

How Collectivism, Animosity, Cultural Heritage, and Country-of-Origin Image Shape Consumer Behavior Toward Foreign Brands

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Abstract

Background: Recent changes in global economic and market conditions have significantly influenced consumer behavior, particularly in the context of international brand consumption. Increasing market fragmentation, shifts toward domestic market protection, and changing consumer value orientations have contributed to a reassessment of foreign versus domestic products. Collectivism and animosity toward other nations have emerged as important sociocultural factors shaping consumer preferences, often reinforcing loyalty to domestic products. Conversely, individuals with high levels of cultural intelligence frequently travel abroad to explore cultural monuments and gain insight into foreign histories. These individuals tend to be innovative, open to trying new products, and sensitive to the image of the country from which a product originates.

Purpose: The primary objective of this study is to examine the effects of collectivism, animosity, cultural heritage, and country-of-origin image (measured through components such as fashion capital, industrialization, and economic development) on consumer decisions to purchase foreign brands. A secondary aim is to assess whether these effects vary across generational groups—specifically Generations X, Y, and Z.

Study design/methodology/approach: An empirical survey was conducted in Serbia (Belgrade, Novi Sad and Kragujevac) in 2024 on a sample of 496 respondents. Statistical analysis was performed using the SmartPLS 4 software.

Findings/conclusions: The results indicate that collectivism and animosity exert a negative and statistically significant effect on consumers' decisions to purchase foreign brands, whereas cultural heritage and country-of-origin image have a positive and statistically significant impact. Furthermore, collectivism and animosity were more pronounced among respondents from Generation X, while cultural heritage and country-of-origin image were more influential for Generations Y or Z.

Limitations/future research: The study is limited by its relatively small sample size and geographic scope, being conducted within a single country. Future research should include cross-cultural comparisons and larger, more diverse samples. Additionally, future studies may consider incorporating other variables such as consumer cosmopolitanism or xenocentrism to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the acceptance of foreign brands.

Keywords

Collectivism, Animosity, Cultural heritage, Country of origin image, Geopolitical crises, Foreign brands

1. Introduction

In recent years, global economic and market dynamics have significantly influenced consumer behavior, particularly in the context of international brand consumption. Shifts toward market fragmentation, changes in trade practices, and evolving consumer value orientations have contributed to a more cautious evaluation of foreign brands (Crespo & Velgan, 2025; Zhang et al., 2025). As many developed countries impose trade restrictions to safeguard their domestic economies, consumer preferences increasingly reflect nationalistic and ethnocentric tendencies (Curth et al., 2025). These shifts call for a deeper understanding of the psychological, cultural, and structural factors that shape purchasing decisions in contemporary international markets (Charinsarn & Speece, 2025).

Among the key sociocultural constructs influencing consumer decision-making are collectivism and animosity toward foreign nations, both of which can serve as cohesive forces that promote loyalty to domestic goods and services (Areiza-Padilla et al., 2021). Collectivist societies, characterized by a strong emphasis on group identity and national unity, often discourage the consumption of foreign brands perceived as threats to local economies or cultural values (Fernández-Ferrín et al., 2020). Similarly, consumer animosity—rooted in political, historical, or economic grievances—can lead to negative attitudes toward products originating from certain countries, regardless of their quality or reputation (Güngördü Belbağ, 2023).

On the other hand, the modern global consumer landscape is also shaped by individuals with high levels of cultural intelligence and appreciation for cultural heritage, who are more open to engaging with foreign markets (Zdravković & Živković, 2025). These consumers are often characterized by greater personal innovativeness, international travel experience, and a more nuanced perception of global brand value (Ge et al., 2023). In this regard, the image of a product's country of origin, including perceptions related to fashion leadership,

industrialization, and economic development, plays a crucial role in forming purchase intentions (Lee, 2020).

While the influence of these variables has been explored in various national contexts, few studies have examined their combined effects on consumer decisions to purchase foreign brands, especially in transitional economies (Marinković et al., 2023; Šapić et al., 2023; Zdravković & Živković, 2025). Moreover, generational differences in these effects—particularly across Generations X, Y, and Z—remain underexplored, despite generational groups theory suggesting that social, political, and technological conditions during formative years influence long-term values and behaviors.

The aim of this study is to fill this research gap by examining the effects of collectivism, animosity, cultural heritage, and country-of-origin image on consumer decisions to purchase foreign brands. In addition, this study investigates whether these effects differ across generational groups. The research is empirically grounded in data collected from consumers in Serbia, a country that provides a unique context due to its historical positioning between East and West, its dynamic political past, and its evolving market orientation.

By addressing these questions, the study contributes to the literature on international consumer behavior, cultural value systems, and cross-generational marketing strategies, offering both theoretical insights and practical implications for multinational firms operating in culturally diverse markets.

The scientific novelty of this study lies in its integrated and comparative examination of multiple sociocultural and contextual determinants of consumers' decisions to purchase foreign brands within a single empirical framework. Unlike prior studies that have predominantly analyzed collectivism, animosity, cultural heritage, or country-of-origin image in isolation, this research simultaneously investigates their combined effects on consumer behavior in the context of a transitional economy. Furthermore, the study advances existing knowledge by introducing a generational perspective, empirically examining

differences in the strength and direction of these effects across Generations X, Y, and Z. By focusing on Serbia as an underexplored market context situated at the intersection of diverse cultural and economic influences, the study provides original empirical evidence from a setting that has largely been absent from the international branding literature. In doing so, this research offers new insights into how sociocultural value orientations and country-of-origin perceptions jointly shape the acceptance of foreign brands across different consumer generations.

2. Literature review

To provide a coherent and **theoretically grounded explanation of consumer behavior** in the context of foreign brand purchasing, the conceptual model of this study draws on several complementary theoretical perspectives that allow the integration of collectivism, consumer animosity, cultural heritage, and country-of-origin image within a unified analytical framework.

The primary theoretical foundation is **social identity theory**, which posits that individuals define their self-concept through membership in social groups, including nations, cultures, and broader social collectives (Charinsarn & Speece, 2025; Ishumbaev et al., 2025). Within this framework, collectivism functions as a value orientation that strengthens group cohesion and emphasizes loyalty to one's in-group. In the consumer domain, such orientations may manifest as a preference for domestic products and a cautious or resistant attitude toward foreign brands. Purchasing decisions thus extend beyond purely economic considerations and become a symbolic means of affirming group identity.

Building upon this perspective, consumer animosity can be understood as a specific form of negative affect directed toward out-groups (Fong et al., 2015; Krüger et al., 2024). Rooted in historical, economic, or cultural tensions, animosity reinforces symbolic boundaries between "us" and "them," whereby products and brands originating from certain countries come to embody broader intergroup conflicts (Kim et al., 2025). In this sense, animosity operates as an affective mechanism that mediates the relationship between collective value orientations and concrete consumer choices.

Cultural heritage represents a deeper, long-term cultural layer shaping norms, values, and habitual patterns of behavior (Zhang et al., 2025). Drawing on broader perspectives from cultural and symbolic

consumption research, cultural heritage influences how consumers interpret the meaning of products, brand origins, and their compatibility with dominant cultural narratives (Ishizuka & Sato, 2026). Foreign brands are therefore evaluated not solely on the basis of functional attributes, but also through their perceived alignment or misalignment with culturally embedded traditions and value systems.

An additional explanatory layer is provided by **acculturation theory**, which helps account for heterogeneity in consumer responses within the same societal context (Crespo & Velgan, 2025). While some consumers, due to greater openness toward other cultures and more extensive international exposure, develop favorable attitudes toward foreign brands, others remain strongly oriented toward the preservation of local cultural identity (Schau et al., 2017). This perspective is particularly relevant for understanding variations in perceptions of country-of-origin image, which may function as a signal of modernity, quality, and global belonging for some consumers, while simultaneously evoking symbolic tension with local values for others (Mann et al., 2018).

By integrating these theoretical perspectives, the **conceptual model developed in this study** offers a comprehensive understanding of how value orientations (collectivism), affective attitudes (animosity), deeply rooted cultural patterns (cultural heritage), and cognitive evaluations (country-of-origin image) jointly shape consumers' decisions to purchase foreign brands. In doing so, the model moves beyond fragmented approaches in the existing literature and provides a theoretically consistent framework for analyzing the complex sociocultural determinants of consumer behavior.

Before elaborating on the individual constructs included in the conceptual model, it is important to briefly distinguish **several closely related concepts** frequently used in the literature on consumer behavior toward foreign brands. Consumer ethnocentrism refers to a normative belief regarding the appropriateness of purchasing domestic products, patriotism denotes a general emotional attachment to one's country, while xenocentrism reflects a preference for foreign products and cultures (Lin et al., 2025; Praveen et al., 2025). In the present study, these concepts are conceptually differentiated from collectivism as a value orientation and consumer animosity as a negative affective response toward specific foreign countries, and they are not directly included in the

empirical model. This clarification ensures greater terminological consistency and interpretative clarity throughout the analysis.

2.1 Collectivism

Collectivism represents a cultural value orientation in which individuals prioritize the interests, norms, and goals of the group over those of the individual. In collectivist societies, people are socialized to maintain group harmony, loyalty to the in-group (e.g., family, nation, ethnic community), and respect for tradition (Jiménez & San Martín, 2010; Mandler et al., 2023). These characteristics are particularly evident in consumer behavior, where individuals often choose products and brands that align with collective values or are endorsed by the broader social group. From a consumption standpoint, collectivism may foster resistance toward foreign brands, especially if such brands are perceived as threats to domestic economic stability, cultural identity, or national unity (Liu et al., 2021). In this context, the purchase of local brands is not merely a matter of preference, but a symbolic act of solidarity and patriotism. Accordingly, consumers with high collectivist values are more likely to favor domestic brands and may exhibit skepticism or rejection toward foreign products, regardless of their objective quality or reputation (Lee et al., 2021b; Han et al., 2023). Based on the above theoretical arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Collectivism has a negative effect on consumers' decisions to purchase foreign brands.

2.2 Consumer Animosity

Consumer animosity refers to negative emotional reactions that consumers harbor toward specific countries due to historical, political, military, or economic tensions (Leonidou et al., 2019). This animosity can manifest itself in the marketplace through boycotts, brand avoidance, or public campaigns against foreign products. It is important to distinguish animosity from general consumer ethnocentrism; while ethnocentrism reflects a belief that one should support the domestic economy, animosity stems from hostility toward the source country, often based on collective memory or perceived injustice (Han et al., 2021; Marinković et al., 2023). In terms of foreign brand evaluation, animosity acts as a psychological barrier that inhibits objective assessment of product attributes. Even when foreign products are superior in quality or innovation, consumers with high levels of animosity may avoid purchasing

them as an expression of political or moral opposition (Mandler et al., 2023). This variable is particularly salient in post-conflict societies or among consumers with strong nationalistic orientations (Kim et al., 2025; Souiden et al., 2018; Verma, 2022; Latif et al., 2017). Drawing on the previous discussion, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H2: Consumer animosity has a negative effect on consumers' decisions to purchase foreign brands.

2.3 Cultural Heritage

Cultural heritage encompasses the tangible and intangible legacies inherited from past generations, including traditions, historical monuments, folklore, language, and shared collective memory (Anser et al., 2025). Consumers who value cultural heritage are often motivated to engage with cultures beyond their own, seeking knowledge, experiences, and products that reflect cultural diversity (Zdravković & Živković, 2025). Such individuals typically possess a high level of cultural awareness and are open to foreign influence, especially when it aligns with aesthetic, historical, or intellectual interests (Šapić et al., 2023). Their purchase decisions are not restricted by national borders but are rather enriched by the symbolic value of cultural narratives embedded in foreign brands (Rahman et al., 2021). This openness makes them more inclined to buy products that originate from countries known for their cultural sophistication, artistic legacy, or historical relevance (Cleveland & Bartikowski, 2023; Hall et al., 2025; Rabêlo Neto et al., 2022; Settembre Blundo et al., 2019; Tang & Xie, 2019). In line with the presented theoretical framework, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Cultural heritage has a positive effect on consumers' decisions to purchase foreign brands.

2.4 Country-of-Origin Image

The country-of-origin image (COI) is a crucial extrinsic cue that consumers rely on when evaluating foreign brands. It refers to the overall perception and mental associations that consumers hold about a particular country's reputation in the global market, and it significantly influences how products originating from that country are judged (Papadopoulos et al., 2018). These perceptions often operate as cognitive shortcuts, especially when consumers are unfamiliar with a specific brand or lack detailed product information (Charinsarn & Speece, 2025). In this study, the country-of-origin image is conceptualized through

three interrelated dimensions: fashion capital, industrialization, and economic development. These components reflect both symbolic and functional aspects of a country's image and collectively shape consumer attitudes toward products associated with that nation (Esmailpour & Abdolvand, 2016; Zdravković & Živković, 2025).

2.4.1 Fashion Capital

The fashion capital dimension refers to the extent to which a country is perceived as a global leader in style, design, and cultural aesthetics. Countries such as France, Italy, or Japan are often associated with fashion leadership, innovation in design, and refined taste, which enhances the desirability of brands originating from them (Lee, 2020). Consumers tend to associate fashion capital with creativity, prestige, sophistication, and symbolic value, especially in industries such as apparel, cosmetics, luxury goods, and even technology. A strong fashion-oriented country image can elevate the perceived status of a brand, making it more appealing to consumers who value global trends and aesthetic expression (Han et al., 2023; Rahman et al., 2021). In this context, a positive perception of a country's fashion capital reinforces consumers' intentions to purchase foreign brands due to their assumed exclusivity, elegance, and cultural depth (Settembre Blundo et al., 2019; Shukla et al., 2025). Building on these theoretical insights, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H4a: The perception of a country as a global fashion capital has a positive effect on consumers' decisions to purchase foreign brands.

2.4.2 Industrialization

The industrialization component reflects consumer perceptions of a country's technological capacity, production infrastructure, and manufacturing quality. Highly industrialized countries are often associated with precision, efficiency, durability, and innovation, making their products more trustworthy in the eyes of consumers (Velčová, & Waliszewska, 2024). For example, countries like Germany, South Korea, or the United States are typically viewed as technologically advanced and industrially strong, which translates into higher perceived quality and reliability of their goods (Papadopoulos et al., 2018). This dimension is especially relevant for product categories such as automobiles, electronics, machinery, and consumer durables. Consumers who perceive a foreign country as highly industrialized are more

likely to develop positive evaluations of the technical performance of brands from that country, leading to stronger purchase intentions (Chen, 2020; Diamantopoulos et al., 2019). Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4b: The perception of a country as a highly industrialized nation has a positive effect on consumers' decisions to purchase foreign brands.

2.4.3 Economic Development

The economic development dimension refers to the perception of a country's overall wealth, stability, standard of living, and position in the global economic hierarchy. Developed countries are seen as safe, stable, and advanced, which instills confidence in the origin of products associated with them (Ye et al., 2025). This component shapes consumer expectations regarding product consistency, regulatory standards, brand ethics, and innovation potential. Products from economically developed countries are often viewed as premium and trustworthy, while those from less developed countries may be viewed with skepticism due to assumed lower production standards or weaker institutions (Yadav et al., 2025). Consumers who associate a brand's origin with a highly developed economy tend to believe that such products are well-regulated, safe, and of superior quality, which directly influences their purchase intentions (Esmailpour & Abdolvand, 2016; Hall et al., 2025; Jiménez & San Martín, 2010). Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H4c: The perception of a country as economically developed has a positive effect on consumers' decisions to purchase foreign brands.

2.5 Conceptual linkage among variables

When analyzed together, these four constructs offer a multidimensional explanation of consumer attitudes toward foreign brands. Collectivism and consumer animosity represent restrictive sociocultural forces grounded in group-based identity and intergroup differentiation. Rather than being treated as universally dominant drivers, these constructs are conceptualized as value- and emotion-based orientations whose effects may vary across consumer segments. They may function as protective mechanisms that encourage preference for domestic alternatives and resistance to foreign brands, particularly among consumers who place strong emphasis on group loyalty and national identity (Han, 2017; Latif et al., 2019; Marinković et al., 2023).

On the other hand, cultural heritage orientation and country-of-origin image perception operate as facilitating mechanisms that may increase openness toward foreign brands. Consumers with a strong appreciation for cultural heritage tend to seek experiential enrichment and symbolic meaning, while favorable country-of-origin perceptions are associated with evaluations of quality, innovation, and symbolic prestige (Anser et al., 2025; Han et al., 2023; Šapić et al., 2023; Shukla et al., 2025). Importantly, the influence of these facilitators is not assumed to be uniform across all consumers, but rather contingent upon broader sociocultural and generational characteristics.

Generational differences constitute a critical contextual condition shaping how sociocultural factors translate into purchasing decisions. Contemporary markets are characterized by the coexistence of multiple generational cohorts formed under distinct social, technological, and economic circumstances. As a result, attitudes toward foreign brands are expected to differ systematically across generations. Generation X (1960–1980), socialized in a period marked by more limited international exposure and stronger national anchoring, tends to exhibit more traditional consumption patterns and stronger attachment to domestic products. In contrast, Generations Y (1981–1995) and Z (after 1995), shaped by globalization, digital connectivity, and cultural diversity, are generally more receptive to foreign influences and global brands (Šagovnović & Kovačić, 2020; Šapić et al., 2023; Yang & Lau, 2015; Zdravković & Peković, 2021). Building on this reasoning, generational cohort is conceptualized as a moderating variable that conditions the strength and direction of the relationships between key sociocultural factors and consumers’ decisions to purchase foreign brands. Accordingly, the following moderation hypotheses are proposed:

H5: Generational cohort moderates the relationship between collectivism and consumers’ decisions to purchase foreign brands. Specifically, the negative effect of collectivism is expected to be stronger among respondents from Generation X than among respondents from Generations Y or Z.

H6: Generational cohort moderates the relationship between consumer animosity and consumers’ decisions to purchase foreign brands. Specifically, the negative effect of consumer animosity is expected to be stronger among

respondents from Generation X than among respondents from Generations Y or Z.

H7: Generational cohort moderates the relationship between cultural heritage and consumers’ decisions to purchase foreign brands. Specifically, the positive effect of cultural heritage is expected to be stronger among respondents from Generations Y or Z than among respondents from Generation X.

H8: Generational cohort moderates the relationship between country-of-origin image and consumers’ decisions to purchase foreign brands. Specifically, the positive effect of country-of-origin image—through perceptions of fashion capital, industrialization, and economic development—is expected to be stronger among respondents from Generations Y or Z than among respondents from Generation X.

Understanding these dynamics is essential for marketers, policymakers, and international firms aiming to position foreign brands in culturally sensitive markets. It also offers a richer understanding of how value systems, emotional orientations, and generational identities intersect in shaping consumer decisions in an increasingly polarized world. The conceptual model of the study is presented in Figure 1.

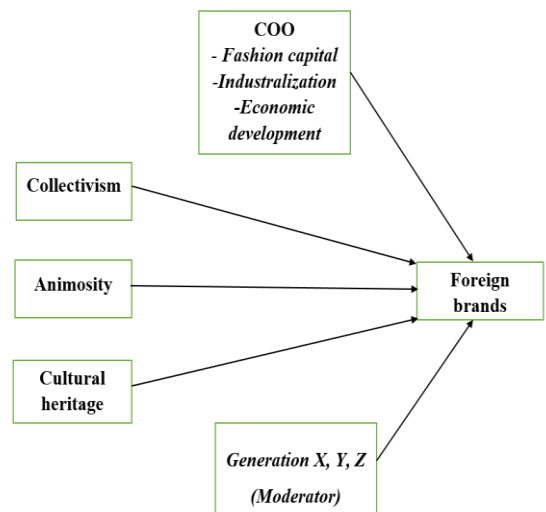


Figure 1 Conceptual model
Source: the authors

The following section outlines the research methodology.

3. Methodology and Data

To enhance the clarity and internal coherence of the research design, the methodological procedure was structured into clearly defined and logically connected phases. This phased approach ensures transparency in the selection of the analytical model, the sampling procedure, and the operationalization of key variables.

Phase 1: Selection of the analytical model

In the first phase, an appropriate analytical model was selected in line with the objectives of the study and the complexity of the proposed conceptual framework. Given the simultaneous examination of multiple latent constructs and their interrelationships, as well as the exploratory and predictive nature of the research, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was chosen as the primary analytical technique. This approach allows for the robust estimation of complex models with multiple constructs and is particularly suitable for consumer behavior research involving attitudinal and perceptual variables measured through latent indicators. Data analysis was conducted using the SmartPLS 4 statistical software package.

Phase 2: Sampling procedure and data collection

The second phase involved the definition of the research sample and the data collection process. The empirical study was conducted using a survey method on a sample of 496 respondents in the Republic of Serbia, with data collected in 2024 in three major urban centers: Belgrade, Novi Sad, and Kragujevac (Table 1).

The sampling approach ensured sufficient heterogeneity in terms of demographic characteristics and generational structure, allowing for meaningful comparative analysis across age cohorts. The sample consists of 218 women and 278 men. The respondents are relatively evenly distributed across the X, Y, Z age groups (156, 167, and 173). In line with generational cohort theory, respondents were classified into three generational groups based on their year of birth. Generation X includes individuals born between 1960 and 1980, Generation Y (Millennials) comprises those born between 1981 and 1995, while Generation Z refers to individuals born after 1995. Generational cohort theory suggests that individuals who grow up under similar social, economic, and technological conditions tend to develop comparable value systems, attitudes, and consumption patterns that

persist throughout adulthood (Yang & Lau, 2015; Barska et al., 2023). Consequently, generational segmentation has been widely applied in consumer behavior and marketing research to explain differences in purchasing preferences, brand perceptions, and attitudes toward global products. In terms of education, 265 respondents completed faculty (53.5%), while 214 respondents completed high school (43.1%).

Table 1 Demographic characteristic of respondents

		Number	%
Gender	Female	218	44.0%
	Male	278	56.0%
	Total	496	100%
Age	Generation X	156	31.4%
	Generation Y	167	33.7%
	Generation Z	173	34.9%
	Total	496	100%
Education	Primary education	17	3.4%
	High school	214	43.1%
	Faculty	265	53.5%
	Total	496	100%

Source: the authors

The sample consists of 218 women and 278 men. The respondents are relatively evenly distributed across the X, Y, Z age groups (156, 167, and 173). In terms of education, 265 respondents completed faculty (53.5%), while 214 respondents completed high school (43.1%).

Phase 3: Operationalization of variables and measurement

In the third phase, the key constructs of the study were operationalized and measured. All variables were assessed using multi-item measurement scales adapted from established and validated instruments in the marketing and consumer behavior literature (Table 2). The items were adjusted to fit the specific context of foreign brand consumption while preserving their original conceptual meaning.

Respondents evaluated all statements using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”). This measurement approach is widely applied in empirical consumer research and allows for capturing nuanced attitudinal differences among respondents. The collected data were subsequently prepared and analyzed within the PLS-SEM framework to assess the reliability and validity of the measurement model, as well as to test the proposed structural relationships.

Table 2 Statements from the questionnaire

Statements
Collectivism (Han, 2017; Latif et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2021a)
1. It is necessary to be loyal to the group to which you belong.

2. It is necessary to maintain strong family relationships throughout life.
3. Important decisions should be made as a group.
Animosity (Han, 2017; Latif et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2021a; Salma & Aji, 2023)
1. I feel antipathy towards certain countries because of war conflicts.
2. I feel animosity towards certain countries because of economic sanctions.
3. I don't buy products that originate from countries towards which I feel animosity.
Cultural heritage (Zdravković & Živković, 2025)
1. I'm interested in the cultural heritage of other countries.
2. I visit museums and operas when I travel to foreign countries.
3. I am interested in the history and traditions of other countries.
Fashion capital (Esmailpour & Abdolvand, 2016).
1. It is important that many famous personalities come from the country.
2. I have a desire to visit cities that are fashion capitals.
3. I buy products that are characteristic of a particular country (e.g., Italian shoes).
Industrialization (Esmailpour & Abdolvand, 2016).
1. I buy products that come from industrially developed countries.
2. It's important to me that the country uses modern production technologies.
3. It's important to me that the country implements innovations in product manufacturing.
Economic development (Yadav et al., 2025; Zdravković & Živković, 2025)
1. It's important to me that products come from countries that are at a high level of economic development.
2. Economically developed countries produce products with good technical characteristics.
3. High economic development enables countries to invest money in improving production technologies.
Foreign brands (Fazli-Salehi et al., 2020; Šapić et al., 2023)
1. In the purchasing process, I prefer foreign brands.
2. Foreign brands are of higher quality than domestic ones.
3. I recommend to my family members and friends to buy only well-known foreign brands.

Source: the authors

The following section presents the results of the conducted research.

4. Research results

To assess the overall fit and statistical soundness of the research model, key indicators of model validity were examined (Table 3).

Table 3 Model validity analysis

Indicators of model validity	Research model – Foreign brands	Recommended value
χ^2/df	1.955	<3
GFI	0.911	>0.9
IFI	0.918	>0.9
TLI	0.926	>0.9
CFI	0.920	>0.9
RMSEA	0.047	<0.08

Source: the authors

The results reveal that the chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio (χ^2/df) falls within the acceptable range, indicating a good model fit. All goodness-of-fit indices—GFI (0.911), IFI (0.918), TLI (0.926), and CFI (0.920)—exceed the recommended threshold of 0.90, confirming the model's adequacy in representing the empirical data.

Moreover, the RMSEA value of 0.047 is well below the cutoff of 0.08, suggesting a high level of model precision and a minimal discrepancy between the observed and estimated covariance

matrices (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). Based on these findings, the model demonstrates strong statistical and theoretical validity.

In the study, a *reliability analysis* was applied to examine whether there is a satisfactory level of agreement and correlation between all statements used to measure the research variables (Table 4).

Table 4 Reliability analysis

Research variables	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	AVE
Collectivism	0.817	0.821	0.689
Animosity	0.864	0.870	0.687
Cultural heritage	0.874	0.880	0.721
Fashion capital	0.767	0.775	0.735
Industrialization	0.842	0.856	0.702
Economic development	0.743	0.822	0.711
Foreign brands	0.873	0.896	0.698

Source: the authors

Based on the *Cronbach's alpha* and *Composite reliability* values, which are greater than the statistical threshold of 0.70, we conclude that there is an adequate correlation between the statements used to measure the research variables, and that the research model is constructed in an appropriate manner.

Also, *all AVE values* are significantly above the threshold of 0.50, indicating that all research variables exhibit satisfactory convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). This implies that the indicators within each latent construct are well correlated and demonstrate a high degree of internal consistency. Therefore, there is no need to eliminate any indicators or apply additional model adjustments with regard to convergent validity.

The *Structural Equation Model (SEM)* was implemented to determine the effects of collectivism, animosity, cultural heritage, and country of origin image (fashion capital, industrialization, economic development) on consumers' decision to purchase foreign brands (Table 5).

Table 5 SEM model

Hypothesis	Beta	Standard deviation	T test	P values
Collectivism → Foreign brands	-0.351	0.074	4.754	0.000**
Animosity → Foreign brands	-0.285	0.082	3.476	0.001**
Cultural heritage → Foreign brands	0.269	0.076	3.543	0.000**
Fashion capital → Foreign brands	0.250	0.053	4.677	0.000**
Industrialization → Foreign brands	0.276	0.056	4.911	0.000**

Economic development → Foreign brands	0.645	0.079	8.192	0.000**
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Level of statistical significance: **0.01; R square=0.548
Source: the authors

The coefficient of determination *R square* is 0.548, indicating that 54.8% of the consumers' decision to purchase foreign brands is explained by the regression model. *Collectivism (coefficient= -0.351, p values=0.000)* and *Animosity (coefficient= -0.285, p values=0.001)* have a negative and statistically significant impact on consumers' decision to purchase foreign brands, *confirming hypotheses H1 and H2.*

Cultural heritage (coefficient= 0.269, p values=0.000) and *Country of origin image through Fashion capital (coefficient= 0.250, p values=0.000), Industrialization (coefficient= 0.276, p values=0.000), and Economic development (coefficient= 0.645, p values=0.000)* have a positive and statistically significant impact on consumers' decision to purchase foreign brands, *confirming hypotheses H3, H4a, H4b, and H4c.*

The *Bootstrap Multigroup Analysis (MGA)* was applied to determine whether the effect of collectivism, animosity, cultural heritage, country of origin image (fashion capital, industrialization, economic development) on the purchase of foreign brands is more pronounced among consumers belonging to the X, Y, or Z generations (Table 6).

Table 6 Bootstrap Multigroup Analysis- generation X, Y, Z

Relations	X	Y	Z	Difference
Collectivism → Foreign brands	- 0.411	- 0.362	- 0.287	X,Y- 0.049 X,Z- 0.124** Y,Z- 0.075
Animosity → Foreign brands	- 0.368	- 0.298	- 0.227	X,Y- 0.070 X,Z- 0.141** Y,Z- 0.071
Cultural heritage → Foreign brands	0.194	0.281	0.369	Z,X- 0.175** Z,Y- 0.088 Y,X- 0.087
Fashion capital → Foreign brands	0.221	0.235	0.312	Z,X- 0.091 Z,Y- 0.077 Y,X- 0.014
Industrialization → Foreign brands	0.213	0.279	0.355	Z,X- 0.142** Z,Y- 0.076 Y,X- 0.066
Economic development → Foreign brands	0.512	0.665	0.689	Z,X- 0.177** Z,Y- 0.024 Y,X- 0.153**

Level of statistical significance: **0.01
Source: the authors

The negative impact of *collectivism (difference = 0.124)* and *animosity (difference = 0.141)* on the purchase of foreign brands is more pronounced among consumers belonging to Generation X compared to consumers belonging to Generation Z, *confirming research hypotheses H5 and H6.* The positive impact of *cultural heritage (difference =*

0.175) on the purchase of foreign brands is more pronounced among consumers belonging to Generation Z compared to consumers belonging to Generation X, *confirming research hypothesis H7.* There is no statistically significant difference in the positive impact of *fashion capital* on the purchase of foreign brands between consumers belonging to generations X, Y, and Z. The positive impact of *industrialization (difference = 0.142)* on the purchase of foreign brands is more pronounced among consumers belonging to Generation Z compared to consumers belonging to Generation X. The positive impact of *economic development (difference = 0.177; difference = 0.153)* on the purchase of foreign brands is more pronounced among consumers belonging to Generations Z and Y compared to consumers belonging to Generation X. Since there are statistically significant differences in the impact of two components COO (industrialization, economic development) on the purchase of foreign brands from the perspective of generations X, Y, and Z, while differences in the third component (fashion capital) do not occur, it can be concluded that **hypothesis H8 is partially confirmed.**

4.1 Discussion of results

The results of the empirical analysis provide several important insights into the sociocultural determinants of consumers' decisions to purchase foreign brands. First, the findings confirm that collectivism exerts a statistically significant negative effect on the acceptance of foreign brands. This result is consistent with the theoretical assumptions of social identity theory, which suggests that individuals with strong group-oriented value systems tend to prioritize the interests and identity of their in-group, often expressed through a preference for domestic products. Similar findings were reported by Lee et al. (2021b) and Han et al. (2023) who demonstrated that collectivist orientations may strengthen resistance toward foreign brands, particularly in contexts where national identity and economic protectionism are salient.

Second, consumer animosity was also found to negatively influence the decision to purchase foreign brands. This finding aligns with previous research indicating that negative emotional attitudes toward specific countries may lead to product avoidance regardless of product quality or brand reputation (Kim et al., 2025; Souiden et al., 2018). The results therefore support the view that consumer decisions are not purely rational or

attribute-based but are also shaped by broader sociopolitical perceptions and collective memory.

In contrast, cultural heritage demonstrated a positive effect on the acceptance of foreign brands. This finding suggests that consumers who exhibit a strong interest in cultural heritage may simultaneously display openness toward cultural diversity and foreign cultural expressions. This interpretation is consistent with prior studies emphasizing that cultural awareness and intercultural curiosity can foster positive attitudes toward foreign products and experiences (Rabêlo Neto et al., 2022; Rahman et al., 2021; Cleveland & Bartikowski, 2023).

Particularly noteworthy is the strong positive effect of the economic development dimension of the country-of-origin image, which exhibited the highest coefficient in the model ($\beta = 0.645$). This result indicates that consumers place substantial importance on perceptions of a country's economic strength, stability, and technological advancement when evaluating foreign brands. Economically developed countries are frequently associated with higher product quality, stronger regulatory systems, and advanced production technologies, which can serve as powerful signals of reliability and performance. Similar patterns have been identified in country-of-origin research, where perceptions of economic development significantly influence consumer trust and purchase intentions (Esmailpour & Abdolvand, 2016; Diamantopoulos et al., 2019; Papadopoulos et al., 2018; Yadav et al., 2025).

Finally, the multigroup analysis confirms the moderating role of generational cohorts. The negative effects of collectivism and animosity were more pronounced among Generation X respondents, while younger cohorts (Generations Y and Z) showed stronger positive responses to cultural heritage and country-of-origin image. These findings are consistent with generational cohort theory, which suggests that individuals socialized under different historical and technological conditions develop distinct consumption values and attitudes toward globalization (Barska et al., 2023; Yang & Lau, 2015). Younger generations, who have grown up in a more globally connected and digitally integrated environment, appear to be more receptive to foreign brands and global cultural influences.

Conclusion

The findings of this study confirm all hypotheses,

indicating that collectivism and consumer animosity exert a statistically significant negative influence on consumer decisions to purchase foreign brands, while cultural heritage and country-of-origin image—measured through perceptions of fashion capital, industrialization, and economic development—have a statistically significant positive effect. Furthermore, generational differences were confirmed, with the effects of collectivism and animosity being more prominent among Generation X, and the effects of cultural heritage and country-of-origin image being more pronounced among Generations Y and Z. The originality of this research lies in its integrated approach to examining sociocultural and perceptual determinants of foreign brand consumption within a transitional economy, as well as in its multidimensional operationalization of the country-of-origin image. By incorporating generational segmentation into the model, the study also contributes to a more nuanced understanding of consumer behavior across different age cohorts.

Theoretical implications

Theoretically, this study extends existing frameworks related to social identity, value orientations, and country-of-origin effects by demonstrating that consumer responses to foreign brands are shaped by the joint influence of group-based values and emotionally driven orientations. By integrating collectivism, animosity, cultural heritage, and country-of-origin image within a single analytical framework, the research moves beyond fragmented approaches in prior literature and emphasizes the sociocultural embeddedness of consumer decision-making.

Moreover, the findings highlight that country-of-origin image functions not only as a cognitive evaluation cue but also as a symbolic and identity-related signal interacting with consumers' value systems. In particular, the strong impact of the economic development dimension suggests that perceptions of national economic strength, technological advancement, and institutional stability play a central role in shaping consumer trust toward foreign brands.

Finally, the inclusion of a generational perspective underscores the heterogeneity of sociocultural effects within national markets, reinforcing the theoretical relevance of generational cohorts in explaining variations in foreign brand acceptance. These findings contribute to the broader literature on international

consumer behavior by demonstrating that sociocultural orientations and perceptions of national development interact in complex ways when consumers evaluate global brands.

Practical implications

From a practical perspective, the findings provide actionable guidance for international marketers and policymakers by highlighting the importance of generationally differentiated strategies. For consumers belonging to Generation X, who exhibit stronger collectivist orientations and higher levels of animosity toward foreign countries, foreign brands should adopt localized positioning strategies that emphasize respect for local values, cultural compatibility, and long-term commitment to the domestic market. Such strategies may include localized branding elements, partnerships with local actors, and communication that highlights mutual economic and cultural benefits.

In contrast, marketing strategies targeting Generations Y and Z should place greater emphasis on innovation, design, global lifestyle associations, and the symbolic value of the country-of-origin image, particularly in terms of fashion leadership and economic development. For these younger cohorts, foreign brands may benefit from digital-first communication, experiential marketing, and narratives that stress openness, creativity, and global connectedness.

Overall, these insights suggest that a one-size-fits-all approach to foreign brand positioning is increasingly ineffective. Instead, generational segmentation represents a critical strategic lever for enhancing brand acceptance in culturally diverse markets, particularly in transitional economies where traditional values and global consumer trends coexist.

Limitations and future research

Despite its theoretical and empirical contributions, this study is subject to several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the empirical analysis relies on self-reported data collected through Likert-type scales, which may be susceptible to social desirability bias or response consistency effects, particularly when examining sensitive constructs such as consumer animosity. While this approach is well established and widely accepted in consumer behavior research, future studies could strengthen the robustness of the findings by complementing survey-based data with behavioral or experimental methods, such as simulated purchase scenarios or implicit

measurement techniques.

Second, the study focuses on a single national context, which may limit the broader generalization of the findings to other cultural and economic environments. Although the sample exhibits substantial demographic and generational heterogeneity, future research conducted in different national or regional contexts could provide additional insights into the sociocultural determinants of foreign brand consumption and allow for broader validation of the proposed relationships.

Future studies may also adopt a cross-cultural perspective and explore additional constructs such as cosmopolitanism, xenocentrism, or perceived brand globalness in order to further enrich the understanding of consumer responses to foreign brands. In addition, longitudinal research designs could provide valuable insights into how geopolitical developments, economic transformations, and generational shifts influence the acceptance of foreign brands over time.

Declarations

Availability of data and materials

The datasets used and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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