

Nigerians Perception of Products Made in China: A Catalyst Effect of the Standard of Living

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Abstract

This study discusses Nigerian perceptions of Chinese-made products by examining whether the country of origin (COO) impacts their consumption choices of these products. It argues that low-income level and the fall in the standard of living of the average Nigerian influences their perception and subsequently contributes to the increased purchase of products made in China. An extensive survey was conducted to explore various facets of this decision-making process and how it is affected by the multi-dimensional way in which China is perceived. It also reviews Immanuel Wallerstein's world-system theory, which addresses core-peripheral relations in order to understand the international dynamics underlying production and consumption of Chinese-made products in Nigeria.

Keywords: Nigeria; made-in-China; perception; consumption choices; low-income; decision making; core-peripheral relations

*Dedicated to the Almighty God and my late sister,
Yewande Oluwatayo*

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List of Acronyms

CBN	Central Bank of Nigeria
COA	Country of Assembly
COB	Country of Brand
COC	Country of Corporate Ownership
COD	Country of Design
COI	Country of Origin Image
COM	Country of Manufacture
COO	Country of Origin
COP	Country of Production
GDP	Gross Domestic Products
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NGN	Nigerian Naira
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
RMB	Chinese Renminbi
TLA	Technologically Less Advanced
TMA	Technologically More Advanced

Chapter 1. Introduction

On May 3, 2018, the federal governments of Nigeria and The People's Republic of China signed a bilateral agreement on currency swap. The deal, which has been undergoing rigorous negotiation since 2016 was worth \$2.35 billion, an equivalent of 15 billion Chinese Renminbi (RMB) and 720 billion Nigeria Naira (NGN) (*Guardian, 2018*). The agreement will provide Naira liquidity to Chinese businesses and provide renminbi liquidity to Nigerian businesses respectively, thereby improving the speed, convenience, and volume of transactions between the two countries (Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), 2018). This will improve the ease of doing business between both countries since both the Yuan and the Naira will be available on demand.

An important part of the agreement was that manufacturers--as well as importers and exporters from both countries--would trade without seeking a third currency. The statement read in part:

with the operationalization of this agreement, it will make it easier for most Nigerian manufacturers, especially small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and cottage industries in manufacturing and export businesses to import raw materials, spare-parts and simple machinery to undertake their businesses (*Premium Times, 2018*).

However, like every other policy actions by the government, this development has raised lots of concerns. As a Nigerian, one of my biggest concern is a question of who benefits from this deal. Will this be of equal benefit to both countries? Thinking through this, one of my biggest concern remains the potential increase of the already over-flowing made-in-China products in the Nigerian market. Made-in-China is a global phenomenon associated with "low-quality mass production of low-tech content" (Lin, 2014, p. 13), but has in recent times made its way into the Nigerian market and subsequently the heart of Nigerians. Statistics have shown that China has overtaken countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherland, Spain, among others, to become Nigeria's top trading partner with \$13 billion worth of products imported to Nigeria in 2016 (*CNN, 2018*).

In this study, I investigate how Nigerians perceive products that are made in China as well as understand the factors influencing Nigerians' decision to patronize

these products. I argue that low-income level and the fall in the standard of living of the average Nigerian influence their perception and subsequently contribute to the increasing purchase of products made in China. To make up for the low earnings, which have, in turn, affected the purchasing power of an average Nigerian, the thirst for inexpensive and low-quality Chinese-made products has become unquenchable.

To best understand the international dynamics underlying the production and consumption of Chinese-made products in Nigeria, this study reviewed Immanuel Wallerstein's world-system theory, which addresses core-peripheral relations. This study contributes to the discussion about the redefinition of relations between countries and the major power shift underway from the West to the East. This helps to establish China as a major world power in the making and perhaps a reason for the acceptance of made-in-China in a low-income country like Nigeria.

In light of these dynamics, the present study discusses Nigerian perceptions of Chinese-made products by examining whether the country of origin (COO) impacts their consumption choices of these products. An extensive survey explores various facets of this decision-making process and how it is affected by the multi-dimensional way in which China is perceived. Throughout the manuscript, phrases such as "made-in-China" and/or "Chinese-made" products would be used interchangeably to mean products with complete production and branding in China and by a Chinese firm or manufacturer.

The internationalization and globalization of markets have seen many multinational firms compete at the global level, where organizations embark on sophisticated marketing strategies targeting the needs and tastes of consumers around the world, thereby, introducing them to a vast number of foreign goods (Leonidou, Palihawadana & Talias, 2007; Mooij, 2000). Therefore, consumers form attitudes and preferences for the numerous brands and products. One of the strong factors that inform consumers buying decisions, is the product's country-of-origin (COO).

COO is an important factor that determines consumers' choice of products and it is usually emblemized by the phrase "made-in" (Leonidou, et al., 2007, Lin, 2014). The made-in cue is an extrinsic element that is used to evaluate the Country-of-Origin Image, (COI), (Han, 1988). The COI is the perception of the quality of products made in a country, and in most situations, the kind of people from that country (Knight & Calantone,

2000). In other words, it refers to the overall perception of attribute towards goods made in a country and the nature of people in that country (Ar & Kara, 2014).

However, the perception of a product's COO is not only influenced by the COI. This is because the COI does not remain static, it changes (Terpstra & Sarathy, 2000). These changes are due to factors such as:

alterations in the comparative advantage of nations, as well as in the competitive advantage of firms; changes in the socio-political and economic conditions in both selling and buying countries; introduction of new manufacturing technologies, as well as movements along the various stages of the international product life-cycle; changes in the way goods are marketed and communicated by both selling countries and organizations; and emergence of regional and/or global buyers (Leonidou, et al., 2007, p. 787).

Japan presents a case of a country whose Country-of-Origin Image changed over time due to globalization and perhaps the internationalization of products. In the past, Japanese products were considered inferior but have subsequently improved in overseas markets. Other attributes used by consumers to evaluate products are status consumption (Ar & Kara 2014; Okechuku & Onyemah, 2000) and consumers ethnocentrism (Chao, Wihrer & Werani, 2005; Leonidou, et al., 2007; Shimp & Sharma, 1987).

In this capstone study, I review my study and present my finding. In Chapter two, I present a brief history of the economic situation in Nigeria. This serves as background knowledge in explaining the situations that could afford Nigerians to patronize Chinese-made products. Subsequently, I review Wallerstein's world-system theory in order to explain the core-peripheral relations as they might be applied to Chinese and Nigerian relations before discussing the perception of Chinese presence in Africa. The third chapter focuses on the factors affecting consumer buying decision; the effects of COO, socioeconomic factors. I also discussed the limitations involved with previous COO studies. This is done to give a view to the idea that information about a country may influence consumers' perception of products from the country. Thereafter, I review empirical studies of COO in relations to products made in China. The fourth chapter gives a detailed information about the research method employed for data collections. The fifth chapter presents the findings and analysis of the data. The sixth chapter summarizes the entire paper and offers concluding thoughts.

Chapter 2. Background to the Study

2.1. Brief Economic History in Nigeria

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, with over 250 cultural/ethnic groups and 500 indigenous languages. The three major ethnic groups in Nigeria are the Yoruba, the Igbo, and the Hausa, accounting for 68% of the population; the Edo, Ijaw, Kanuri, Ibibio, Ebiraland, Nupe, and Tiv comprise 27%, and other minorities make up the remaining 7%. The official language in Nigeria is English—an outcome of British colonization, which ended in 1960. The two major religions in Nigeria are Islam (50%) and Christianity (49%); the remaining 1% of the population follows other religions. Nigeria is indeed a nation with multiple and diverse cultures.

Prior to the oil boom of the 1970s, agriculture was the mainstay of the Nigerian economy. The export sector in Nigeria was largely dominated by non-oil products such as cocoa, groundnuts, rubber, cotton, palm produce, and solid minerals (bauxite, columbite, coal, tin ore). The nation's main foreign exchange earnings at that time accrued from the sale of these cash crops (Oladipo, 2014). During this period, the industry and manufacturing sectors had increased growth rates until the period between 1980–1988 when the industry and manufacturing grew negatively by -3.2% and -2.9% respectively (Osevwe, 2010). The growth in the agricultural sector was unsatisfactory. The agricultural sector suffered from low commodity prices in the 1960s while the oil boom contributed to the negative growth of agriculture in the 1970s (Osevwe, 2010). By 1975, the economy had become a net importer of basic food items and consequently heavily depended on imported goods. The contribution of agriculture to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has reduced from 63% in 1960 to 34% in 1988 due to the neglect of the agricultural sector (Osevwe, 2010).

In the early 1970s, the emergence of crude oil production and exports radically changed the structure of the economy (Oladipo, 2014). The oil sector took over as the leading sector of the economy and, over time, the non-oil sector, particularly agricultural production, and exports became less competitive. During this era, the GDP recorded a 6.2% annual growth rate unlike the previous decade immediately after independence in 1960 when it grew by 3.1% annually (Osevwe, 2010). The boom in the oil sector lured

labour away from the rural sector to urban centres. The huge foreign exchange earnings from crude oil exports also gave room for the massive importation of goods, including food, to the extent that the terms of trade turned against agriculture (Oladipo, 2014).

This situation did not get better until the Structural Adjustment Policy, (SAP) of the IMF was introduced in 1986 (Okonkwo & Douglas, 2016). The economic policy to liberate the economy indeed contributed to the growth of the GDP. However, the SAP encouraged Nigeria to rely more on foreign products rather than strengthening the country's industrial and manufacturing sector (Okechuku & Onyemah, 2000; Nkamnebe, Ezenweke & Anionwu, 2009). First, the SAP introduced a series of policy measures targeted at opening the Nigerian market to foreign competition. These measures lowered import tariffs and entry barriers for foreign and domestic firms and import licensing procedures were revised, which allowed foreign manufactured goods to flood into the country (Okechuku & Onyemah, 2000). Today, Nigeria, being an import-dependent country since the 1980s, imports most of the products it consumes (a total of \$39.5 billion in 2015) (The Observatory of Economic Complexity, (OEC), 2017). Second, the policy affects both the purchasing power of Naira and income-earning opportunities in Nigeria was seriously reduced. This affected the purchasing power of the average consumer and as a result, they resorted to buy the counterfeit and low-quality product as a better alternative (Nkamnebe, et al., 2009).

Nigeria is just recovering from an economic recession which started shortly after being in a boom occasioned by a surge in world oil prices from 2012 to 2015. The impressive growth in national income before this period could not be sustained for obvious reasons among others, the "persistence of very large national budget deficit, huge merchandise trade deficits, growing levels of food imports (especially rice and pastries), the recent depreciation of the national currency occasioned partly by significant slump in world oil price and the drastic cut in crude oil supply by about 60 percent resulting from the militants activities in the Niger Delta, and the near total collapse of the power in Nigeria" (Okonkwo & Douglas, 2016, p.51).

In an economy like Nigeria's where the government is the biggest spender, the fall in the price of crude oil resulted in a reduced government revenue. This reduction in revenue subsequently reduced government spending and in turn affected every aspect of the economy, surprisingly, even the private sector. However, since the economy was

already depended on the importation of products, it became difficult for the average Nigerian to purchase the good quality products coming from the West. Thus, Chinese-made products became alternatives. Due to the low earnings which in turn reduced the purchasing power, Nigerians purchased the made-in-China products, most of which are known to be sub-standard.

2.2. China and Africa

Recent studies indicate that a healthy economic partnership is already developing between China, which is the world's most populated nation and Nigeria, also the largest population in Africa (Nkamnebe, et al., 2009). Shafaeddin (2008), asserts that "over the past 25 years, South-South (S-S) trade has been expanding faster than international trade. For example, the average annual growth rate of exports of developing countries to other developing countries during the period 1995–05 was more than 11%, compared to 6.6% for the world as a whole" (p. 1). Research and policy attention is increasingly being directed at the relationship between China and Nigeria as well as China and continental Africa as a whole. These relations have been manifested at both official and unofficial levels and have also been seen in symbolic political-cum-public-diplomacy projects (Nassanga & Makara, 2016). However, these relations have created a mixture of favourable and unfavourable outcomes.

Rossouw, Sofie, and Namhla, (2014) identify two perspectives to understand the Chinese business in Africa; "the formal and the informal sectors" (p. 8). On one hand, the formal sector often involved "governments of China and African states, diplomats and Chinese multinational corporations, with trade relations involving crude oil, agriculture, construction and telecommunication" (p. 8). On the other hand, the informal sector is involved in the "illegal importation of Chinese-made products into Africa by Chinese traders living in Africa." (Rossouw, et al. 2014, p. 9-10) As Rossouw elaborates, "[t]he informal sector allows poor traders with a low level of education to sell sub-standard, counterfeit and cheap products which are not healthy for the market" (2014, p. 9-10). This affects the development of the African economy, prevents the establishment of businesses that lead to job creation. Their study shows, even though China has a positive impact on the economic development of the African countries where the study was conducted, Chinese companies do not have good reputations there (Rossouw, et al. 2014).

Interestingly, another study on the morals involved in trade relations between China and Nigeria, reveals the desire among consumers in Africa to buy cheap products even if such products are known counterfeit. In their study, Nkamnebe, et al. (2009) note that prevailing counterfeit markets existing between Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in both Nigerian and Chinese are due to institutional weaknesses in both countries. This is attributed to “lack of efficient parallel structure (the black market) that will provide efficient movement of goods and money, and security support to the operators” (pp. 79-80). Secondly, this is precipitated by the unending desire for profit among most SMEs in both countries, and the willingness of Chinese firms to collaborate in producing and exporting anything once they are paid for. Finally, they argue that uncontrolled counterfeit imports from China would have obvious potential negative effects on the perception of Made-in-China products and of China as a COO (Nkamnebe, et al., 2009).

Nassanga and Makara, (2016), in their study, explore local perceptions of this trend looking at the media coverage of China in Africa, using Uganda as a case study. They argue that both the actors and the activities are largely at government levels, and the major focus is on politics, foreign affairs, and trade. Most respondents believed that Uganda benefitted from the relationship with China, but despite the portrayal of China as a benevolent nation, a considerable part of the coverage focused on China’s lack of transparency in its procurement processes, its marginalization of local companies, and the low quality of its products.

China’s engagement with Africa is viewed as a give-and-take relationship, where China’s hunger for resources is satisfied, and Chinese manufacturers flood African markets with goods such as clothing, jewelry, electronics, and building materials (Carmody, 2011; Rossouw, et al., 2014). Rossouw, et al., (2014), argues the perception of products imported from China is negative. The services rendered by Chinese are also considered low quality. Constructions executed by Chinese companies are often criticized for being poor (Rossouw, et al., 2014, p. 10). Overall, that the “life duration for Chinese products are always short and has become a norm for Chinese goods to be sub-standard (Rossouw, et al., 2014, p. 19). However, these low-cost products have helped lift the “standard of living of low-class family who can only afford these products” (Rossouw, et al., 2014, p. 10).

Some views are because China provides an alternative to Western (especially American) global dominance as traditional Western actors are finding their once undisputed influence and dominance of Africa being challenged by aggressive Chinese multinational corporations in collusion with the state (Nassanga & Makara, 2016, p. 24). Nassanga and Makara, (2016), argue that this relation is an effect of the “Beijing Consensus,” the approach which is relaxed and pragmatic, guided by the policy of “non-interference” in the internal affairs of African countries, but it seems Africans have found this approach more attractive than the “Washington Consensus,” by which aid often comes with demands to improve human rights and democracy (p. 24). Fergus (2013) notes that China’s position has been further strengthened by the shrinking foreign aid budgets of Western countries. The “good governance” agenda, which Western donors have sought to promote, seems to be under threat from China’s approach to business and its policy of non-interference.

Most Western perceptions do not hold a positive image of the China-Africa relationship. The increased interest of China and other countries in gaining access to Africa’s resources is often described as “the new scramble for Africa” (Carmody, 2011; Nassanga & Makara, 2016). Although access to resources is often the primary motive for increased engagement, the continent also offers a growing market for low-priced goods from Asia (Agbonifoh & Elimimian, 1999; Rossouw, et al., 2014). Others believe China’s commitment of billions in aid to Africa as part of a charm offensive (Fergus, 2013). They accuse China of cynically using development aid to buy favours from despotic leaders in Africa, implying that the engagement in Africa is motivated primarily by economic imperatives (Nassanga & Makara, 2016).

Despite these perceptions of made-in-China, Nigeria remains a big market for the products. Popular for its “low-quality mass production of low-tech content” (Lin, 2014, p. 13), China is the largest import origin of Nigeria, at \$13.6 billion on import, which constitutes approximately 35% of Nigeria’s total importation in 2016 (OEC, 2017). The volume of trade between Nigeria and China was over \$15 billion, an estimate of about 8.3% of China’s total trade with Africa in 2015 (*Premium Times*, 2016). It is followed by the United States with \$3.24 billion export value to Nigeria (OEC, 2017; *Premium Times*, 2016). Nigeria imports products such as electronics; cell phones, computers, electrical appliances, machinery, textile and so on. This makes Nigeria the biggest Chinese market in Africa (Nkamnebe, et al., 2009). China’s other export destinations are the US

(\$385 billion), followed by Hong Kong (\$287 billion), Japan (\$129 billion), South Korea (\$93.7 billion) and Germany (\$65.2 billion). Other countries include Vietnam, India, Netherlands, UK, and Singapore (Hong Kong Trade Development Council, (HKTDC), 2017; OEC, n.d). Other notable Chinese export destinations in Africa include South Africa and Zambia.

Though these figures continue to rise, China is considered the biggest manufacturers of sub-standard products with a short-life duration (Rossouw et al., 2014). Imports from China to Nigerian markets are often dumps of cheap products (Proshare, 2013). Due to their affordability compared to others, these products have helped millions of families keep up with the difficult economic situations in Nigeria. A report by the *New York Times* in 2015 claims that sub-standard Chinese-made products have taken over the Nigerian market. The report stated that it is evidence of Beijing's growing dominance in global trade and has become a national problem in Nigeria. It claims that the Nigerian market has become a dumping ground for products made in China and this had driven local companies out of the market, resulting in Chinese monopoly (*The New York Times*, 2015).

Chapter 3. Consumers Products Perceptions and Buying Behaviour

3.1. The World-System Theory

This research was also inspired by the world-system theory. The world-system theory was developed by Immanuel Wallerstein in 1974, as an analysis of the dynamics of the capitalist world economy as a total social system. Wallerstein developed the world-system theory to explain how Europe moved towards the establishment of a capitalist world economy in order to ensure continued economic growth after the collapse of the feudal system in the sixteenth century (Carlos, 2001). The fall of the feudal system resulted in a severe economic crisis, thus, as a response, the world economic system emerged.

The world-system theory provides a model for understanding both the change in the global system and the relationship between its parts. Wallerstein's approach to world history is evolutionary. He compares regions and national societies with each other within the same time periods, as well as compares them with earlier and later instances in order to comprehend the long-term trajectories of social change (Chase-Dunn, 2012). It is characterized by mechanisms which bring about a redistribution of resources from the periphery to the core. The world-system theory is considered an adaptation of the dependency theory because of its focus on understanding the periphery by looking at core-periphery relations (Carlos, 2001). Dependency theory posits that there is a relationship of unequal exchange in which the rich nations of the world enforced trade relationships with the poor, whereby; the rich extract surpluses from the poor (Carlos, 2001, p. 3).

Agreeing with Wallerstein (1974), Carlos (2001) argues that a world-system is a "multicultural territorial division of labour in which the production and exchange of basic goods and raw materials is necessary for the everyday life of its inhabitants" (p. 3). The world-system was based on an international division of labour that determined relationships between different regions as well as the types of labour conditions within each region (Carlos, 2001). Wallerstein sees the world economy as a large geographical zone within which there is a division of labour and hence internal exchange of basic and

essential goods as well as the flow of capital and labour (Wallerstein, 2004, p. 51). This division of labour refers to the forces and relations of production of the world economy. Since the world economies lack the unifying cement of an overall political structure or a homogenous culture, what holds them together is the efficacy of the division of labour (Wallerstein, 2004, p. 52).

A world system in what Wallerstein terms a capitalist world economy, “is integrated through the market rather than a political center, in which two or more regions are interdependent with respect to necessities like food, fuel, and protection, and two or more polities compete for domination without the emergence of one single center forever” (Carlos, 2001, p. 3). According to Wallerstein (1974), the world-system is a social system, one that has boundaries, structures, member groups, rules of legitimation, and coherence, while these structures are conflicting forces, it is largely self-contained, and the dynamics of its development are largely internal. One of the major structures of the world system is the power hierarchy between core and periphery, in which powerful and wealthy core societies dominate and exploit weak and peripheral societies (Carlos, 2001).

Wallerstein proposes four different categories, core, semi-periphery, periphery, and external, into which all regions of the world can be placed. These categories describe each region's relative position within the world economy as well as certain internal political and economic characteristics. These are geographically and culturally different, one focusing on labor-intensive, and the other on capital-intensive production. (Carlos, 2001). The core-periphery relationship is structural. Semi-peripheral states act as a buffer zone between core and periphery and have a mix of the kinds of activities and institutions that exist on them (Carlos, 2001). Technology is a central factor in the positioning of a region in the core or the periphery. Advanced or developed countries are the core, and the less developed are in the periphery (Carlos, 2001).

The core regions benefited the most from the capitalist world economy. Wallerstein argues that the states within this part of Europe developed strong central governments, extensive bureaucracies, and large mercenary armies. Therefore, the local bourgeoisie had control over international commerce and extracted capital surpluses from this trade for their own benefit (Carlos, 2001). The first core region was located in northwestern Europe and made up of the United Kingdom, France, and

Holland (Carlos, 2001). Today, the United States is an example of a core country. The U.S. has large amounts of capital, and its labour forces are relatively well paid.

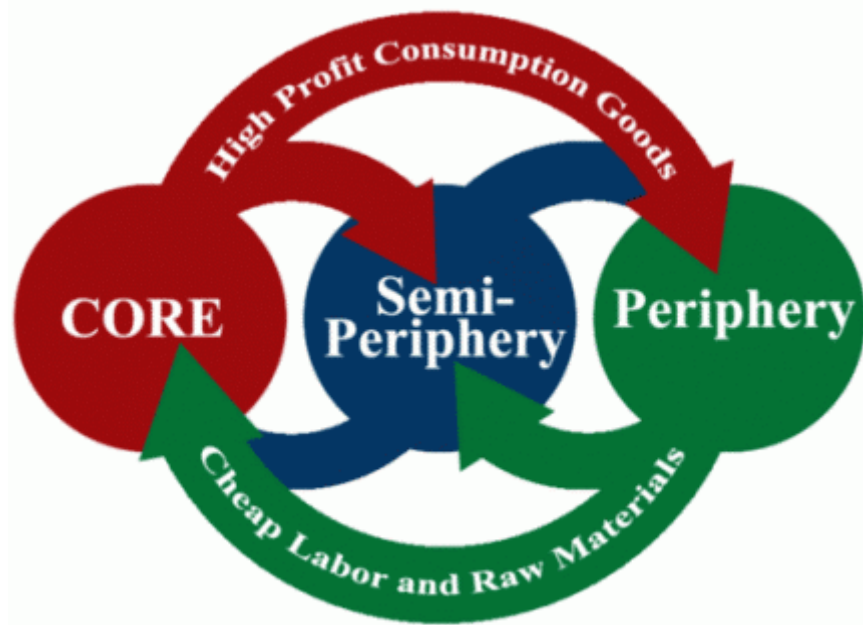


Figure 1. Wallerstein's World-System Theory

The peripheral regions lacked strong central governments and were controlled by other states, exported raw materials to the core, and relied on coercive labour practices (Carlos, 2001). The core expropriated much of the capital surplus generated by the periphery through unequal trade relations. Labour systems in these areas were mainly established to produce goods for a capitalist world economy and not merely for internal consumption (Carlos, 2001). Eastern Europe and Latin America were the first peripheral zones (Carlos, 2001). Today, most of the countries in Africa remain peripherals.

The semi-peripheries fall between the cores and the peripheries. These regions are considered either core regions in decline or peripheries attempting to improve their relative position in the world economic system (Carlos, 2001). China, India and most Southeast Asian countries are examples of improving periphery that became semi-peripheries. Economically, these regions retained limited access to international banking and the production of high-cost high-quality manufactured goods. Wallerstein argues that unlike the core, however, the semi-periphery failed to predominate in international trade and thus did not benefit to the same extent as the core (Carlos, 2001).

Conversely, the current world-system, the growth of China as a world economy and the continuous growth and industrialization of Southeastern Asia challenges this view. Perhaps, Wallerstein foresaw a major change when in his first book, *The Rise and Future Demise of The World-System Analysis* (1974) he predicts that the modern world-system is in a structural crisis, one that is both unpredictable and uncertain (Chase-Dunn, 2012). The world-system is presently experiencing a huge change, a major power shift from Europe and other Western countries to the East. Hoge (2004), notes that the transfer of power from West to East is gathering pace, such that China, India, and other Asian countries (East), most of which are formerly peripherals that now boast growth rates that could outstrip those of the major Western countries.

To a great extent, these prognostications have in fact materialized. China now occupies the leading position as the world's biggest economy, in terms of the Purchasing Power Parity (PPP), and of course the world's factory (Euromonitor International, 2014; Forbes, 2017; The World Bank, 2017). Eclipsing rivals such as the United State, Germany and even regional competitor Japan. The Chinese economy was the fastest growing economy during and after the global economy and financial crisis (Lardy, 2012). The Chinese economic growth started in the late 1940s after the founding of the People's Republic of China and fully manifest in the 1980s. Between the end of the 1970s and early 1980s, China's economy transformed from a centrally-controlled market to an open economy that is dependent on production and exportation of goods (Lin, 2014; Rossouw et al., 2014; The World Bank, 2017; Weforum, 2015, 2016).

However, considering China's growth and power in the world political-economic system, the questions remain whether consumers perceive Chinese-made product in the same way as Western products in Nigeria. How is made-in-China perceived? What factors influence Nigerians buying decisions? Further, in this study, I will be exploring the effects of the COO as a factor affecting product perception and purchase.

3.2. The Effects of the Country of Origin

The concept of country-of-origin (COO) is diverse and spreads across several research fields that relate to consumers' behaviour and attitude towards products made globally (Lin, 2014). COO has been one of the most researched subjects in the field of international business, business and marketing communication, consumer behaviour

and marketing since first studied by Schooler, (1965) (Leonidou, et al., 2007; Lin, 2014). Many scholars have conducted studies from diverse perspectives to understand the effects of COO (Ahmed, Johnson, Lopez, Gotsi & Andriopolous, 2011; Han, 1988; Lin, 2014; Nagashima, 1970; Okechuku & Onyemah, 2000; Yang, Fatt, Teng & Boon, 2004). Schooler (1965) notes that consumers' view of a product is greatly influenced by their knowledge of its country-of-make (Leonidou, et al., 2007). Suffice to say that, COO results in an attitude that influences the purchase of a product, whether favourable or not (Ar & Kara, 2014).

The term has been extensively defined by various researchers. To Pisharodi and Parameswaran (1992), COO is a developing model which states that people attach stereotypical "made in" perceptions to products from specific countries, which in turn "influences their purchase and consumption behaviors in multinational markets" (Develi, 2010, p. 175). Johansson, Douglas, and Nonaka, (1985), describe COO as the country where the corporate headquarters of the company that manufactures and markets a product or brand is located (Lin, 2014). That is the home country of a company (Ahmed et al., 2004; Yasin, Noor & Mohamad, 2007).

However, globalization and internationalization of businesses have resulted in most multinational corporations outsourcing production, assembly, and manufacture to countries other than the home country, usually less developed countries. Thus, introducing new concepts as country-of-manufacture (Okechuku & Onyemah, 2000), country-of-production (Ar & Kara, 2014), country-of-assembly (Ahmed et al., 2004), country-of-part, and country-of-design (Leonidou, et al., 2007). However, in a recent study, Sinrungtam (2013), identifies six aspects of the country of origin (COO) as the country-of-manufacture (COM), country-of-assembly (COA), country-of-parts (COP), country-of-design (COD), country-of-brand (COB), and country-of-corporate ownership (COC).

Further, instances of these are the hybrid products. For example, the Apple products, such as the iPhone that is produced and assembled in China, designed in California, and where its component and product's parts are from countries like Japan, South Korea, and Germany (Arnold, 2012). But despite the various COM, COA, COD, and COP an iPhone represents, consumers still perceive it as an American product. Therefore, the COO can refer to the country in which the product's brand originates

(Agrawal & Kamakura, 1999) and it may be dependent solely on the perception of the consumer (Lin, 2014). These concepts, COM, COA, COD, COP, though differ in context, may be generalized and be used interchangeably in this paper to mean COO.

The study of COO has been undertaken from a range of perspectives and examines a range of issues, including country-of-production image, trust, and perceptions of quality (Ar & Kara, 2014); choice of domestic versus foreign products (Han, 1988); corporate image on country image (Lopez, et al., 2011); celebrity and foreign brand name as moderators of country-of-origin effects (Chao, et al., 2005); roles of materialism and value consciousness (Sharma, 2011); image of country-of-origin and brand equity (Yasin, et al., 2007); and effect of multiple extrinsic cues on quality perceptions (Miyazaki, Grewal & Goodstein, 2005).

3.2.1. The COO and Product Evaluation

The COO information salience differs on information-processing strategies used by consumers in product evaluations. These cues could either be intrinsic cues, such as taste, shape and other features, or extrinsic cues like the brand, price, and durability (Sharma, 2011). While the former includes the quality of the product, the latter is an external feeling that has little to do with the quality. As an extrinsic cue, COO is used in the absence of intrinsic cues or personal experience with the product (Ar & Kara, 2014; Leonidou, et al., 2007), and makes it difficult to evaluate factors such as the product quality, performance, and reliability (Okechuku & Onyemah, 2000). Where a product is made has an impact on the consumer's judgment about product quality and further influences their purchasing decision (Han & Terpsta, 1988; Okechuku, 1994).

In addition, Kaynak, Kuankeminghian, and Hyde (2000), categorize consumers into groups of novices and experts. These two consumer categories differ in the types of information they desire when evaluating a product (Chao, 2005). A novice is more likely to rely on the COO information than an expert, who relies more on the qualities and other characteristics of the product to make a buying decision (Schaefer, 1997). Consumers employ COO to infer product quality when they have little knowledge of the product class and brand (Kaynak & Kucukemiroglu, 2001; Schaefer, 1997; Yun et al., 2015). Conversely, most consumers are not aware of the real COO of many popular brands, either because it is not necessary (Diamantopoulos, et al., 2011), or in some

cases, by over-generalizing the COO of a product. For instance, consumers perceive most products from Southeast Asia as made-in-China.

According to Develi (2010), people who receive product information to make a purchase decision are likely to interpret the attribute information in terms of pre-existing concepts that have positive or negative implications for the product's quality. They integrate these implications to arrive at a more general overall assessment of the product's quality and an evaluation of the product and transform this evaluation into a purchase decision (Hong & Dang, 2006). The product quality evaluation has a major influence on the consumer's purchase intention. A study by Dodds et al., (1991), on product's quality assessment in terms of likelihood, probability and willingness to buy in measuring the purchase intention show the influence of quality evaluation on purchase intention. (Lin, 2014)

Han (1989) highlights two perspectives that reflect the role of COO effects on product evaluation; the "halo" and "summary" effects. The halo effect hypothesizes that "consumers make inferences about product quality from the country image which subsequently influences consumer perception towards product attributes," while the summary construct "maintains that consumers make abstractions of product information into a country image, and this directly affects consumer attitudes toward brand" (Han, 1989, p. 223).

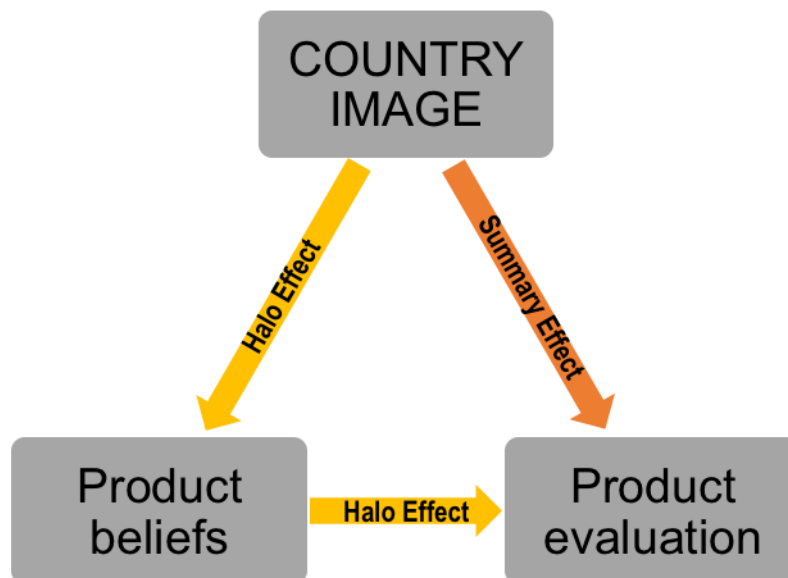


Figure 2. The Halo and Summary Effects

The Cognitive Attribute of the COO Effect

The effect of the COO is also determined by the preconceived ideas the consumer has about the country where the product is made. COO Image (COI) refers to the consumers' understanding of a country which is based upon their prior product perception of the strengths and weaknesses of the production and marketing of product from the country (Roth & Romeo 1992). The COI, usually expressed by the phrase "Made-in" (Ar & Kara, 2014), is the relative perceptions, impressions, or mental pictures of a country in an individual's mind (Lopez et al., 2011). Nagashima (1970), describes Product-Country Image (PCI), simply as:

Idea, emotional background and connotation associated with a concept. Thus, the made-in image is the picture, the reputation, the stereotype that businessmen and consumers attach to the product of a specific country. This image is created by attributes product category, national characteristics, economic development, experience and the way of life of the people (p. 68).

The COI has multiple dimensions such as the strength of the country's economy, the nature of its political system, technological competence, and cultural characteristics (Develi, 2010). This is because the identification of the origin of the product influences the perception of one or more other attributes of the product (Diamantopoulos, Schlegelmilch & Palihawadana, 2011). Miranda and Parkvithee, (2013), citing Lin and Chen (2006), note that consumers employ the COI as a way of assessing or determining the quality of a product based on their perception of the country's competence. In other words, the higher the perceived competence, the more capable the country is of manufacturing good products (Kaynak & Kucukemiroglu, 2001).

For instance, consumers' image of Japan would directly impact their perception of "Toyota" because it is a Japanese product, and in turn, their buying decision. This could be product-category-specific, or all the products and services made in a country. For instance, the positive perception of Germany in the manufacture of "luxury automobiles," computers and airplane in the United States, cosmetics in France, and electronics in Japan (Han, 1988; Okechuku & Onyemah, 2000). Thus, the COI of a product category may affect consumers' attitude about other products, especially product categories sharing the same characteristics (Ar & Kara, 2014).

The Emotional Attribute of the COO Effect

So far in this study, I have identified the cognitive attributes of the COO effects. The COO also has an affective connotation--a symbolic and emotional meaning for the consumer (Leonidou et al., 2007; Sharma, 2011). Miranda and Parkvithee (2013), identify three elements; the cognitive, affective and normative attributes in evaluating the COO effect on a product. The COO could be perceived in terms of status consumption, morality, and/or sense of national identity or patriotism (Han, 1988). For instance, consumers' decision to buy locally-made products as against imported goods is due to their judgment of the morality of buying foreign-made goods (Ahmed et al., 2004; Shimp & Sharma, 1987). This moral judgment is usually influenced by the buy local or buy domestic campaigns sponsored by governments of various countries (Leonidou et al., 2007). These types of consumers are referred to as ethnocentric consumers.

Han and Terpstra (1988) claim that the patriotic consumers prefer to buy domestic products not only on strictly nationalistic feelings but also consider their own products as being of high quality and better service than similar foreign-made products. Ethnocentric consumers buy locally-made goods even when the quality is perceived to be lower than the imported ones because they believe buying foreign-made products is unpatriotic and has negative effects on their economy such as reducing job opportunity (Sharma 2011; Shimp & Sharma, 1987). Such conduct is often an attribute of consumers from developed economies (Ahmed et al., 2004; Okechuku & Onyemah, 2000).

Conversely, status consumption is another attribute that involves an inclination towards a possessive lifestyle and could be perceived from three perspectives; success, centrality, and happiness (Sharma, 2011). Featherstone (2007) holds that there are different ways in which people use goods in order to create social bonds or distinctions. On the one hand, buying imported goods impact consumers' status in developing economies where using foreign goods amount to success, wealth and achievements, consequently, helping consumers make a positive impression on others (Cleveland, Laroche, & Papadopoulos, 2009; Okechuku & Onyemah, 2000). Miller (1995) notes that consumption stratification reflects the stratification that has already been determined by other factors, for instance, "by class, by which it could be argued that there is some almost invisible operation of sumptuary laws" (p. 136). Here, lifestyle preferences involve grouping of taste, consumption preferences, and lifestyle practices are associated with

specific occupation and class fraction and the struggle to obtain positional goods that define social status in the upper reaches of society (Featherstone, 2007).

On the other hand, consumers, especially in emerging economies, where the preference for foreign goods is high, perceive products made in developed countries to be of higher quality compared with products made in emerging markets (Sharma, 2011). For instance, a study of consumption pattern plots in a television advertisement in Nigeria and South Africa, Oyedele and Minor (2012) show the hedonism and idolization of Western ideals in Nigeria. According to Oyedele and Minor (2012), the

The plot is set to mimic Western ideals by projecting Western architecture and an array of popular tourist destinations in the West, usually the London Bridge, Westminster Abbey, the Eiffel Tower, the New York Wall Street district etc., and fashion styles that combine the Western and traditional garments. The goal of the protagonist is usually linked to one or a combination of the following hedonistic activities: dancing to Western-style music, happiness, enjoyment, vacationing in Western countries, searching for love by mimicking Western romantic motifs, and expressing Western conceptions of bodily beauty (p. 97).

The message here is that the consumption of the product will make the individual happy because the use of the product should connect the individual to the paradise of the West (Oyedele & Minor, 2012). Oyedele and Minor (2012) point out that the connotation derived; the hedonism and idolization of the West in Nigeria is structural. To them, we can trace this back to Nigeria's independence in 1960 when the British colonial administrators handed power over to the Nigerian elites who themselves acquired their status through British education. They simply put it;

...although these Westernized Nigerians were at the forefront of the nationalist movement in the early years of colonial rule, they became champions of British material culture as soon as they gained political power. Many of the elites were known to criticize all aspects of indigenous culture and religion. Some elites went as far as condemning non-religious aspects of the culture such as singing, dancing, and storytelling... in the eyes of the Nigerian elites, assimilation into Western culture can be achieved by acquiring a Western education, adopting Western etiquette, and consuming Western goods (Oyedele & Minor, 2012, p. 97).

The idolization of Western products, especially those from the former colonial masters persisted through the continuous Western hegemonic ideologies. The "colonial mentality"--neo-colonialism, the continued dominance of the West in Third World

countries like Nigeria through the ideas in the form of cultural imperialism, globalization, capitalism and other political-economic systems (Ahluwalia, 2001).

The Conative Attribute of the COO Effect

Apart from the cognitive and affective cues, the COO also has a normative connotation, such that consumers' perception about products from a country could be based on their approval or disapproval of the policies, practices or actions of that country (Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999). Hence, consumers reward some countries by boycotting their products and punish other countries by boycotting their goods (Smith, 1993). Further studies on hostile attitudes vary by socio-demographic and psychological consumer characteristics (Wang & Lamb, 1983). In line with this is situational economic animosity--the perception of products resulting from feelings of economic dominance or aggression among the population of a nation towards a hostile country and related to temporary economic events (Nisco, Mainolfi, Marino & Napolitano, 2015; Sharma, 2011).

Prior studies indicate that evaluation of foreign products may also be based on the level of marketing strength (Sharma, 2011), such as aggressive promotion and price reduction techniques. For instance, companies from developed economies like the US, UK, and Germany are in a better position to provide sophisticated marketing strategies for their products abroad than firms from emerging economies, who lack proper management and marketing skills (Zhang, 2002). Again, it is noteworthy that attitudes towards buying foreign products are also determined by the kind of product under consideration, a variety of products have purchasing risks attached to it which in turn impacts product evaluation (Miranda & Parkvithee, 2013). Shimp and Sharma, (1987) also argue the COO cues appear to be stronger among the elderly, the less educated, the politically conservative and those with a high level of purchases (Ahmed et al., 2004; Anderson & Cunningham, 1972). That is, the COO effect also has a larger influence on "big spenders rather than the economy shoppers" (Lin, 2014, p. 32).

3.3. Socioeconomic Factors

It is not every consumer that uses the COO cues to evaluate products, nor do they use them in the same way, socioeconomic and other demographic features such as the age, gender, race, and education also have an impact on consumers' purchasing decision (Gurhan-Canli & Maheswaran, 2000a; Lin, 2014; Papadopoulos et al., 1990b; Schooler, 1971; Sharma, 2011). Individual's personal experience remains an important attribute that influences their attitude towards foreign-made products (Anderson & Cunningham, 1972). For instance, consumers with different levels of education and income regard foreign products differently.

Similarly, the factors affecting consumers buying decisions vary across cultures based on the diverse cultural patterns present in different countries (Gurhan-canli & Maheswaran, 2000a). In their study, Okechuku and Onyemah (2000), investigate ethnic differences in the perception of made-in-Nigeria label, the Country-of-Manufacture (COM) and preferences for foreign products among Nigeran consumers. The findings indicate that to the Yoruba tribe, the COM is more important, while the Igbo tribe are influenced by the price of the commodity, and the Hausa tribe prefers reliable products. On product specificity, the Yorubas' preference is for foreign cars, while Igbos and Hausas prefer foreign television sets.

Hofstede (1980), identifies various cultural indices, such as individualism and collectivism, power distance, and masculinity and femininity. Power distance is another cultural index that refers to "the extent to which less powerful members of organizations within a country accept the unequal distribution of power," which in turn affects their purchasing power (Hofstede, 1980, p. 390). Thus, the first class, the middle class, and the lower class. The first class being the most influential and wealthier and the lower class, just as the name implies are the opposite of the first class. This is also referred to as the social class.

The individualistic culture refers to the cultural demonstrator that gives prominence to the individual rather than group interest. Collectivistic culture considers group rather than individual interest (Nkamnebe, et al., 2009). In other words, individualistic and collectivistic cultures respectively are cultures where "people look after themselves and their immediate family members only, and where people look after the

interest of larger groups and collectivities in exchange for loyalty” (Hofstede, 1980, p. 390). The evaluations and cognitive responses converge to show that the ‘individualists’ evaluate the home country’s product more favourably only when it was superior to the competition (Lin, 2014). In contrast, ‘collectivists’ evaluated the home country product more favourably regardless of its superiority (Gurhan-canli & Maheswaran, 2000a).

According to Hofstede (1980), masculinity as a cultural construct, on one hand, refers to the value placed on material things, power, and assertive behaviour, while femininity, on the other hand, refers to value affiliation (Nkamnebe, et al., 2009). For instance, the Igbos in Nigeria have also been argued to portray evidence of masculinity by favouring, on one hand, hard work and the other, material things as a correlate of success (Nkamnebe, et al., 2009). The foremost African novelist Chinua Achebe in his book, “*Things Fall Apart*”, portrayed the Igbo culture as one that abhors laziness and celebrates hard work, material acquisition, and bravery (Achebe, 1959).

3.4. Empirical Analysis of Studies on Made-in-China Products

Various studies have been conducted to investigate how consumers perceive products from countries all over the world. A lot of these studies focus on developed nations and some developing countries (Ar & Kara, 2014; Leonidou et al., 2007; Nagashima, 1970), with little attention on Africa (Agbonifoh & Eliminian, 1999; Ahmed et al., 2002). Kaynak and Kucukemiroglu (2001), in their study, investigate Hong Kong consumers’ perception of foreign products after the Chinese takeover of 1997, comparing products from four advanced countries of Germany, Japan, the UK and the US, with products from China. The study results indicate that the made-in image of Chinese products among Hong Kong consumers is not favourable except in areas related to price (pp. 123-131). This could be due to the general belief that made-in-China products are of low price and low quality. Though the results reveal that most of the products from the West and Japan are manufactured in China, a considerable number of the respondents show a preference for products made in developed countries (Kaynak & Kucukemiroglu, 2001, pp. 130-133).

In the same vein, a study of British consumers' evaluations of the US and Chinese goods also rate China high on pricing considerations. Leonidou, et al. (2007) note that brand equity and model are significant to products evaluation. First, the study indicates that Chinese products were rated high on pricing considerations. However, US high evaluation for non-price factors proved that COO effects are based on the level of development in a country. Second, consumers evaluation at the country, industry and product level differs on brand equity and model. For instance, when Whirlpool and Haier brands were compared, the high brand equity of Whirlpool was responsible for increasing the positive image of US products, while the low brand equity possessed by Haier further diminish the reputation of Chinese product. But when the information and features of the actual models were presented, the evaluation became reverse. This implies that consumer evaluation of products depends on the nature and content of information provided (Leonidou, et al., 2007, pp. 803-807). The study also shows that China rated high on internal product and technology. The fact that this high evaluation would not be a few years ago clearly indicates that consumer evaluations are not static, but change over time (Leonidou, et al., 2007, pp. 806-812).

In another study, Agbonifoh and Elimimian (1999), investigate the attitude of consumers in a developing country towards COO products in an era of multiple brands. The study looks at Nigerian consumers attitude towards product made-in-Nigeria compared to the ones made in Technologically More Advanced countries (TMA) such as the UK, US and Japan and Technologically Less Advanced countries (TLA). They submit that made-in-Nigeria products were considered inferior compared to products from these TMA and TLA countries. Consumers evaluation was completely negative on all factors and qualities. The results also show that Nigerians rate products made-in-Ghana higher than Nigeria. Though Ghana is less technologically advanced than Nigeria, this suggests that "mere foreignness" of the product may be a reason for the preference (p. 111).

Also, a study of Turkish consumers' perception of Germany and Chinese products show that Chinese products are low-quality (Develi, 2010). According to Develi, (2010), 40.9% of the respondents believe that Chinese products don't have high technology, and 36.1% of them think the Chinese products have high technology, 20% are hesitant. For German product, 55% of the respondents believe that German products have high technology, where 35% of them think the German products don't

have high technology, 10% are hesitant (p. 181). These figures clearly indicate that the preference for Germany product is not just because the products are higher in quality, but because the country Germany is perceived to have the higher technology.

In a related study of Turkish consumers, Ar and Kara (2014), evaluate emerging market consumers' perceptions of product image, trust, and quality of global brands made-in-China. The findings show that the overall perception of China among Turkish consumers is negative. First, the results indicate that the Turkish believe China does not respect citizens' freedom. Second, they have an unfavourable response towards the work environment and environmental protection in China. The global trust for Philips and Adidas was negatively affected when consumers became aware that they were manufactured in China. Ar and Kara (2014), conclude that product evaluation and buying decision of global brand significantly correlate with "quality perception", "country-of-origin image", and "brand trust" (pp. 494-500).

In another study, Nisco et al. (2015) examine the role of economic animosity as an antecedent of consumer ethnocentrism and their perception of foreign countries and products. The results show that, first, higher levels of animosity towards a foreign country do not affect either the perceived level of the general country image or the perceived quality of the products made in the country. However, findings show a strong and negative relationship between consumer animosity and product receptivity; that is, consumers with a higher level of economic animosity are less willing to welcome more imports from countries "perceived as hostile, they show a lower level of pride and are less available to share positive word of mouth" (Nisco et al., 2015, p. 65). Second, that economic animosity towards a foreign country is also able to increase sentiments of ethnocentrism, favouring the preference for domestic products and services as an expression of "patriotism" and, consequently, the potential avoidance and in extreme cases, organized boycotting of foreign suppliers (Nisco et al., 2015, p. 65).

A study by Sharma (2011), examines COO effects in developed and emerging markets by exploring the contrasting roles of materialism and value consciousness. Findings reveal that highly ethnocentric consumers have less favourable perceptions of imported products while materialistic consumers generally have a more favourable perception of foreign-made goods. Further, the results show that emerging market consumers have more positive perceptions toward products imported from developed

countries compared to those from their markets. Therefore, consumers from emerging market have a stronger negative association for products imported from developing markets and a positive one for the developed market.

Perhaps, a study on regional labeling could proffer solutions to the consumer ethnocentrism and materialism studies. To this end, Smith (1993), suggests that the use of regional labeling could reduce some of the negative COO effects on consumer attitude towards products imported from developed countries. In doing this, he compared products of US origin; a piece of cloth and a glass of wine with the same produced in four regions of Africa, Asia, Latin America and Western Europe across age groups. His findings reveal that age plays a major role in consumers' buying decision. For instance, a major difference in the evaluation of wine glass is that the younger generations believe that the Asian glass is more modern than African's, while the older respondents offered a more positive evaluation of foreign wine glass. Overall, his findings show that African and Latin American regions were evaluated as being comparable with Western Europe.

Ahmed et al., (2002), investigate Singaporean consumers' attitude toward low-involvement products, such as bread and coffee in the newly industrialized nation. Findings indicate that COO affects consumers' evaluation of low-involvement products in Singapore, as much as it affects high-involvement products in developed countries. When a food product with a favourable image is "skillfully projected," it can increase the chance of successful market entrance in Singapore (p. 114). Conversely, Ahmed et al., (2002), also note that, indeed, COO matters when evaluating low-involvement products, but its impacts become weaker in the presence of other extrinsic cues, such as price and brand. In this case, the price becomes the determinant factor.

3.5. Limitations of the COO studies

Notably, one can generalize that the root of most COO effect studies lies in the buyer's perception of a product. Most of the existing knowledge shows that the most COO studies are associated with product related variables, such as the perception of product quality, price, design, technology, and brand, and these product attributes are assessed by the customers who are influenced by its COO image (Lin, 2014). However, the converse way of how those attributes affect the image of the COO is less studied. In other words, the COO image may be changed by the attributes that associated with the country's product, and this part of studies needs to be explored further. Similarly, there have been studies that show the perception of the COO as not constant, but changes over time (Leonidou, et al., 2007; Terpstra & Sarathy, 2000). However, studies on how it changes remained premature.

Interestingly, one of the biggest controversies in the COO study is the significance and insignificance of the COO cues on the product evaluation. In spite of the salient interest in the COO research and the abundant empirical evidence to support the COO effect on consumer purchase behaviour in the academia, one may argue that in reality, most consumers care very little about a product's origin, a clear disconnect between reality and academic research (Lin, 2014). Prior studies show that very few consumers knew the COO before purchase while most of them reveal that they did not know and had no interest in knowing a product's origin (Lin, 2014). A similar study by Balabanis and Diamantopoulos, (2008) indicate that consumers neither possess much accurate knowledge of the origin of brands nor actively seek out such information (Lin, 2014).

Another controversy lies in whether the COO remains relevant or not. Usunier (2006) argues that it has become increasingly difficult for consumers to determine the COO information, mostly due to the change in labeling requirements as more countries develop the necessary wherewithal to manufacture products (Lin, 2014). The limitations can be seen in several aspects. First, much of the COO research tends to focus on the consumer's perspective, particularly on how the COO affects consumer's evaluation of product quality (Wang, Li, Barnes, & Ahn, 2012), while little or no research attention has been given to how the COO effect has changed over time (Leonidou, et al., 2007). Though the COO concept has often been deeply entrenched and tends to endure over

time, they are not inevitable (Lin, 2014). A negative country image may be improved through various marketing activities such as advertising or national export promotion campaigns. These all seek to enhance the general image of a country and their national product's image (Lin 2014, p. 37).

Lin (2014) argues that despite the “generalizations deduced from the combined literature on the COO, a recurring criticism is that the main thrust of the studies has been as ‘effect’ studies rather than ‘theory’ studies” (p. 37). Very few studies have been theoretical or conceptual framework-driven or linked to buyer behaviour models (Lin, 2014).

Lastly, another limitation is the country for study. Previous studies on the COO have compared the US (Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran, 2000a), the member countries of the European Union, Japan, newly industrialized economies (NIEs) in Asia, Mexico, and Brazil (Lin, 2014). In about 100 COO studies reviewed by Fong and Burton (2008), most of the research was conducted in more developed, Western countries (Lin, 2014). They found that very limited studies have investigated the COO effects in countries like China (Zhang, 1996; Lin, 2014), the less developed countries like India and Nigeria (Cordell, 1993; Okechuku & Onyemah 2000).

Chapter 4. Methodology

This research adopts the quantitative method of the survey to understand the views of the Nigerian consumers. The design will investigate Nigerians' perception of Made-in-China products. This study will look at what other factors influence their purchasing decisions; the perception of China as the country of origin of these products; and whether their perception of the country affects their perception of the products. Therefore, the major questions this paper seeks to answer are; a) how do Nigerians perceive products that are made in China? b) What factors influence Nigerians' decisions to purchase products that are made in China?

Cross-sectional data were obtained for the survey. Cross-sectional surveys involve the collection of data at a single point in time from a sample drawn from a specified population (Visser, Krosnick, Lavrakas, & Kim, 2013). This kind of survey is used not only for the purposes of description but also to determine the correlations between variables at the time of the study (Babbie, 1990). The survey remains an essential tool when addressing topics that are difficult to assess using other approaches. Again, it is important to reiterate that the survey involves studies that deal with opinions, attitudes, reasons, belief and the perception people have about an issue. This is in line with Bennett, Khangura, Brehaut, Graham, Moher, Potter, and Grimshaw (2011), who believe that it is employed in studies assessing constructs that require individual self-report about beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, opinions, or satisfaction.

The survey method provides the opportunity to question a larger and more representative population. Visser et al. (2013) claim that the survey involves the collection of data from a sample of elements drawn systematically to be representative of a well-defined, large, and geographically diverse population. Rea and Parker (2014) hold that it is impractical and uneconomical to collect data from every single person in a population, and therefore, a sample of that population is then chosen.

The choice of the research method was guided by philosophy, like other human inquiry, it is a set of perspectives and principles that provide the grounding and rationale for its existence (Lin, 2014). In the social science field, the philosophical objective is such that the principle behind the study is to regulate "the search for and acquisition of

social knowledge about social reality through a series of inter-subjectively accessible and justifiable methodical steps” (Lin, 2014, p. 61). This research places scientific realism as its philosophical stance to guide the research process and the choice over methodology. Positivism as a philosophical stance holds the world as being real and existing independently from the human existence. The world is seen as an ordered, structured place that is governed by physical laws. It posits that the goal of knowledge is simply to describe the phenomena that we experience (Lin, 2014).

Positivist epistemology believes that knowledge can only be gained by gathering facts in a systematic and objective manner, predominately by the experimental method and by testing of hypotheses to gradually build laws (Lin, 2014). The aim is to refine them and achieve applicability on a universal level. The purpose of positivist science is simply to stick to what can be observed and measured, and a positivist would hold other knowledge beyond that as impossible. Positivists do believe that social scientists should use quantitative methods and aim to identify and measure social structures (Abbott, 2010).

To Bryman (1984), the survey is typically the preferred instrument of research because it can apparently be readily adapted to such concerns. In explicating his ideas, he notes that:

through questionnaire items, concepts can be operationalized; objectivity is maintained by the distance between the observer and observed along with the possibility of external checks upon one's questionnaire; replication can be carried out by employing the same research instrument in another context; and the problem of causality has been eased by the emergence of path analysis and related regression techniques to which surveys are well suited (p. 77).

The data for this study were obtained from an online survey using SurveyMonkey® software provided by SurveyMonkey. In recent years, online surveys have become one of the most prevalent ways for data collection among researchers as well as people in organizations who use it for general data gathering (Bangura, 1991; Kohler, 2015). According to Hoonakker and Carayon (2009), the online surveys are increasingly popular because they are easier to handle for researchers as the databases provide information to track the number of respondents and allow the researcher to send the targeted reminders. It is more cost-effective when looking at the potential number of respondents who are not bound by geographical barriers, since it is perceived as a

faster, easier, better, and cheaper method (Julien, 2012; Schonlau, Fricker, & Elliott, 2002).

Aside from these, web surveys also simplify the implementation of real experiments (Kohler, 2015). Online survey greatly facilitates analysis of data gathered by moving electronic responses directly into analysis software (Julien, 2012). One of the weaknesses of online survey is that participant must have access to a networked smartphone and/or computer. It may be practical for certain populations but not so for those without digital access. Bangura (1992) argues that fixed-choice questions limit logical answers that could be made by the respondents because whatever they say or choose can only confirm or oppose an assumption. Questionnaires limit the idea of discourse because questions and answers follow a “system of stimuli and response rather than as a form of communication” (Bangura, 1992, pp.8-9). For instance, questionnaires are usually fixed choice or yes-no type, Likert format and less often open-ended questions. Nonetheless, well-structured surveys generate standardized data that are extremely amenable to quantification and consequent computerization and statistical analysis. This quality has been enhanced through rapid advances in computer technology as well as through the development and refinement of complex analytical statistical software packages and techniques (Rea & Parker, 2014).

Invitations to participate were sent out, containing a link to the questionnaire on various social media platforms including WhatsApp, Twitter, and Instagram as well as through Emails; on my Facebook page and groups that relate to or deal with Nigerian issues. My family members, friends, and university colleagues were invited and kindly requested to forward the invitation to as many people as possible, taking the form of “snowball sampling” (Schmidt & Hollensen, 2006). The snowball, known as the referral sampling mode is a non-probabilistic method that is capable of recruiting participants at a low cost and from a large geographic area (Baltar & Brunet, 2012; Patton, 2014). It relies on previously identified members of a group to identify other members of the population. As newly identified members name others, the sample snowballs (Fink, 2010). However, snowball sampling is known to have disadvantages, including the inability to generalize the findings because of sampling biases introduced by the method (Scott & Vigar-Ellis, 2014). Also, sample representativeness is not ensured, and findings, therefore, cannot be generalized to the population with any level of confidence (Hair, Money, Samouel, & Page, 2007).

The survey is reserved for participants who considered themselves Nigerians either in or outside Nigeria. Participants who do not consider themselves as Nigerians were excluded. My survey gathered the views of Nigerians both in the diaspora and at home. The survey was also restricted to Nigerians who have access to the internet and who understand the content of the survey which is in its simplest form. The subgroup serves as the sample size and according to Babbie (1990), provides more accurate information than questioning every member of a population, noting that the quality of data gathered in a large survey might be lower than the ones obtained in a smaller and more manageable one. Participants were at least 18 years of age and were recruited by their voluntary participation. Before beginning the survey, participants were made aware of the purpose of the study and the contact information for the researcher. In this same screen, participants were briefed about their right to withdrawal at any moment or if any of the questions make them feel uncomfortable. The instrument used to collect data was proposed to and approved by the Simon Fraser University Office of Research Ethics.

The online survey was comprised of 22 questions and divided into five sections. The first section contained four demographics questions and three questions each inquired whether the respondent adhered to Nigerian identity. The second section addressed the perception of China as a country. This section had four close-ended questions and one Likert scale. The third section addressed factors influencing purchase decisions. This section had three close-ended questions and two Likert scales. The fourth question addressed the perception of product made in China and contained two close-ended questions and one Likert scale. The last section posed one close-ended questions, one Likert scale and one open-ended questions on whether the participants would like to share any further comments or opinion about the study.

Chapter 5. Analysis and Findings

A total of 128 participants answered the online survey. While two of the respondents chose Ghana and Niger as their country of origin, all 128 respondents identified as Nigerians. Out of the 128, 102 reside in Nigeria, while others reside in places such as Canada, Niger, Philippines, the United Kingdom and the United State. Seventy participants are between the ages of 18 and 24, forty-seven, 25 – 34, while 11 participants are between ages 35 and above. Seventy-one respondents identified as male, 54 as female and three preferred to self-describe.

Out of the 128 participants, 86 of them earn an average of less than 100,000 NGN monthly, 8 earn less than 200,000 NGN and 34 respondents earn a monthly household income of 200,000 NGN and above. The results are shown in Table 1. below. This explains that purchasing decisions could be based on financial ability. Since the income is relatively low, it is indeed really difficult to purchase some other branded and well-known products from Europe. Low-income earners tend to settle for cheap and affordable commodities while the COO effect has a larger influence on the big spenders.

Table 1. Average Monthly Household Income

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Under ₦10,000	13.28%	17
Between ₦10,000 and ₦59,000	39.84%	51
Between ₦60,000 and ₦99,000	14.06%	18
Between ₦100,000 and ₦149,000	3.91%	5
Between ₦150,000 and ₦199,000	2.34%	3
Between ₦200,000 and ₦250,000	5.47%	7
Over ₦250,000	21.09%	27
TOTAL		128

5.1. Perception of China as a Country

Since the study is to gather the views Nigerians hold about made-in-China products, it is therefore important to first understand how Nigerians perceive the country China. The questions in this section inquire respondents' degree of contact with China. Out of the 128 participants, only thirty-five have Chinese friends, 87 do not have friends who are Chinese and none of the respondents have been to China. When asked what means informs them about China, there were 43 responses for an interpersonal relationship with others; media forms (including news, advertisements, and movies) with 194 responses; and five participants adding the Internet to their responses. Therefore, it could be deduced that the media was a significant contributor to respondents' perception of China. While it is important to understand how the participant gets information about China, it is not within the scope of this study to understand how the media shape or influence how Nigerians perceive China and whether or not it affects their perception of products made-in-China. Future studies should address these issues.

Table 2. Sources of information about China

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Interpersonal relationships with others	35.24%	43
News	68.85%	84
Advertisements	37.70%	46
Movies	52.46%	64
Other (please specify)	7.38%	9
Total Respondents: 122		

It is surprising that despite the little or no contact with China except for what the media presents, the majority of the respondents hold strong and favourable perceptions of Chinese culture, people, working conditions, and the economy. The exceptions to these positive appraisals were in the areas of politics, governmental policies, and environmental conditions, where the majority of the respondents preferred to be neutral. This is evident in the subsequent question where 58.20% agreed that their perception of China would affect their decisions about purchasing Chinese-made products. Again, this

could be due to the COO Image of China– the relative perception, impression and mental pictures of the country in an individual’s mind and its influence on their buying decisions.

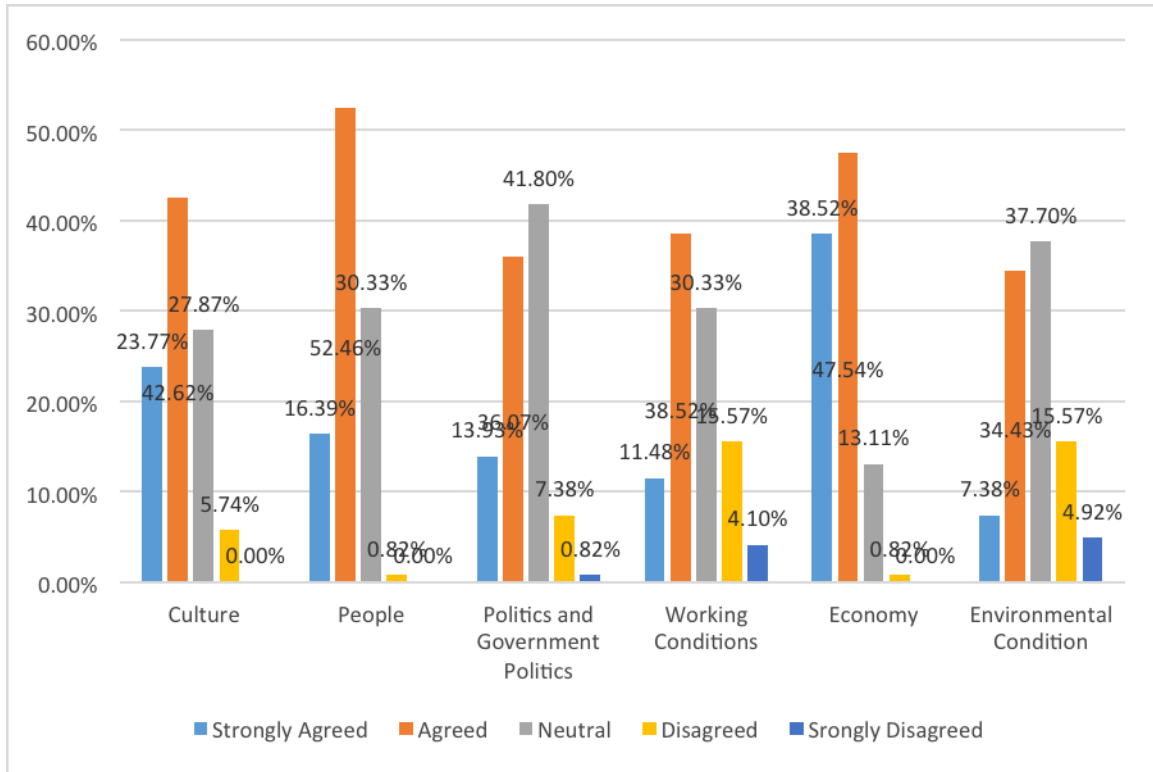


Figure 3. Respondent answers showing perceptions of China as a country

5.2. Factors Influencing Purchase Decision

In this section, participants were asked to rate factors that are likely to affect their buying decision. Participants used the Likert scale to respond to how certain products features may influence their decision. These include features such as price, appearance, quantity or quality, the similarity with the original, the country of origin and brand. The results in Figure 3 below show that majority of the respondents are either likely or very likely to be influenced by these factors.

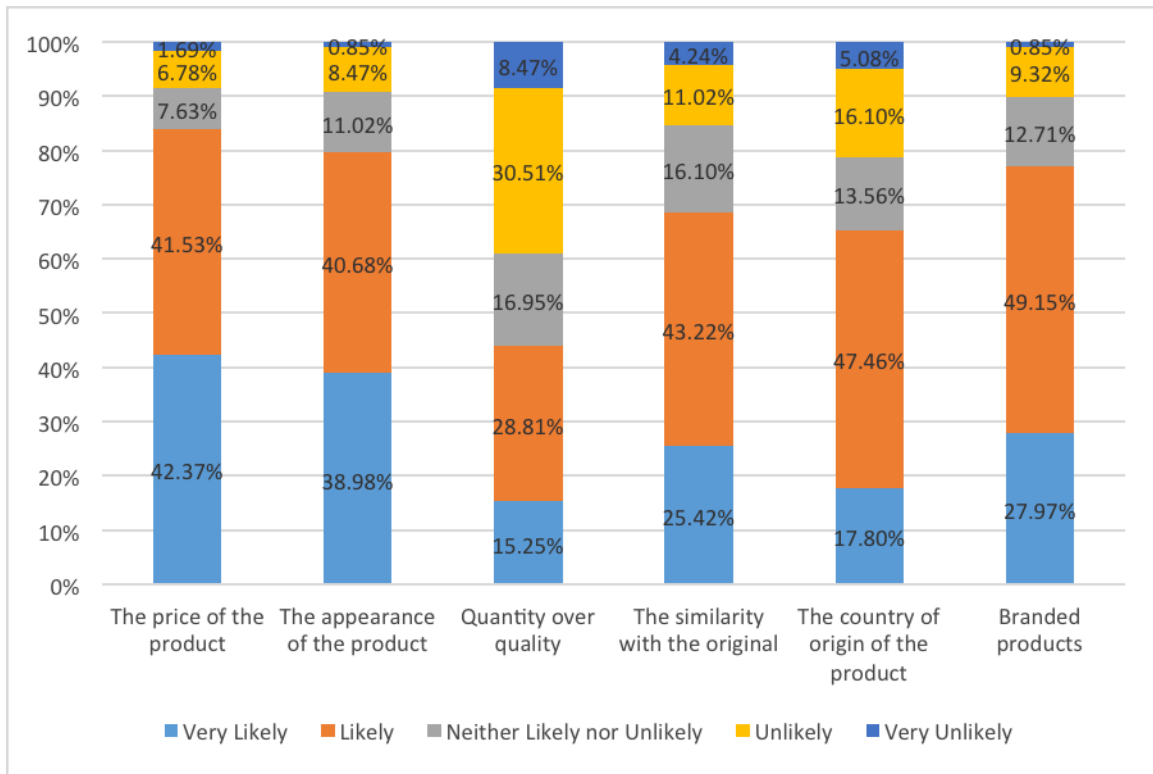


Figure 4. Respondents answers showing factors affecting the purchasing decision

The second set of questions in this section are for the country of origin (COO). The participants responded to how often they look for the “made-in” cue before buying a product. Majority of the respondents, 38.98% always look for the “made-in” on the label. While 42.37% occasionally consider the made-in cue before purchase, only 30.51% always consider the “made in” cue on the label before purchase. As for how the COO would influence the respondents’ purchase of commonly-used and imported products in Nigeria, the results showed that for some products, respondents consider the COO before buying them, but for other products, they don’t. Eighty-nine (78.07%) participants agreed and strongly agreed that they consider the COO before buying an electronic. Computers and Cameras (88 and 77.19%), Cellphones and Accessories (89 and 78.07%), Home Appliances (81 and 71.06%) are other products the respondents agreed and strongly agreed they consider the COO before purchase. While for some products, the majority of the participants were undecided, 46.49%, 50.87%, and 46.49% strongly agreed and agreed they consider the COO for before purchasing clothes, shoes, and bags respectively. For Automobile and Motorcycle, Children Toys, and Furniture, 66.66%, 28.94%, and 40.35% of the participants respectively consider the COO before

purchase. This confirms earlier the aforementioned statement that the COO is product-category-specific. There are different levels of risks and different meanings connected to each product.

5.3. Perception of Made-in-China

This section addresses how the participants perceived and received notions of made-in-China. As earlier mentioned, “made-in-China” is used interchangeably with “Chinese-made” in this study to mean commodities manufactured and or produced and branded in China by a Chinese firm or manufacturer. It is important to note the romance between the governments of China and Nigeria that has yielded various bilateral agreements such as FDIs. From constructions and infrastructural development to the recent currency exchange, there is the expectation that these would ease the cost of doing business between both countries, thereby inspiring research on this phenomenon. Also, considering the already high volume of importation from China, it is important for this research to understand how Nigerians perceive these products. Thus, the question in this section about the factors and product qualities that influence their preference for Chinese-made products is particularly important.

Contrary to some of the literature reviewed, 57 respondents agreed and strongly agreed that made-in-China are good quality products, 42 were undecided and others disagreed or strongly disagreed. Only 36.04% of the respondent were fulfilled each time they use a product made in China. I am more surprised that even though 71.17% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that made-in-China products are affordable, 76.58% of them agreed and strongly agreed they will purchase products made-in-Nigeria if they are the same quality as the ones made-in-China, irrespective of the price. Perhaps, this could be nationalistic tendencies—ethnocentric consumers are influenced by their morality to buy locally-made products over foreign-made. Figure 4 below presents the results of the perception of products made-in-China. A part of the question on whether the presence of Chinese-made product in the market impact the economy reveals that, though the majority (76.57%), purchase these made-in-China products from Nigerian retailers and online stores, only 29.73% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that buying Chinese-made products impacts the economy. This is contrary to the study by Rossouw, et al., (2014), that Chinese business positively impacts economic development in Nigeria.

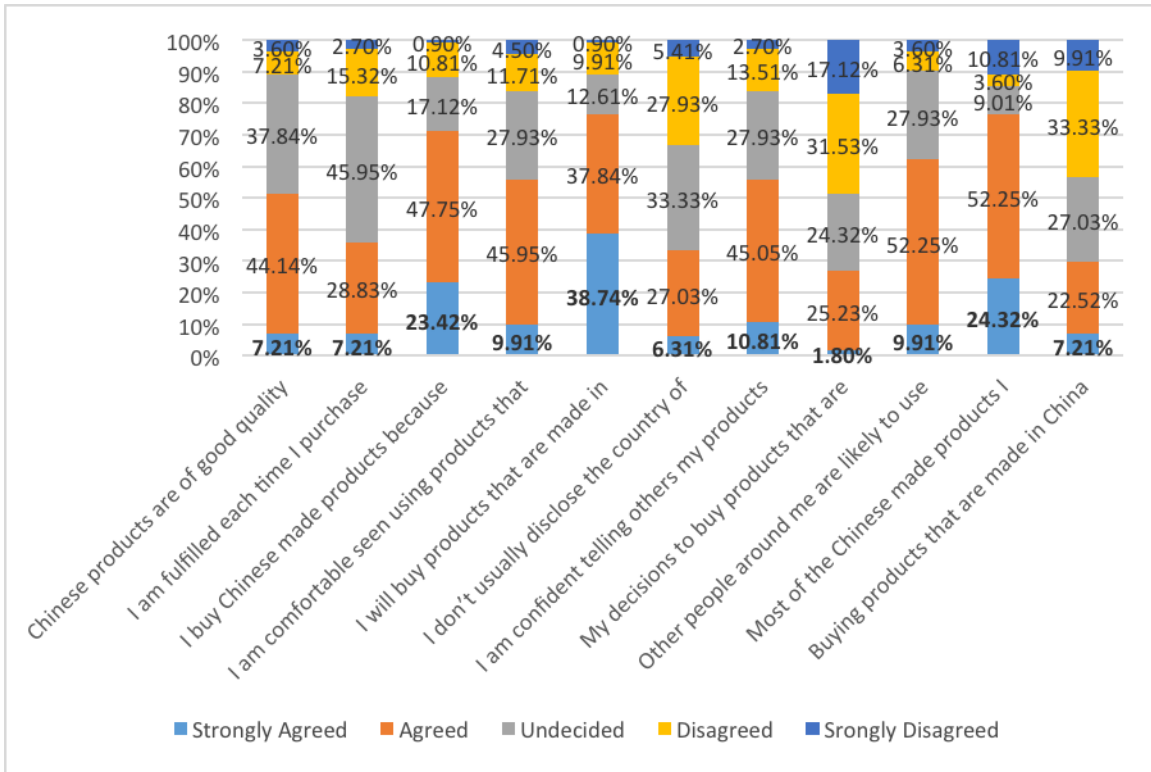


Figure 5. Respondents answers showing the perception of Chinese-made products

5.4. Preference for Locally-Made VS Foreign-Made Products

In this section, participants answer questions about their products preference while comparing locally-made products with Chinese-made and Western-made products. Majority of the respondents show a clear preference for Foreign products. 41.51% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed they prefer locally-made products to China-made products, while 51.89% of the participants preferred locally-made Nigerian products to Chinese-made products of the same price. This situation explains why some consumers prefer to buy domestic products based on nationalistic feelings and often, also because they consider their own products to be of higher quality and better service than similar foreign-made products— a sense of national identity. However, only 23.58% of the respondents preferred Locally-made Nigerian products to Western products, while 37.74% preferred locally-made products to Western products of the same price. The results in Figure 5 and Figure 6 below clearly exemplified the idea that consumers use foreign products, especially Western, to imply success, wealth and achievement. They

use goods to create social bonds and distinction such that their social status in the upper reaches of the society is defined by their ability to obtain positional goods.

Also, only 21.69% preferred Chinese-made products to Western-made products and 30.18% of the respondents preferred Chinese-made products to Western products of the same price. Overall, 70.21% agreed and strongly agreed that foreign-made products are always of good quality. The results above showed the reason why the participants preferred products made outside of Nigeria was not only because of the quality, but also, their perception of the country’s competence—the higher the perceived competence, the more capable the country is for manufacturing good products, because consumers, especially, in emerging economies, where the preference for foreign goods is high, perceive products made in developed counties to be higher quality compared with products made in emerging markets.

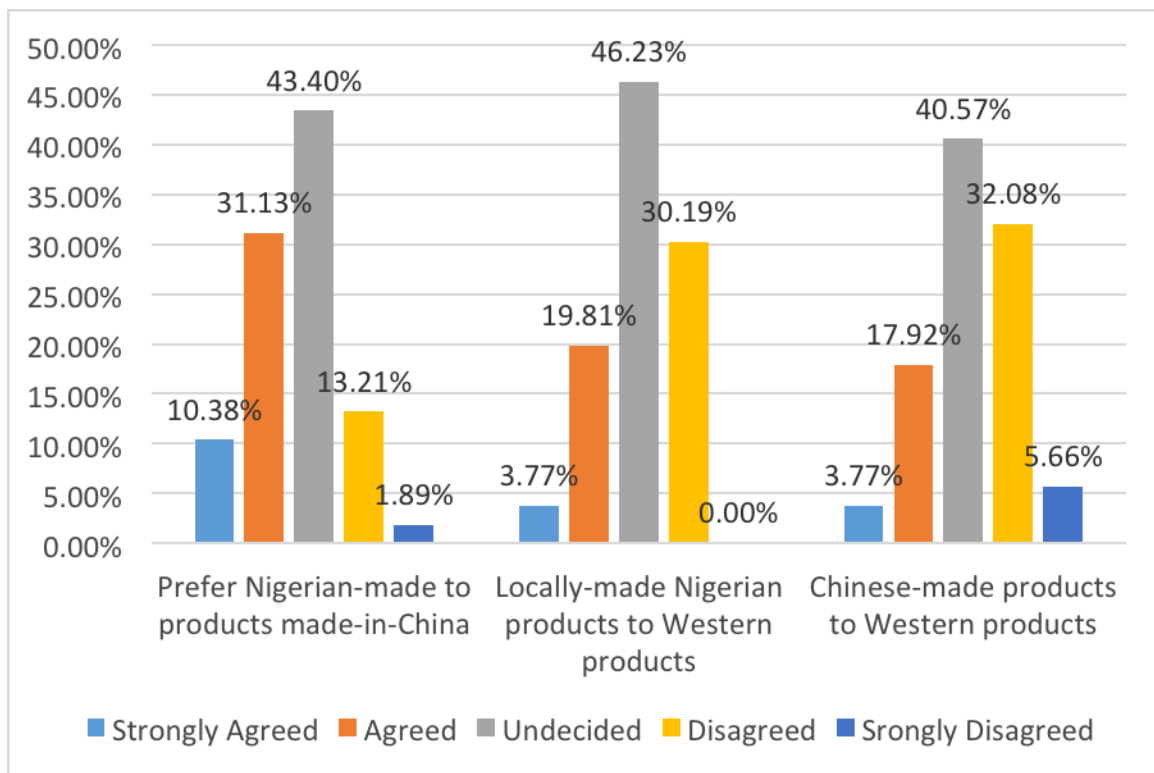


Figure 6. Respondents answers showing preference between locally-made Nigerian products and foreign products

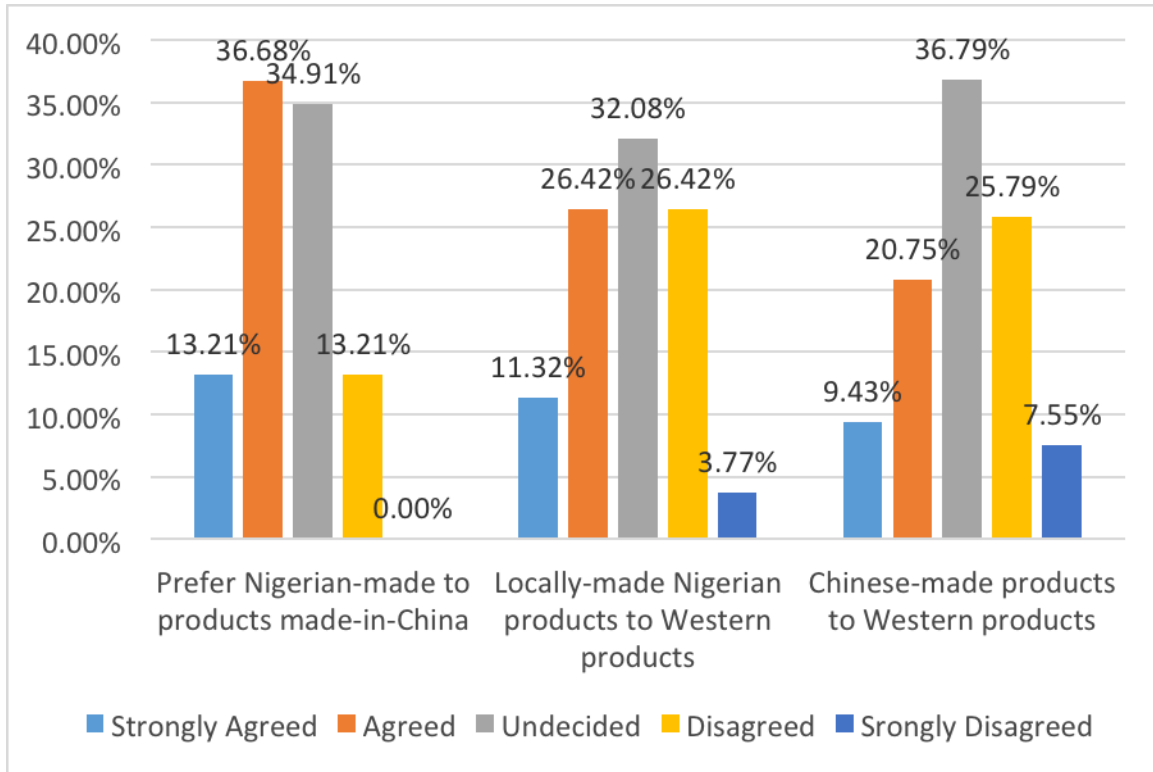


Figure 7. Respondents answers showing preference between locally-made Nigerian products and foreign products of the same price

For the second question in this section, participants were asked whether they are more likely to purchase made-in-China knowing that many Western brands manufacture in China. 51.89% agreed, 27.36% were undecided, while others disagreed. As mentioned earlier, COO effects are not static but change over time. According to Leonidou et al., (2007), these changes could be due to alterations in the comparative advantage of nations, as well as in the competitive advantage of firms; changes in the socio-political and economic conditions in both selling and buying countries; changes in the way goods are marketed and communicated by both selling countries and organizations; and the emergence of regional and/or global buyers.

Table 3. Change of preference for made-in-China now that most Western Brands manufacture in China

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	51.89%	55
No	20.75%	20
Undecided	27.36%	29
TOTAL		106

Chapter 6. Conclusion

My approach to the study was to examine how Nigerians, perceive products that are made-in-China as well as understand the factors influencing Nigerians' decision to patronize these products. I argue that low-income level and the subsequent fall in the standard of living of the average Nigerian contribute to the increasing purchase of products made-in-China. To achieve my aim in this study, I gave a background understanding of the economic situation in Nigeria since independence in 1960 and highlighted Chinese activities in African and the perception of their presence across various sectors in Africa.

I also examined Wallerstein's World-System Theory which provides the knowledge of the world economy, especially, the core-peripheral relations. It explains the power hierarchy that allows the core to exploit the peripheral through unequal trade relations and the understanding that the world is experiencing a global power shift. I also examine the effect of country of origin. This explains how consumers perceive products from different countries.

The result from the survey revealed that the perception of made-in-China products is favourable among Nigerians. It should be noted that this is mainly due to the affordability of the products. In an economy with low purchasing power where the class distinction is below the middle-class range, it is only fair for the consumers to patronize cheap and affordable products. Miller (1995) points out that consumption reflects the stratification that has already been determined by other factors, such as class; by which there is some almost invisible operation of the sumptuary laws. But then, this is not enough since most participants have a differing view towards purchasing locally-made Nigeria products, ones made in China and Western products. First, buying local is an act of patriotism. These consumers prefer to keep their national identity. Ethnocentric consumers prefer to buy domestic products not only on strictly nationalistic feelings but also consider their own products as being of high quality and better service than similar foreign-made products (Sharma, 2011).

Secondly, the preference for Western products, on the one hand, signifies status consumption. Consumption preferences and lifestyle practices that define social status

or to re-establish the original social distance (Featherstone, 2007), especially in a country like Nigeria, the consumers perceive products made in developed countries to be high quality (Sharma, 2011). On the other hand, "colonial mentality," Oyedele and Minor (2012) call it the idolization of the West--the neo-colonial ideas that persist through the hegemonic ideologies of the West. First is cultural imperialism that has continued to expose us to the Western culture through the media, and other means of globalization. The same idea of globalization that Ahluwalia, (2001) argues that it is a complex process which produces new global forms of unevenness, inequality, difference, and discrimination. Also, political-economic systems; capitalism, institutionalized through organizations such as the World Bank and the IMF to make policies and programs that promote these ideas. Such program includes; the SAP that has continued to encourage the dependents on Western Products.

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Appendix

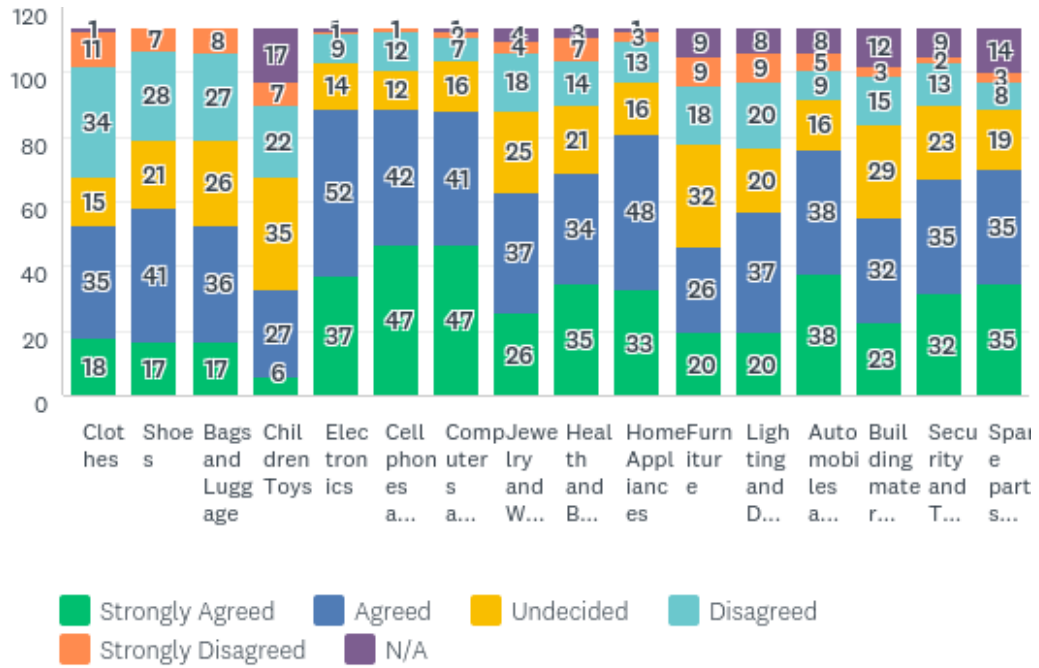


Figure A1. Influence of Country of Origin on Purchase of Listed Products