An Analysis of Consumer Preference Towards Thai Products on Chinese E-Commerce Platform

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Abstract

China's e-commerce industry has grown exponentially over the past decade and has become an important channel for international goods to access the expansive Chinese consumer base, particularly at a time when demands for imported goods are on the rise. Thai products, in particular, are popular with online Chinese consumers, due to the perception of them being closely associated with local wisdom and thus being unique. Nevertheless, there remain several factors that hinder the sales of Thai products on Chinese e-commerce platforms.

This study aims to explore Chinese consumer preference towards Thai products on e-commerce platforms by examining the factors that affect consumers. Results from online surveys of 124 Chinese respondents in three first-tier high-purchasing power cities of China indicate that product information quality for Thai products is the most essential factor with a significant positive effect on consumer satisfaction. However, trust, electronic word-of-mouth and price consciousness have an insignificant effect on consumer satisfaction. Moreover, consumer satisfaction is found to significantly influence and exert a mediating role in the increase of Chinese consumers towards Thai products. Even though these results differ from the previous studies, they have shed light on the significance of product information quality as the decisive factor that affects consumer satisfaction over electronic word-of-mouth, trust and price consciousness due to the intrinsic characteristics and unique nature of Thai products.

Thai manufacturers and retailers should pay greater attention to enhancing product information quality which, in turn, will be favorable for improving consumer satisfaction, purchasing behavior, and will help to further penetrate the Chinese online market.

Introduction

China today has more than 850 million consumers shopping online on e-commerce platforms such as Taobao, Tmall, JD, and Xiaohongshu. With these e-commerce platforms, comes the growing need from the online consumers for readily available and comprehensive product information to satisfy their purchasing demands, such as quality brand guarantee, competitive pricing, detailed product specification and consumer word of mouth (Gao, 2012). In 2015, of every 10 RMB spent on consumer goods in China, 1.3 RMB were spent through e-commerce (SMO Group, 2015).

The Chinese market is at the heart of global manufacturers where competition between each brand is relatively high. Many Chinese consumers trust the quality of imported goods through the e-commerce channel and consider them to adhere to international production standards. However, counterfeit and sub-standard quality domestic products remain a problem that Chinese consumers face, prompting them to turn away from the traditional "value purchase," where the price is the most important purchasing decision factor, to a more "quality purchase" with greater emphasis on factors such as branding, quality, and status. In addition, with the increased consumption and purchasing power, foreign imported goods, to a great extent, are the answers to their new purchasing needs.

Thai products, in general, have high export potential because of their perception of being associated with local wisdom. According to the statistics from Taobao.com and T-mall.com (Table 1), in 2019 the top ranking categories of Thai products by Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) on these two platforms were Bird's Nest and Other Nourishing Food Products (such as Blue Marine, Twin Lotus brand), Mattresses and Bedding (such as Paratex brand), Facial Makeup, Sunscreen, Eye Makeup (such as Mistine brand), Body Care (such as Beauty Buffet brand), Facial Mask (such as Annabella brand) etc. Although these Thai products have strong brand awareness among Chinese consumers, many factors hinder sales of Thai products on Chinese e-commerce platforms, namely the undiversified product range, lack of product development, and proper packaging design which have yet to meet the standards of consumers. Many manufacturers lack the necessary information about the behavior and preference of Chinese consumers and the essential skills of information technology, particularly in e-commerce, to market their products accordingly. Hence, understanding the preference and mindset of Chinese consumers are key to penetrating the China market.

Table 1 Top 10 Categories of Thai products by GMV on Taobao and T-mall platform in 2019

1. Bird's Nest and Other Nourishing Food Products	6. Eye Makeup
2. Mattresses	7. Body Care
3. Bedding and Accessories	8. Face Wash
4. Facial Makeup	9. Facial Masks
5. Sunscreen	10. Lip Makeup

Therefore, this research intends to explore Chinese consumer preference towards Thai products by examining the factors that affect consumers' attitudes, intentions, and actual buying behavior. The result of this research can help Thai retailers gain an in-depth understanding of Chinese consumer preference and behavior which will serve as valuable information for product development and marketing channels. In addition, the result of this research will allow Thai retailers to effectively promote their products and brand image in the eyes of Chinese consumers on Chinese e-commerce platforms.

The structure of this paper is organized as follows: Section 2 outlines the literature on factors affecting consumer satisfaction and consumer preference; Section 3 discusses the methodology and describes the data used; Section 4 presents the empirical results; and Section 5 serves to conclude the results of this paper.

Literature Review

In the literature related to e-commerce, there have been numerous studies on consumer's purchasing experiences, factors influencing consumer's online purchasing behavior, and factors influencing consumer satisfaction. However, there are limited studies on Chinese consumer's preference and purchasing behavior towards Thai products.

Online purchases are affected by consumer behavior characteristics and consumer decision making. Various factors influence consumer satisfaction such as socio-cultural influences, psychological factors, personal characteristics, post-decision behavior, and experience (Kapoor & Madichie, 2012). In this paper, we point out that product information quality, electronic word-of-mouth, price consciousness, and trust are the four most important factors that can influence Chinese consumer's satisfaction, and these factors will affect consumer preference when making online purchases.

Theoretical Background

Expectation-Confirmation Theory (ECT) was developed to explain the relationship between consumer satisfaction and repurchase behavior. The theory is used to evaluate the expectations of consumers and their post-purchase satisfaction. If the product's performance

is above the consumer's expectations, the consumer is satisfied. If the product's performance is below the consumer's expectations, the consumer is likely to be dissatisfied (Oliver, 1980; Spreng et al., 1996). Similarly, when consumers expect that an e-commerce website is trustworthy, they will be more motivated to repurchase from the same e-commerce website.

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) was developed by Fishbein & Ajzen (1975) to explain the relationship between consumer attitudes, behaviors and intentions. Consumers make a decision based on information available online, and this information quality can influence consumer's purchase intentions (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Similarly, reliable information will increase the consumer's satisfaction to make the initial purchase. Thus, consumer satisfaction in e-commerce websites can positively affect consumer's intentions.

Product Information Quality

Product information quality is explained as the consumer perception of the quality of information about the product that is presented by a website (Bailey & Pearson, 1983; Delone & McLean, 2003; Wang & Strong, 1996). Information presented on websites usually consists of product information and service information which is helpful to consumers for evaluating the quality of a product or service (Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2001). Hence, information quality can affect consumer satisfaction when using online websites (Park & Kim, 2003).

In addition, product labels also affect consumer's attitudes and intentions (Obermiller & Spangenberg, 1989). The appearance and information presented on the product such as packaging, brand, shelf-life, and process are important factors for consumer's consideration (Umberger & Mueller, 2010). Therefore, information presenting products and services on websites should be up to date to help consumers make better decisions and to satisfy consumer's information needs (Zhang et al., 2000).

TRA theory can be used to explain the relationships between the information on product quality and consumer satisfaction. If the information provided by the website is reliable and accurate, then this will increase consumer satisfaction, which will lead the consumer to make the initial purchase. Therefore, if this theory is valid, one would expect a positive correlation where product information quality increases consumer satisfaction.

Hypothesis (H1): An increase in product information quality will have a positive effect on consumer satisfaction.

Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM)

In recent years, electronic word-of-mouth not only has become a more powerful source of information in China but also an important channel for products and brand awareness. eWOM is considered one of the decisive indicators of products and services that can affect consumer purchasing decisions on e-commerce websites.

eWOM is described as any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former consumers about a product or company which is made available to a multitude of people and institutes via the Internet (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012). Previous research has suggested that consumers rely more on eWOM than television or print-advertisements (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). Hence, eWOM is considered as an important information source that can affect consumer purchasing decisions and attitudes towards products and services (Daugherty & Hoffman, 2014).

Nowadays, as a form of eWOM, online reviews are experiencing tremendous growth with great influence on consumer's attitudes toward a brand or product and their purchase intentions (Fagerstrøm, Ghinea, & Sydnes, 2016). More than two-thirds of consumers rely on online reviews before making any purchasing decisions (Nielsen, 2015).

There is a relationship between eWOM and consumer satisfaction, as eWOM can affect consumer's expectations and perceived quality of a product/service (Zeithaml et al., 1993; Buttle, 1998). When consumers are deciding to buy a product, eWOM can affect consumer's expectations and influence their purchasing decision (Stock & Zinsner, 1987). Positive eWOM can help to promote consumer's expectations of a product and service (Zeithaml et al., 1993), whereas unsatisfied consumers are likely to spread negative eWOM (Ranaweera & Prabhu, 2003).

Hypothesis (H2): An increase in electronic word-of-mouth will have a positive effect on consumer satisfaction.

Price Consciousness

Price consciousness refers to the level of consumer value for the price when choosing a certain product (Sinha & Batra, 1999). Consumers with price consciousness tend to have a negative indication for purchase decisions, while highly price-conscious consumers seek lower prices (Gauzenter & Roy, 2012). When making a purchase decision, consumers will assess the costs and benefits of the products, as they are prone to accept the quality of the products based on the price (Boyle & Lathrop, 2013). In addition, consumers tend to focus on paying less, thus being price conscious (Wu, Yeh, & Hsiao, 2011), and are concerned with obtaining the best value for their money (Park & Gretzel, 2008). Nevertheless, the price also has a relation with satisfaction and purchase intention as price tolerance and consumer satisfaction could be positively or negatively related (Anderson, 1996). Moreover, price elasticity is reduced by consumer satisfaction as satisfied consumers are more willing to pay for higher quality products (Kim & Lee, 2011). Therefore, price and quality are important factors that can influence purchase decisions. Thus, this study hypothesizes that:

Hypothesis (H3): An increase in price consciousness will have a positive effect on consumer satisfaction.

Trust

Consumer trust can be defined as a set of beliefs held by online consumers concerning certain characteristics of the e-supplier as well as the possible behavior of the e-supplier in the future (Coulter & Coulter, 2002). Studies have revealed that trust can have a positive influence on consumer buying decisions (Jarvenpaa et al., 2000; McKnight et al., 2002), because consumers tend to have a positive attitude towards online shopping when they have a sense of trust (Che & Cao, 2014). Similarly, trust encourages online purchasing and affects consumer attitudes towards purchasing from e-retailers (Lee & Lin, 2005). B2C (e-commerce) needs to build consumer trust in web-retailer to ensure growth, hence, trust is an essential component for B2C (e-commerce) (Palmer et al., 2000). According to the theory of reasoned action, attitude will affect one's behavioral intention and behavior itself. Thus, when consumers trust online shopping, they will generate a positive attitude towards online shopping.

Hypothesis (H4): An increase in trust will have a positive effect on consumer satisfaction.

Consumer Satisfaction and Consumer Preference

Consumer satisfaction is defined as the evaluation based on the total purchase and consumption experience with the good or service over time (Fornell et al., 1996); it is also the degree to which a consumer is happy with a product, service, or experience that accounts for only part of why people change product or service providers (Fisher, 2001). Consumer satisfaction with the products of a company has been one of the most important factors towards competitiveness and success in today's business world (Hennig-Thurau & Klee, 1997). Consumer satisfaction can help the product brands to build strong relationships with their consumers (Eshghi, Haughton, & Topi, 2007) as well as generate long-term profits for a firm (Anderson, Fornell, & Mazvancheryl, 2004).

Consumer preference is defined as the subjective (individual) tastes obtained from ranking various bundles of goods and is measured in terms of level of satisfaction (Jain & Sharma, 2012). The ability of consumers to purchase goods does not indicate their preferences however, it only indicates an option with the greatest value among a number of options. Consumers' preferences for products or brands are affected by various factors such as the product's price and durability, even the attributes of consumers themselves (e.g., goals, attitudes, and income) (Venkatraman et al., 2012).

Previous studies have shown that consumer behaviors are influenced by many factors when making purchasing decisions (Matsatsinis & Samaras, 2000). Consumers tend to shop for different types of products depending on their preference (Dennis et al., 2007; Zhou et al., 2007). Consumer satisfaction is an indicator that predicts future consumer behavior (Hill, Roche, & Allen, 2007). When consumers are satisfied with products, they will purchase them frequently and recommend them to other potential consumers (Tao, 2014). Therefore, consumer satisfaction is very important as satisfied consumers would add value to the brand, spread positive word of mouth, and help in making a good reputation for the brand. Satisfied consumers would be able to make a long-term profitable relationship with brands.

Hypothesis (H5): An increased level of consumer satisfaction will have a positive effect on consumer preference.

Consumer Demographics

Numerous studies have used consumer demographic characteristics such as age, gender, education level, income, etc. to describe the sample of consumers and evaluate effects on consumer preference (Liebermann & Stashevsky, 2009; Zhou et al., 2007).

1) Gender: Consumers tend to shop for different types of products depending on their preference (Dennis et al., 2007; Zhou et al., 2007). When shopping online, women have a stronger need than men in product evaluation (Citrin et al., 2003), and women are found to be less satisfied than men with their online shopping experience (Doolin et al., 2005; Kim & Kim, 2004).

2) Education: Better educated consumers have a higher chance to be exposed to Internet technology and, thus, have more confidence in using the Internet for shopping (Hui & Wan, 2007). In addition, many studies have shown a positive relationship between a consumer's educational level and online shopping intention (Swinyard & Smith, 2003; Susskind, 2004).

3) Income: Income has an important effect on households' budget constraints (Henseleit et al., 2009). Online consumers tend to have a higher income than traditional store consumers (Susskind, 2004; Doolin et al., 2005). The higher the income level of Chinese consumers, the more likely they are to shop online.

Some studies have indicated that the Chinese consumer's age, education, and income are significant factors that influence online purchasing intention. In addition, several studies have found that educated consumers with higher income level are the main online shoppers in China (Lee, 2009). Therefore, consumer-demographics are considered an important factor that can influence consumer preference (Henseleit et al., 2007).

Research Methodology

Based on the literature review, the research model presented in Figure 1 shows consumer satisfaction (mediating variables) influencing Chinese consumer's preference towards Thai products on Chinese e-commerce platforms. Moreover, to gain insight into the factors influencing consumer preference, six factors were selected from prior studies to represent the contexts of consumer preference.
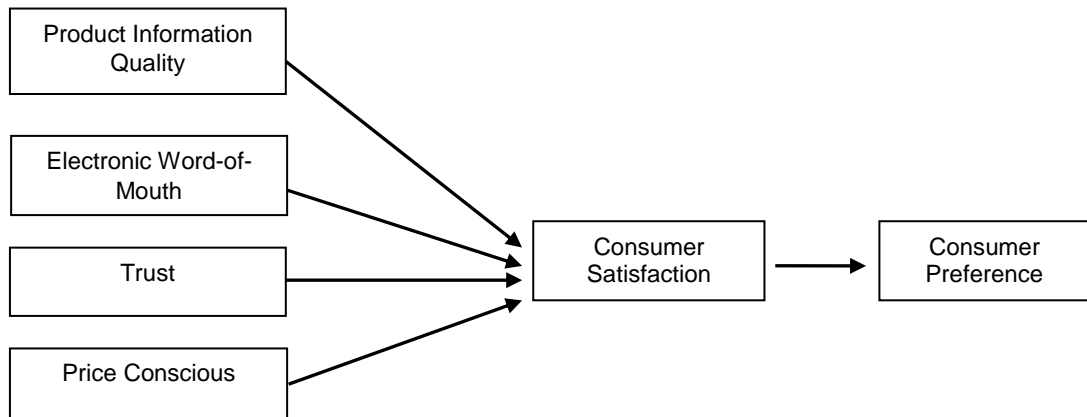
Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Measurements

Measuring items for the research construct were derived from prior studies. In this paper, six constructs were selected. As shown in Appendix Table A1, product information quality is measured by four items adapted from Park and Kim (2003) and DeLone and Mclean (2003), while four items measuring eWOM were taken from Jalilvand and Samiei (2012). To measure trust, four items were adapted from Gefen et al. (2003), whereas the scale of price consciousness was adapted from Sinha and Batra (1999) and Linhtenstein et al. (1998). Consumer demographics were taken from Liebermann and Stashevsky (2009), while the consumer satisfaction scale (four items) was adapted from Bhattacherjee et al. (2001). Similarly, three scale items of consumer preference were adapted from Kumar et al. (2017). Finally, the survey questionnaire used a five-point scale with anchors ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1).

Data Collection

The main focus of this study was to examine consumer preference towards Thai products on Chinese e-commerce platforms; hence, Jingdong (business to consumer), Tmall (business to consumer), and Taobao (consumer to consumer) were selected as target e-commerce platforms as they constitute the highest shares of online sales in China. During

the "Double Eleven" shopping festival, Beijing, Shanghai, and Hangzhou received the most online purchases (Zhengjuanshibao, 2018).These three cities are classified as first-tier cities with high per capita income and strong purchasing power. Moreover, they are the most developed areas with huge economic, cultural, and political influence in China. As this study is related to consumer preference, primary data were collected through an online-based questionnaire survey from 130 male and female Chinese consumers from different age groups, occupations, education levels, and income groups residing in Beijing, Shanghai, and Hangzhou. Cochran's unknown population formula was used to calculate the sample size.

Tools and Techniques Used

A five-point Likert scale questionnaire was adopted. A pretest with 10 samples was conducted to ensure the quality of the questionnaire, and it was tested through reliability analysis by the internal consistency technique which demonstrated that each factor had Cronbach's alpha value of more than 0.70 (0.81-0.90). Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed in this research in order to investigate the measurement model, or outer model, and the structural model, or inner model. A measurement model was tested through a structure validity test (Confirmatory Factor Analysis- CFA). It was found that each construct's AVE was above 0.5 (0.65-0.88) and each indicator has outer loading above 0.70 (0.74-0.95) while the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) of each construct was below 0.85 (0.15-0.83) reflecting that the measurement model was satisfactory.

For the structural model, the relationship between consumer preference, consumer satisfaction, product information quality, electronic word-of-mouth, and trust was analyzed using the bootstrapping technique to test the statistical significance. The path coefficient at the significance level 0.05 was $p < 0.05$ and the t-value was more than 1.96 which showed that the coefficient supported the hypothesis of the research.

Research Results

In this section, research results generated by collecting online samples, descriptive data, and the relationship of variables are discussed.

Sample

Of the 130 online distributed questionnaires, 124 were completed and returned. The research questionnaire was divided into three main parts, namely: 1) consumer demographic data; 2) factors affecting consumer preferences; and 3) consumer satisfaction & preference. From 124 respondents, 60.5% of respondents were female and 39.5% were male. In terms of age, 66.1% of respondents were between 25-35 years old. The overwhelming majority of respondents (40.3%) had a post-graduate degree. In terms of

monthly income and monthly expenses, 38.7% of respondents had a monthly income of more than 15,000 RMB, while almost one-third of the respondents (29%) had a monthly expense of more than 8,000 RMB. Most of the respondents (83.9%) spent less than three hours browsing and shopping online. Almost two-thirds of the respondents (76.6%) had used Thai products before and had frequently used e-commerce platforms such as Taobao (55.6%), Jing Dong (32.3%), and T-Mall (8.8%). The results are consistent with prior studies which state that educated consumers with higher income levels are the main online shoppers in China and illustrate important factors that influence online purchasing intentions (Lee, 2009).

**Table 2** Descriptive Statistics of Variables

Independent Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Product Information Quality	1	5	3.48	0.72
Electronic Word-of-Mouth	1	5	3.65	0.85
Trust	1	5	3.54	0.64
Price Consciousness	1	5	2.79	0.92
Consumer Satisfaction	1	5	3.50	0.68
Consumer Preference	1	5	3.47	0.70

Source: Own Study

Table 3 Results of the Ordinary Least Squares Regression Analysis

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Coefficient and t-values	Hypothesis Test Result
H1: Product Information Quality	Consumer Satisfaction	0.49(5.26)***	Supported
H2: Electronic Word-of-Mouth	Consumer Satisfaction	0.12(1.15)	Not Supported
H3: Trust	Consumer Satisfaction	0.13(1.15)	Not Supported
H4: Price Consciousness	Consumer Satisfaction	0.04(0.51)	Not Supported
H5: Consumer Satisfaction	Consumer Preference	0.74(11.03)***	Supported

Note: Values in parentheses are t-statistics. *, ** and *** indicate significance at the 10%, 5% and 1% levels, respectively.
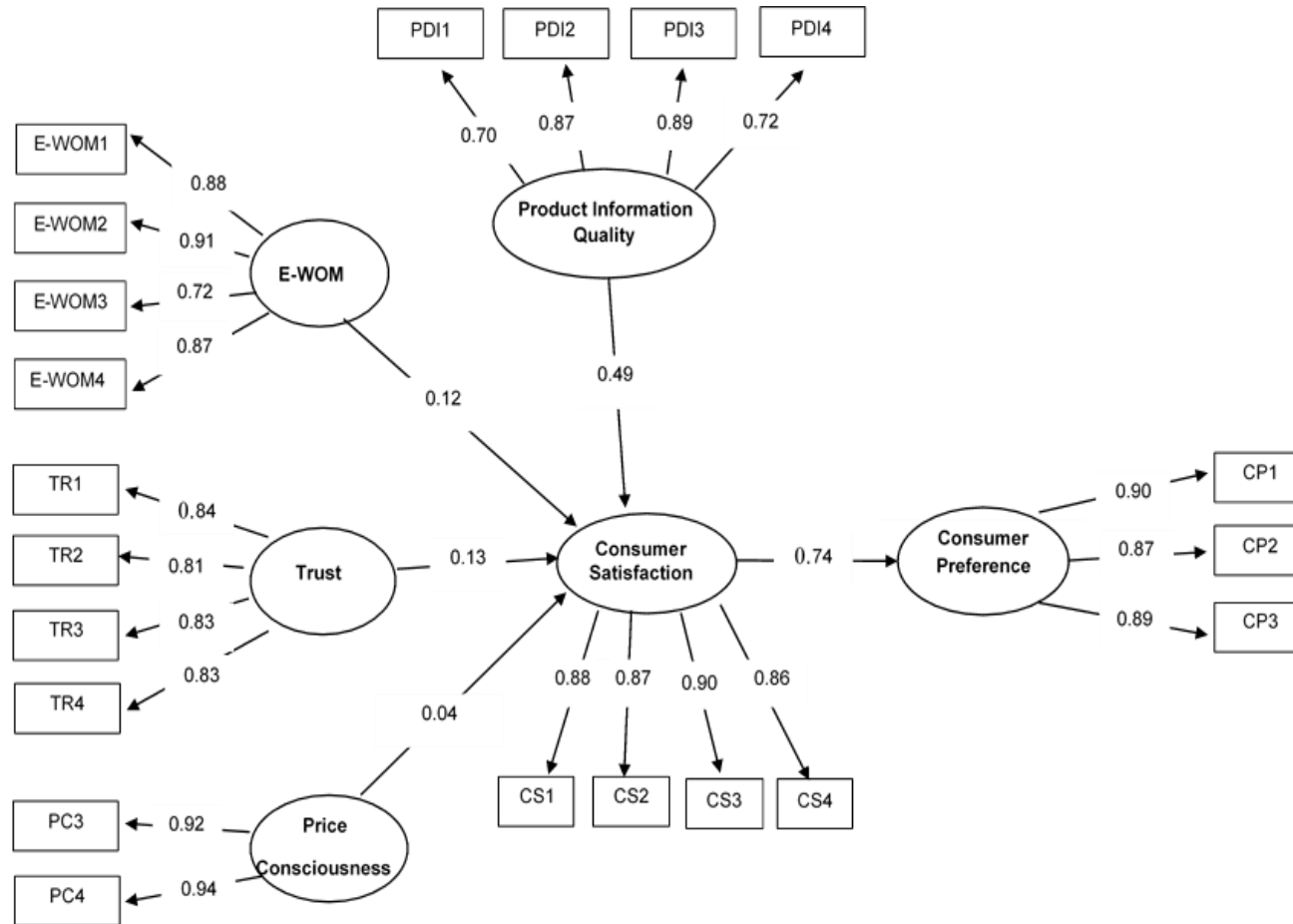
Figure 2 Relationship between Factors Affecting Consumers Satisfaction and Consumer Preference

Table 4 Total Effects between Variables

Dependent variable	Adjusted R^2	Effects	Independent variable				
			CS	PD	E- WOM	TR	PC
Consumer Satisfaction	0.403	DE	-	0.491	0.093	0.097	0.043
		IE	-	-	-	-	-
		TE	-	0.491	0.093	0.097	0.043
Consumer Preference	0.547	DE	0.742	-	-	-	-
		IE	-	0.365	0.093	0.098	0.032
		TE	0.742	0.365	0.093	0.098	0.032

Source: Own Study

Results Analysis

Table 3 and Figure 2, H1, H2, H3, and H4 examine the factors affecting consumer satisfaction, namely production information quality, electronic word-of-mouth, trust, and price consciousness. At the 0.01 significance level, product information quality had a positive and statistically significant relation with consumer satisfaction which supported H1. However, electronic word-of-mouth, trust, and price consciousness had limited influence on consumer satisfaction; thus, H2, H3 and H4 were not supported. In addition, H5 examined the effect of consumer satisfaction on consumer preference. At the 0.01 significance level, consumer satisfaction was found to influence consumer's preference, significantly supporting H5. This supports the notion that consumer satisfaction mediates the effect of product information quality on consumer preference.

Table 4 presents the overall model analysis that described the influence of independent variables on direct effect (DE), indirect effect (IE), and total effect (TE). Product information quality influenced consumer satisfaction at 0.49 with a significant direct effect at 0.49, whereas electronic word-of-mouth, trust, and price consciousness had an insignificant influence on consumer satisfaction with values at 0.093, 0.097, and 0.043 respectively. In addition, consumer satisfaction acted as an important mediator that influenced consumer preference at 0.742 with a significant direct effect at 0.742.

Furthermore, the structural validity of the model could be explained by the coefficient determinants of two variables, consumer satisfaction and consumer preference. The adjusted R^2 coefficient of consumer satisfaction at 0.403 revealed that 40% of the variance in consumer satisfaction was explained by production information quality, electronic word-of-mouth, trust, and price consciousness. On the other hand, consumer preference with the adjusted R^2 coefficients as 0.547, which counted as the medium, was influenced by

consumer satisfaction which could explain the variances constituting the percentages of 54.7. From the above statistical data, it can be interpreted that consumer's preference for online shopping is highly related to consumer satisfaction. Nevertheless, consumer satisfaction is significantly affected by product information quality. This implies that when the consumer is searching for product information on an e-commerce platform, production information quality is an important feature that affects the consumer's buying preference. Therefore, if the information provided by the website is reliable and accurate, this will increase consumer satisfaction, which will lead the consumer to make the initial purchase. The result is similar to that stated in the TRA theory and also with that hypothesized in this paper which states that an increase in product information quality will have a direct positive effect on consumer satisfaction. Information presented on the products is an important factor for consumer's consideration and affects consumer's attitudes and intentions. As information is helpful for consumers to evaluate the quality of a product or service (Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2001), information quality can affect consumer satisfaction when using online websites (Park & Kim, 2003). The result is also consistent with a prior study which identified that up-to-date information presenting products helps consumers with better decision making and helps satisfy consumer's information needs (Zhang et al., 2000). In addition, consumer satisfaction has played a significant role in building consumer preference in an online e-commerce platform which is in line with the previous finding that states that consumer satisfaction is an indicator that predicts future consumer behavior (Hill, Roche, & Allen, 2007). Therefore, it can be pointed out that product information quality plays a significant role in affecting Chinese consumer preference on an e-commerce platform.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper explored Chinese consumer preference towards Thai products by examining the factors that affect consumers' satisfaction. A research model that hypothesizes the key factors was developed and empirically validated. The key factors identified were product information quality, electronic word-of-mouth, trust, and price consciousness. The results reveal that for Chinese consumers in first-tier cities (Beijing, Shanghai, and Hangzhou) that make online purchases on e-commerce platforms, especially Taobao, Thai product information quality is the most important factor, with a significant positive effect on consumer satisfaction. On the contrary, trust, electronic word-of-mouth, and price consciousness have an insignificant effect. Additionally, Chinese consumer satisfaction was found to play a significant mediating role in Chinese consumer's preference on e-commerce platforms. The aforementioned findings is explained below.

Firstly, according to the statistics from Taobao.com and T-mall.com, in 2019 the top-ranking categories of Thai products by GMV on these two platforms were bird's nests and other nourishing food products, mattresses and bedding, facial makeup, sunscreen, etc. In

addition, many Thai products, apart from cosmetics, lacked a strong branding strategy but emphasized the product's intrinsic benefits, unique characteristics, and background story to create product identity. Hence, information regarding composition, ingredients, nutrition value, manufacturing process, local wisdom utilization, and product application are all crucial information that Chinese consumers look for on product information websites before they can make a purchase online. Different levels of shopping experience affect Chinese consumers' behavior differently (Pappas et al., 2014). Studies have shown that on a C2C e-commerce platform such as Taobao, where buyers and sellers have little or no prior interactions, it is rare to build trust spontaneously at the individual level (Pavlou & Gefen, 2004). This is especially true in the case of Thai products whereby consumers' shopping experience tends to vary; hence, product information quality becomes the main decisive factor that affects consumer satisfaction and gives it precedence over electronic word-of-mouth and trust.

Secondly, Chinese consumers residing in first-tier cities, in general, have high purchasing power and high exposure to foreign cultures which inherently makes them less price-conscious and more receptive to Thai products. Previous studies have shown that price-conscious consumers tend to engage more in information searching as they would spend more time evaluating product features. Hence, it is expected that consumers will be more interested in descriptive content messages (Gauzente, 2012).

Thirdly, the high emphasis on product information quality also reflects purchasing trends and the close relationship between China and Thailand in the e-commerce sector. This may be attributed to the fact that the three major e-commerce platforms used in this study, namely Taobao, Tmall, and JD, all have subsidiary companies in Thailand, namely Lazada and JD Central. In addition, both Alibaba and JD have close cooperation with the Thai government and related agencies, in the forms of Memorandums of Understanding and training projects, particularly for assisting Thai retailers to enhance marketing strategies such as product information quality, search engine optimization, and packaging on their respective e-commerce platforms.

Hence, with respect to the results of this study, it is imperative that Thai retailers not only maintain the quality of their products but also ensure high product information quality on Chinese e-commerce platforms. In light of the increasingly high competition, coupled with the growing demand for unique and premium imported goods, providing relevant, reliable, and quality information online will facilitate the consumers' understanding of Thai products and encourage a purchase decision. While marketing and localization are both indispensable to this process, over-localization can put the product at risk of losing its prestige as a foreign brand and an imported good. In addition, an in-depth understanding of Chinese market insights such as the internal economy, political situation, trends, and consumer behavior can all form important insights into Chinese consumer preference towards Thai products.

In conclusion, Thai product information quality on the surveyed websites had a great influence on Chinese consumer satisfaction, and thus influenced online purchase decisions. Therefore, having a clear understanding about the preference of Chinese consumers is beneficial to Thai products' online product presentation and marketing and, thus, key to penetrating China's online market.

However, this study also had limitations that can be improved in future research. First, the sample size of this study was quite small. This drawback might have influenced the research outcomes. Second, future studies should expand on the target group of online Chinese consumers that reside in other first-tier cities to yield a more accurate representation of Chinese consumer preference towards Thai products. Third, future studies should compare and contrast Chinese and foreign products to identify the competitive traits of Thai products that Chinese consumers prefer over their counterparts. Fourth, this paper did not analyze consumer satisfaction towards Thai products after purchasing decisions which is an essential part of the online shopping experience; hence, it is worthwhile to explore factors that affect consumer satisfaction towards after-sales service.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix 1

Table A1 Construct Measuring

Factors	Items
Product Information Quality (DeLone & McLean 2003; Park & Kim 2003)	(PIQ1) The information on the web site facilitate buying the products (PIQ2) The web site provides the relevant product information (PIQ3) The web site presents information that is easy to understand (PIQ4) This site provides up-to-date book information
Electronic Word-of-Mouth (Jalilvand & Samiei,2012)	(E-WOM1) I often read other consumers' online product reviews to know what products/brands make good impressions on others (E-WOM2) To make sure I buy the right product/ brand, I often read other consumers' online product reviews (E-WOM3) I often consult other consumers' online product reviews to help choose the right product/ brand (E-WOM4) I frequently gather information from online consumers' product reviews before I buy a certain product/brand
Trust (Gefen et al., 2003)	(TR1) Based on my experience with online shopping websites in the past, I know that they are trustworthy (TR2) Based on my experience with online shopping websites in the past, I know that they care about their consumers. (TR3) Based on my experience with online shopping websites in the past, I know that they are not opportunistic. (TR4) Based on my experience with online shopping websites in the past, I know that they keep their promises to their customers.
Price Consciousness (Sinha & Batra 1999. Linhtenstein et l.,1998)	(PC1) I tend to buy the lowest-priced brand that will fit my needs. (PC2) When buying a brand, I look for the cheapest brand available. (PC3) I usually buy—when they are on sale. (PC4) Price is the most important factor when I am choosing a brand.
Consumer Satisfaction (Bhattacherjee, 2001)	(CS1) I feel good regarding my decision to purchase products from an online shopping website (CS2) Purchasing products from an online shopping website is a good idea. (CS3) I am satisfied with the experience of purchasing products form an online shopping website. (CS4) On the whole, I am satisfied.
Consumer Preference (Kumar et l.,2017)	(CP1) I would recommend online booking to my friends and associate. (CP2) I would keep going back to online booking. (CP3) I would encourage everyone to go for online booking.

Table A2 Descriptive Statistics of the Respondent Profile

Measures	Items	Frequency	Percentage

Gender	Male	49	39.5
	Female	75	60.5
Age	Less than 25	17	13.7
	25-35	82	66.1
	36-45	22	17.7
	46-55	2	1.6
	Greater than 55	1	0.8
Level of Education	High School	1	0.8
	Undergraduate	39	31.5
	Post-Graduate	50	40.3
	Doctorate	30	24.2
	Others	4	3.2
Monthly Income (RMB)	Less than 3,000	10	8.1
	3,001-5,000	10	8.0
	5,001-8,000	16	13.0
	8,001-10,000	19	15.3
	10,001-15,000	18	14.5
	More than 15,000	48	38.7
	Others	3	2.4
Monthly Expense (RMB)	Less than 1000	5	4.0
	1,001-2,000	12	9.7
	2,001-3,000	17	13.7
	3,001-5,000	26	20.9
	5,001-8,000	27	21.7
	More than 8,000	36	29.0
	Others	1	0.8
Occupation	Student	19	15.3
	Office Worker	87	70.1
	Self-employed	9	7.3
	Others	9	7.3
Frequently used E-Commerce Platform	Taobao	69	55.6
	T-Mall	11	8.8
	Jing Dong	40	32.3
	Others	4	3.2