.

The first hypothesis: The quality of Chinese products and goods has influenced the preference of the brands made in China in the minds of the people of Tehran.

Correlation analysis results

The correlation test results between items 1 and 2 are shown in the table 1. According to the results, the significance value is below 0.05. Meaning that there is a positive and significant correlation between these two variables. In other words, we can say that the high quality of a country's products and export goods improves the

mental image of the host country's consumers towards that country, and vice versa. Based on this result, the low quality of Chinese products and services has made the consumers of Tehran prefer other foreign brands over Chinese brands.

Second hypothesis: The quality of Chinese products and goods has affected the trust of Tehran's consumers in Chinese products and goods.

Correlation analysis results

The correlation test results between items 1 and 3 are shown in the table 2. According to the results, the significance value is below 0.05. This means that there is a positive and significant correlation between these two variables. In other words, the high quality of the export products and goods of a country increases the trust of the consumers of the customer country, and vice versa. According to this result, the low quality of Chinese products and services has reduced the trust of Tehran's consumers towards Chinese goods and services.

The third hypothesis: The quality of Chinese products and goods has influenced the mental image of Tehran's consumers on the Chinese nation branding.

Correlation analysis results

The correlation test results between items 1 and 4 are presented in the table 3. According to the results, the significance value is below 0.05. This means that there is a positive and significant correlation between these two variables. In other words, the high-quality products of a country and export goods increase the trust of the customers country's consumers and vice versa. According to this result, the low quality of Chinese products and services has weakened the position of the Chinese nation branding in the minds of Tehran's consumers.

Discussion and conclusion:

In today's world, nation branding has become one of the most important challenges for governments. In the last couple of years, various countries have invested in their national branding projects. A nation's brand is affected by various factors—political, economic, scientific, financial, sports, commercial, etc. The mentioned factors can affect the promotion or decline of a nation's brand. This research examined the effect of the quality of Chinese goods and products on the position of China's brand in the minds of Tehran's citizens. According to the results, the low quality of Chinese products and goods has reduced the trust of Tehran's consumers in Chinese products and goods and the low preference for Chinese products over other foreign brands. Also, the bad quality of Chinese goods and products available in the Iranian markets has damaged the brand of the Chinese nation in the public opinion of people of Tehran.

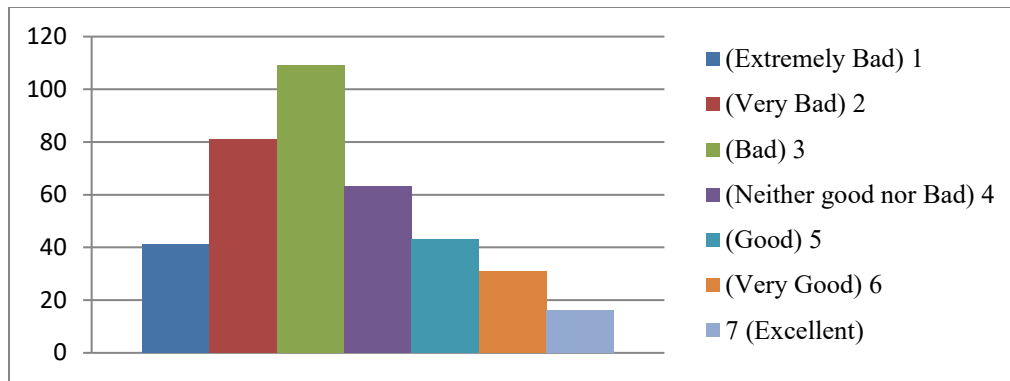


Figure 1. Descriptive statistics of answers for question 1.

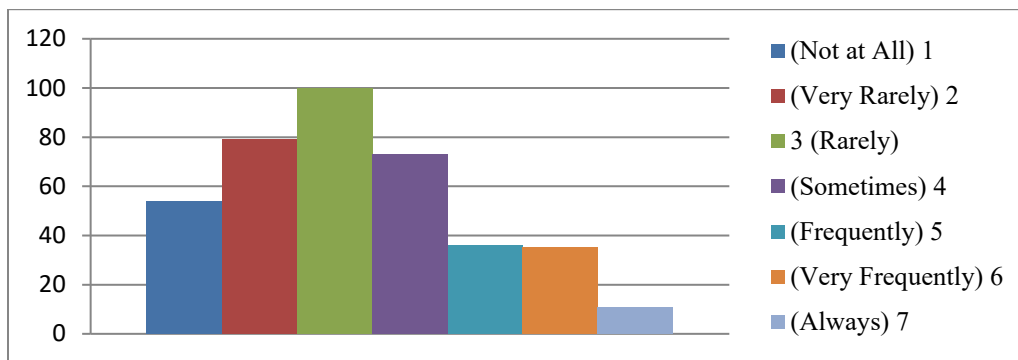


Figure 2. Descriptive statistics of answers for question 2.

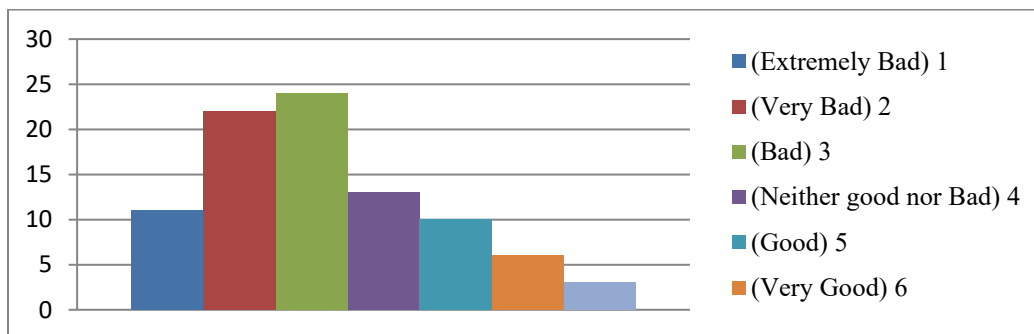


Figure 3. Descriptive statistics of answers for question 3.

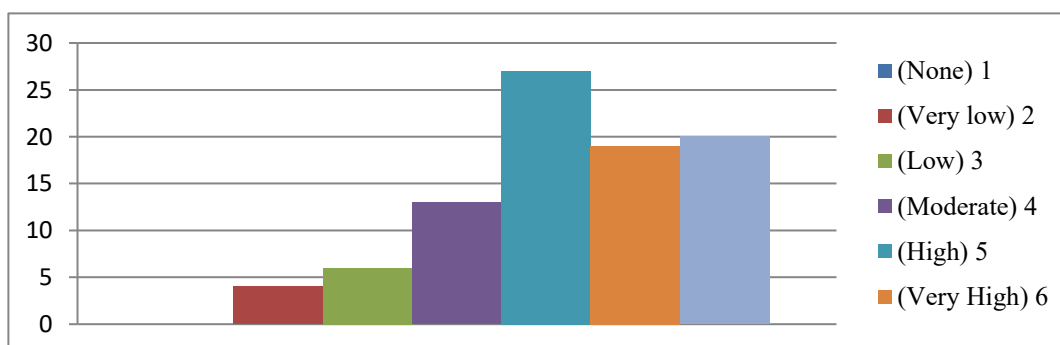


Figure 4. Descriptive statistics of answers for question 4

Table 1. Correlations test results between items 1 and 2

			Q1	Q2
Spearman's rho	Q1	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.866**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.023
		N	384	384
	Q2	Correlation Coefficient	.866**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.023	.
		N	384	384

Table 2. Correlations test results between items 1 and 3

			Q1	Q3
Spearman's rho	Q1	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	0.804**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.031
		N	384	384
	Q3	Correlation Coefficient	0.804**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.031	.
		N	384	384

Table 3. Correlations test results between items 1 and 4

			Q1	Q2
Spearman's rho	Q1	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	0.764**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.037
		N	384	384
	Q2	Correlation Coefficient	0.764**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.037	.
		N	384	384

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

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Citation: Kiyampoore Z, Hashemi Nezhad Mikal H. Investigating the Effect of the Quality of Chinese Products on Iranians' Mental Image of China's Nation Brand. *SJAMAO*, 2025; 7(3): 1-4.

<https://doi.org/10.47176/sjamao.7.3.1>