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HOW FIRSTHAND EXPOSURE RESHAPES NIGERIAN PERCEPTIONS OF CHINESE PRODUCT QUALITY AND COUNTRY-OF-ORIGIN BIAS

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the intricate relationships between Firsthand Exposure to China (FHEC), Perceptions of Chinese Products (PPCP), Cultural Familiarity with China (CUFC), and Nigerian Perceptions of Chinese Product Quality (PCPQ) and Country-of-Origin Bias. It specifically examines how FHEC, PPCP, and CUFC directly influence PCPQ, providing valuable insights into how these factors enhance consumer perception within the Chinese production sector. Using a stratified sampling method, 390 responses were gathered from Nigerian consumers of Chinese products, and the data was analyzed using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) technique. The results indicate that FHEC, PPCP, and CUFC have a significant positive effect on PCPQ, highlighting their key role in building product quality in the market. These findings contribute to the ongoing discourse on PCPQ, particularly in how product quality can be established and maintained through these strategies. Additionally, the research offers practical recommendations, urging Chinese production companies in Nigeria to adopt a strategic framework that prioritizes sustainability, product quality, and diversification to enhance product perception. Specifically, companies should establish a cross-functional task force to implement these strategies, track progress, and adapt to emerging industry trends and quality standards. This structured approach will help companies navigate market volatility, comply with evolving regulations, and maintain a competitive edge through enhanced product quality and innovative practices.

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INTRODUCTION

Globalization has significantly shaped international trade, consumer behavior, and perceptions of product quality across different markets (Johnson *et al*., 2022). China, as the world's leading manufacturing hub, has experienced diverse and often contradictory perceptions regarding the quality of its products(BANICA *et al*., 2015). While Chinese goods dominate global markets, including Nigeria, many consumers hold preconceived biases about their quality. These biases are often shaped by media portrayals, third-party opinions, and previous experiences with low-cost Chinese products(Akhter *et al*., 2022). However, firsthand exposure to China (FHEC)through travel, education, or business interactionscan offer a direct perspective that may reshape these preconceived notions(Huang & Wang, 2022). This study examines how FHEC, prior perceptions of Chinese products (PPCP), and cultural familiarity with China (CUFC) influence the perception of Chinese product quality (PCPQ) among Nigerian consumers. Accordingly, Nigeria has become an important trading partner of China, with Chinese products ranging from consumer electronics to automobiles and construction materials flooding the Nigerian market (Moshood *et al*., 2022). However, perceptions of these products remain mixed, with some consumers associating them with low durability and affordability, while others recognize China's advancements in high-tech industries(Rahman *et al*., 2022). Country-of-origin (COO) bias plays a crucial role in shaping these attitudes, as many Nigerian consumers generalize product quality based on the country's manufacturing reputation rather than specific brand performance (Wilk *et al*., 2020). This research investigates whether direct exposure to China and increased cultural familiarity can bridge the China experience gap and alter these perceptions. Furthermore, this study is particularly relevant given the increasing economic, political, and cultural ties between Nigeria and China(Falola, 2021). As more Nigerians travel to China for business, education, and tourism, their exposure to China's technological advancements, innovation hubs, and high-quality production facilities may challenge existing biases (AHAIWE & NWADIGOHA, 2021). This research seeks to determine whether such firsthand exposure (FHEC) leads to a more balanced or positive reassessment of Chinese product quality and whether prior perceptions (PPCP) and cultural familiarity (CUFC) influence this effect. Therefore, the objectives of the study are to examine the influence of firsthand exposure to China (FHEC) on perception of Chinese product quality (PCPQ) among Nigerian

consumers, to analyze the role of prior perceptions of Chinese products (PPCP) in shaping Nigerian consumer attitudes towards Chinese product quality (PCPQ), and lastly, to assess how cultural familiarity with China influences perception of Chinese product quality.The study further seeks to answer the following study interrogations; How does firsthand exposure to China influence Nigerian consumers' perception of Chinese product quality?In what ways do prior perceptions of Chinese products affect Nigerian consumer attitudes towards Chinese product quality? And finally, does cultural familiarity with China impact perception of Chinese product quality? In addition, the current research provides insightful contributions to existing body of knowledge in the following way; Firstly, this study will provide empirical evidence on how direct exposure to China influences country-of-origin biases and product quality perceptions. It will contribute to international marketing and consumer behavior literature by demonstrating the extent to which firsthand experience can reshape preconceived notions. Secondly, by analyzing how prior perceptions and cultural familiarity shape attitudes, this study will offer practical insights for Chinese manufacturers, Nigerian importers, and policymakers seeking to improve market acceptance of Chinese products. It will also help businesses design more effective marketing and branding strategies tailored to Nigerian consumer psychology. Lastly, the findings will highlight the role of cultural familiarity (CUFC) in fostering positive cross-border business relations. If exposure to China enhances trust in product quality, this could encourage more direct engagement between Nigerian businesses and Chinese manufacturers, reducing reliance on third-party narratives. After the introduction, the paper is organized as follows: Chapter 2 provides the literature review, Chapter 3 explains the research methodology, Chapter 4 presents the results and analysis, and Chapter 5 discusses the study's implications and limitations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Firsth and Exposure to Chinaand Perception of Chinese Product Quality: Firsthand exposure allows individuals to experience premium Chinese products firsthand, challenging the stereotype that all Chinese goods are of low quality. Seeing advanced manufacturing, innovative brands, and high-tech industries can lead to a more favorable perception of product quality(Zhao *et al*., 2018). Moreso, exposure to different product categories in China helps consumers recognize that Chinese products vary in quality based on price, target market, and manufacturing standards. This understanding reduces negative generalizations and promotes a more nuanced perception of product quality(H. Lin *et al*., 2020). Habib *et al*., (2021) suggests that visiting Chinese factories, production facilities, and wholesale markets allows individuals to witness the quality control measures, innovation, and technological advancements in Chinese manufacturing. This exposure increases trust and appreciation for Chinese-made products. Similarly, many Nigerians form perceptions of Chinese products through media narratives and secondhand opinions, which often emphasize low-cost, low-quality goods. Firsthand exposure provides a balanced perspective, allowing individuals to assess product quality based on personal experience rather than external biases (Al-Jahwari *et al*., 2018). Furthermore, many consumers are unaware of China's high-end brands that compete with global leaders in technology, automobiles, and fashion. Firsthand exposure introduces individuals to these brands, shifting their perception of Chinese products from cheap alternatives to high-quality, innovative solutions (Jie *et al*., 2022). Also, direct engagement with Chinese business practices, customer service, and market trends improves cultural understanding, leading to a more appreciative and informed view of Chinese products. This familiarity fosters confidence in Chinese brands and reduces skepticism about their quality (Han & Kim, 2017).

Prior Perceptions of Chinese Products and Perception of Chinese Product Quality: Consumers who have previously encountered high-quality Chinese products (e.g., Huawei, Xiaomi, BYD) are more likely to associate Chinese products with innovation and reliability. This prior positive perception strengthens their confidence in new Chinese products(Willott *et al*., 2020). Correspondingly, if consumers have previously bought durable and well-performing Chinese products, their perception of overall Chinese product quality improves. Positive firsthand experiences lead to repeat purchases and brand loyalty(Ibrahim & Aljarah, 2021). Furthermore, many consumers recognize China's rapid growth in technology, engineering, and AI-driven manufacturing. Prior knowledge of these advancements enhances their trust in the quality and competitiveness of Chinese products(Islam *et al*., 2018). Similarly, Chawla & Joshi, (2019) revealed that when consumers have positive prior perceptions, they are less likely to generalize all Chinese products as low quality. Instead, they distinguish between premium, mid-range, and low-end Chinese brands, leading to a more balanced perception of product quality. In addition, consumers who have followed trends in Chinese product innovation (e.g., electric vehicles, 5G technology, smart appliances) tend to perceive Chinese products as globally competitive. This awareness reduces skepticism and improves acceptance of Chinese brands(C. Lin *et al*., 2013).Likewise,a study recommends that if consumers have heard positive testimonials from peers, influencers, or business associates, their prior perceptions of Chinese products are more favorable. This trust leads to higher expectations of product quality and greater willingness to purchase (Jie *et al*., 2022).

Cultural Familiarity with China and Perception of Chinese Product Quality: Chinomona, (2019) posits that greater cultural familiarity helps consumers move beyond negative stereotypes about Chinese products. Understanding China's business ethics, innovation, and craftsmanship allows for a more balanced and informed perception of product quality.Thus, consumers who are familiar with China's culture, values, and work ethic tend to trust Chinese manufacturers and brands more. This trust makes them more willing to purchase high-quality Chinese products without skepticism (Dubey *et al*., 2024). Additionally, cultural familiarity helps consumers recognize that China produces goods across various quality levels, from luxury to budget-friendly options. This awareness prevents generalizations that all Chinese products are low-quality (Ghorbanzadeh & Rahehagh, 2021). Accordingly, people familiar with China's technological progress in sectors like AI, green energy, and smart devices are more likely to perceive Chinese products as advanced, competitive, and high-quality (Alwakid *et al*., 2020). Furthermore, exposure to Chinese business culture and manufacturing standards boosts confidence in product reliability. Consumers who understand China's emphasis on quality control and customer satisfaction tend to have a more favorable perception of Chinese products(Awan, 2019). Also, cultural familiarity gained through media, travel, education, or interactions with Chinese businesses fosters a more accurate understanding of China's market and product quality. This reduces misconceptions and enhances brand acceptance (Atlas *et al*., 2021).

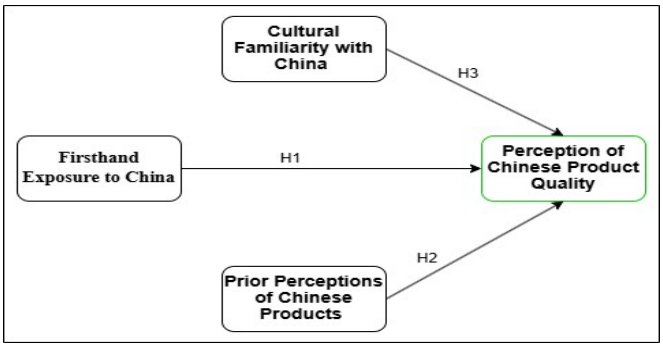

Figure 1. Conceptual outline

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research method and sampling: The investigator employed a questionnaire-based approach to gather data from respondents,

distributing written forms directly to them. This method involved engaging participants on key variables pertinent to the study. The questionnaire comprised both closed and open-ended questions, facilitating easy coding and data analysis. This approach was selected for its efficiency in reaching a large sample within a short timeframe, ensuring the collection of relevant information (Latif *et al*., 2022;Wiredu *et al*., 2020). The questionnaire was structured into three sections: the first section included a face sheet to capture respondents' demographic details; the second focused on firsthand exposure, while the third examined perceptions of Chinese product quality. A five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Not Sure, 4 = Disagree, 5 = Strongly Disagree) was utilized due to its reliability in measuring responses. This method allowed respondents to express their views freely while providing a cost-effective means to collect substantial data within a short period.The measurement scales were adapted from previous studies, with minor modifications to align with the research context (Wiredu, Yang, *et al*., 2021). Participants were selected based on their interest in Chinese product quality and included CEOs, General Managers, and employees. Eligible participants were required to have a minimum of five years of experience in the Nigerian manufacturing sector.

As part of the survey distribution process, the researchers provided participants with a consent form and clearly explained the study's objectives, assuring them that their responses would remain strictly confidential and used solely for research purposes. Given the diverse sub-sectors within the oil and gas industry under investigation, a stratified random sampling technique was employed. This method involved dividing the population into distinct strata and selecting a proportionate random sample from each to ensure a comprehensive representation of key variables (Ababneh, 2021;Wiredu, Bo, *et al*., 2021). Since the sub-sectors varied in the number of enterprises they encompassed, stratified random sampling with proportional allocation was applied to guarantee adequate representation based on predefined inclusion criteria. During the initial phase of data collection, researchers reached out to 440 potential respondents through personal outreach, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook. By the end of the data collection period, an impressive 88% response rate (N = 390) was recorded, reflecting strong participant engagement. As the study did not involve clinical or animal experiments, ethical approval was not required. Data collection was conducted with strict secrecy, and input remained completely voluntary.

Demographic Profile of Respondents: Respondents were asked to provide details on their gender, company age, company size, educational background, and job position. Their responses were analyzed using frequency and percentage distributions, as summarized in Table 1 below. The findings indicate that the sample consisted of 230 male respondents (59%) and 160 female respondents (41%).Regarding company age, the data reveal that 31% of manufacturing firms had been operating for 1–5 years, while the majority (46%) had between 6 and 20 years of business experience. Companies with over 21 years in the industry accounted for 23% of the sample. These results suggest that a significant proportion of Chinese manufacturing firms (46%) have developed substantial experience over 6–20 years, reflecting a strong but relatively recent establishment in the sector. This distribution highlights a notable presence of firms with sufficient industry experience, positioning them to effectively navigate both the challenges and opportunities in the manufacturing landscape. Concerning educational background, the results show that 51% of Chinese company owners held a bachelor's degree, making it the most common qualification among the respondents. The next largest group, comprising 28% of the sample, held a master's degree. A smaller proportion, 21%, had earned a PhD. These findings indicate that over three-quarters of Chinese business leaders possess undergraduate-level qualifications, pointing to a predominantly technical and vocational educational background within the industry. This level of education is likely aligned with the practical skills necessary for operational roles in the sector.The study also revealed that 18% (70) of respondents held the position of Chief Executive Officer, 32% (125) were General Managers, and 50% (195) were employees. Regarding company size, Table 1 illustrates that the majority of Chinese companies in Nigeria employed between 10 and 50 workers (54%), followed by 28% with 51-100 employees, and only 18% with more than 100 employees. This distribution suggests that most Chinese companies in Nigeria have relatively small teams, which could be attributed to the high level of technology in use, allowing for automation and reducing the need for large workforces.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondent's (N=390)

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	230	59%
	Female	160	41%
Company Age	1-5	120	31%
	6–20	180	46%
	21 and above	90	23%
Educational Background	Undergraduate	200	51%
	Master degree	110	28%
	Ph.D. degree	80	21%
Job Position	Chief Executive Officer	70	18%
	General Manager	125	32%
	Employee	195	50%
Company Size	10-50	210	54%
	51-100	110	28%
	100 and above	70	18%

Measurements: The online survey for this study was carried out in two phases. In the first phase, respondents provided fundamental demographic details, including gender, company age, educational background, job position, and company size, as summarized in Table 1. The second phase focused on measurement scales adapted from prior research, as detailed in Table 2. The questionnaire incorporated two higher-order constructs, covering key variables such as Perception of Chinese Product Quality (PCPQ), Firsthand Exposure to China (FHEC), Prior Perceptions of Chinese Products (PPCP), and Cultural Familiarity with China (CUFC).To enhance the accuracy and reliability of the study, feedback from manufacturing employees and industry experts was collected before finalizing and distributing the questionnaire. All constructs were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, with response options ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Table 2. Measurement Details

Construct	No of Items	Source
Perception of Chinese Product Quality	6	(H. Lin *et al*., 2020)
Firsthand Exposure to China	4	(Habib *et al*., 2021)
Prior Perceptions of Chinese Products	6	(Jie *et al*., 2022)
Cultural Familiarity with China	4	(Atlas *et al*., 2021)

Method of Data Analysis: The study employed the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method to assess the theoretical framework for several key reasons. Firstly, PLS-SEM enables precise estimation of relationships between variables by simultaneously analyzing both structural and measurement models, providing a comprehensive evaluation (Hair *et al*., 2020;Wiredu *et al*., 2023). This method is particularly beneficial for exploratory research, as it effectively manages complex relationships, including moderation and mediation effects, even when sample sizes are relatively small (Meng *et al*., 2023).Furthermore, PLS-SEM is widely recognized across various disciplines and has been extensively used in business product studies, demonstrating its robustness and reliability in similar research settings (Wiredu *et al*., 2024). Its combination of accuracy, flexibility, and established credibility makes PLS-SEM a highly suitable analytical tool for this investigation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Measurement reliability and validity: To assess the internal reliability of the constructs, the study utilized multiple tests, including composite reliability, Cronbach's alpha, factor loadings, and average variance extracted (AVE).Hair *et al*., (2021), recommend a threshold of 0.70 or higher for composite reliability, Cronbach's alpha, and factor loadings. As shown in Table 3, the findings indicate that all constructs meet or exceed these recommended thresholds, confirming the strong internal reliability of the measurement scales used in this research.

Table 3. Summary of validity results

Indicators	Items	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's alpha (α>0.7)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	AVE (>0.5)	VIF
	FHEC1	0.726	0.791	0.800	0.615	1.302
FHEC	FHEC2	0.737				1.567
	FHEC3	0.844				1.959
	FHEC4	0.823				1.901
	PPCP1	0.822	0.813	0.832	0.585	1.212
	PPCP2	0.851				1.954
PPCP	PPCP3	0.755				3.244
	PPCP4	0.780				2.405
	PPCP5	0.809				4.622
	PPCP6	0.798				1.300
	CUFC1	0.773	0.723	0.829	0.549	1.272
CUFC	CUFC2	0.847				1.727
	CUFC3	0.743				1.414
	CUFC4	0.789				1.302
	PCPQ1	0.766	0.743	0.825	0.655	1.759
	PCPQ2	0.741				1.300
PCPQ	PCPQ3	0.838				1.940
	PCPQ4	0.709				1.449
	PCPQ5	0.859				1.373
	PCPQ6	0.707				1.192

Table 4. Results of Discriminant Validity

Fornell & Larcker, (1981) Criteria					
	CUFC	FHEC	PCPQ	PPCP	
CUFC	0.741				
FHEC	0.275	0.784			
PCPQ	0.966	0.390	0.675		
PPCP	0.472	0.547	0.633	0.696	
HTMT Criteria					
	CUFC	FHEC	PCPQ	PPCP	
CUFC					
FHEC	0.663				
PCPQ	0.266	0.587			
PPCP	0.472	0.651	0.674		

Common method bias (CMB): The common method bias (CMB) can artificially increase the standard errors of regression coefficients, making it difficult to isolate the distinct impact of each predictor on the dependent variable. To mitigate multicollinearity and enhance the clarity of variable relationships, this study conducted an assessment using the variance inflation factor (VIF). As shown in Table 3, all VIF values fall below the recommended threshold of 5.00, as proposed by Harman (1976), indicating that collinearity and CMB are not a concern in this analysis.

Assessing reflective measurement model

Discriminate validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterial): Discriminant validity is an essential component of construct validity, demonstrating the extent to which a measurement accurately represents its intended theoretical construct. Henseler *et al*., (2016)suggest that a study model is considered valid when the structural model constructs exhibit values below the 0.90 threshold. This study assessed discriminant validity using both the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio and the Fornell & Larcker (1981)criteria. As presented in Table 4, the outcomes from both methods approve that the anticipated model possesses robust psychometric features.

Combined loadings and Cross loadings: Table 5 beneathoffers the outcomes for both cross-loadings and combined loadings of the constructs, offering a comprehensive assessment of their validity. The results indicate that each variable demonstrates stronger loadings on its corresponding items than on other variables, confirming that each construct successfully achieves convergent validity. This reinforces the reliability of the measurement instrument, ensuring that the theoretical constructs are accurately captured through their respective item loadings.

Moreover, the results suggest that the study model is free from significant measurement bias, aligning with previous research findings (Pham, 2021;Otoo *et al*., 2024). The absence of such bias enhances the robustness of the study, improving confidence in the reliability of the data. By maintaining high psychometric standards, this study ensures that its constructs are both conceptually and statistically sound. Consequently, these outcomes provide strong support for the overall validity of the model, reinforcing its suitability for examining the proposed relationships.

Model Performance and Goodness of Fit: Assessing effect size is a crucial complement to evaluating the significance level (p-value) of relationships between variables, as it highlights the practical relevance of observed effects within the study model. In this research, effect size was measured using F^2 and R^2 tests, which assess the strength and explanatory power of each predictor. As presented in Table 6, the results indicate that the statistical coefficients for F^2 and R^2 range from small to large effect sizes, offering a detailed perspective on the impact of each variable.Furthermore, the model's goodness of fit was evaluated using root mean square error (RMSE), RMS_theta, and the normed fit index (NFI).

These indicators confirm the robustness and reliability of the analysis, further strengthening the study's validity. This rigorous analytical approach ensures that the findings are both credible and actionable, providing policymakers with valuable insights to support well-informed decision-making based on the study's results.

H1 (β = 0.541, t = 7.817, p = 0.000). Moreover, PPCP significantly influences PCPQ, as supported by H2 (β = 0.406, t = 10.362, p = 0.000). Additionally, the analysis demonstrated that CUFC has a positive effect on PCPQ, as indicated by H3 (β = 0.858, t = 9.714, p = 0.000).

Table 5. Item cross-loading matrix of the constructs

Constructs	CUFC	FHEC	PCPQ	PPCP
CUFC1	0.673	0.205	0.641	0.197
CUFC2	0.847	0.150	0.838	0.433
CUFC3	0.743	0.217	0.709	0.414
CUFC4	0.689	0.263	0.659	0.333
FHEC1	0.268	0.726	0.332	0.358
FHEC2	0.139	0.737	0.224	0.424
FHEC3	0.233	0.844	0.326	0.447
FHEC4	0.200	0.823	0.316	0.491
PCPQ1	0.590	0.460	0.766	0.798
PCPQ2	0.671	0.201	0.641	0.197
PCPQ3	0.847	0.150	0.838	0.433
PCPQ4	0.743	0.217	0.709	0.414
PCPQ5	0.689	0.263	0.659	0.333
PCPQ6	0.151	0.525	0.707	0.499
PPCP1	0.420	0.158	0.493	0.722
PPCP2	0.181	0.335	0.242	0.651
PPCP3	0.202	0.476	0.290	0.755
PPCP4	0.170	0.412	0.292	0.780
PPCP5	0.237	0.384	0.321	0.809
PPCP6	0.590	0.460	0.766	0.798

Table 6. Structural Model Fit Summary

Variables	R^2	F^2
CUFC		
FHEC	0.541	0.761
PCPQ	0.821	0.046
PPCP	0.975	0.995
Model Fitness Indicators	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
RMSE	0.342	0.254
NFI	0.218	0.267
(RMS_theta)	0.183	0.176

Table 7. Results of Hypothesis Analysis

Hypothesis	Relationship	β	T-stats	P-value	Hypothesis Supported
Direct Relationship					
H1	FHEC ->PCPQ	0.541***	7.817	0.000	Supported
H2	PPCP ->PCPQ	0.406***	10.362	0.000	Supported
H3	CUFC ->PCPQ	0.858***	9.714	0.000	Supported

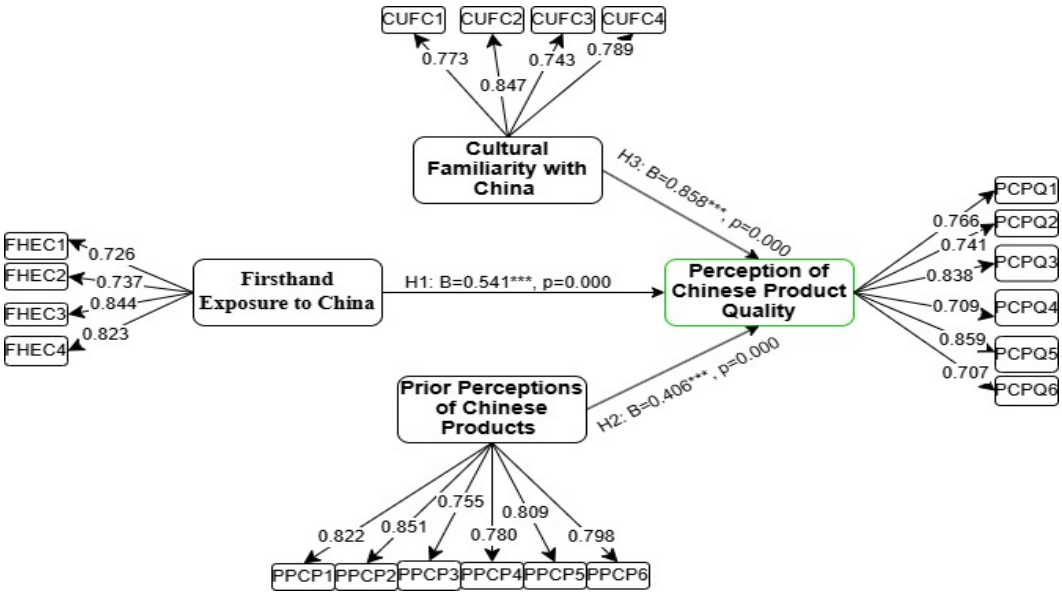

Figure 2. Final Model with Estimated Parameters

Direct Path Analysis: The study introduced three direct relationships within the research model. Empirical findings confirmed that FHEC has a strong and significant direct impact on PCPQ, as evidenced by

Furthermore, Table 7 presents the results of the direct paths, emphasizing the significance and direction of each hypothesized relationship. These findings provide crucial insights into the strength

of associations between key variables. Additionally, Figure 2 visually illustrates the structural model, incorporating the final model with estimated parameters. This detailed representation enhances comprehension by offering a holistic view of the study's framework. By integrating numerical and graphical data, the analysis ensures a deeper understanding of the relationships among essential constructs, reinforcing theoretical and practical implications.

DISCUSSION

The concept of Perceived Chinese Product Quality (PCPQ) has garnered significant scholarly interest, particularly in studies analyzing consumer perceptions within the Chinese production sector. Despite this growing attention, there remains a gap in understanding the specific mechanisms through which FHEC, PPCP, and CUFC influence PCPQ, especially in emerging economies like Nigeria. Addressing this research gap, the present study explores the direct relationships between these critical factors and their impact on Nigerian consumers' perceptions of Chinese products. The empirical findings confirm that FHEC, PPCP, and CUFC significantly and positively shape PCPQ, reinforcing the proposed hypotheses (H1 to H3). These insights provide a deeper understanding of consumer trust, product acceptance, and market positioning of Chinese products in developing markets like Nigeria. The findings reveal that FHEC has a significant and positive impact on PCPQ. A possible explanation for this result could be thatfirsthand exposure to China allows Nigerian consumers to personally observe Chinese manufacturing processes, technological advancements, and quality control measures. This direct experience challenges pre-existing biases and misconceptions, leading to a more positive perception of Chinese product quality and reducing negative country-of-origin bias(H. Lin *et al*., 2020). Also, when Nigerians visit China for business, education, or tourism, they engage directly with Chinese brands, retailers, and industries. This exposure enhances their understanding of product reliability, durability, and innovation, fostering greater trust in Chinese goods. As a result, their perception of Chinese product quality improves, and country-of-origin bias diminishes, as firsthand experience replaces secondhand information or media-driven stereotypes (Jie *et al*., 2022).

Likewise, the findings of this studyaffirmedH2 that PPCP has a substantialinfluence on PCPQ. The outcome implies thatas Nigerian consumers increasingly use Chinese productsespecially those with high functionality, durability, and affordabilitytheir perception of Chinese product qualityimproves. Positive personal experiences with these products reinforce trust in Chinese brands, gradually shifting perceptions and reducing country-of-origin bias, which may have been shaped by outdated stereotypes (Ibrahim & Aljarah, 2021). Additionally, the result suggests that the widespread availability and competitive pricing of Chinese products in Nigeria expose consumers to a variety of options across different sectors, from electronics to automobiles. As Chinese brands invest in innovation, marketing, and after-sales services, Nigerians recognize their value and reliability, leading to a more favorable perception of product quality and a weakened country-of-origin bias (Willott *et al*., 2020). Lastly, the H3 of this researchestablished that CUFC positively impactsPCPQ. A probable elucidation to this electrifying outcome could be thatincreased cultural familiarity through media, education, business interactions, and diplomatic ties allows Nigerians to develop a better understanding of Chinese society, work ethics, and production standards. As cultural exposure grows, preconceived negative stereotypes about Chinese products diminish, leading to a more favorable perception of product quality and a reduction in country-of-origin bias (Chinomona, 2019). Also, when Nigerian consumers become more familiar with Chinese culturewhether through language, traditions, or personal relationshipsthey develop a sense of trust and emotional connection with Chinese brands. This familiarity fosters greater confidence in Chinese products, reinforcing the perception that they are reliable and of good quality, while simultaneously decreasing skepticism associated with products from China (Dubey *et al*., 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study provides significant insights into the intricate relationship between Firsthand Exposure to China (FHEC), Perceptions of Chinese Products (PPCP), Cultural Familiarity with China (CUFC), and Perceived Chinese Product Quality (PCPQ). Using the SEM-PLS methodology, the research hypotheses were rigorously tested, and the findings confirmed that FHEC, PPCP, and CUFC positively influence PCPQ. These results contribute to a deeper understanding of consumer perception dynamics in resource-rich developing economies, offering crucial insights for policy formulation and strategic planning. This research is particularly relevant for stakeholders aiming to enhance consumer confidence in Chinese products within the region.

Practical Implications: This study presents several practical contributions. Given that the findings confirm the crucial role of FHEC, PPCP, and CUFC in improving PCPQ, the research recommends that:

- First, since FHEC is vital in enhancing PCPQ, companies and policymakers should prioritize creating opportunities for Nigerians to have firsthand exposure to China, through trade fairs, educational exchanges, or business partnerships. This will foster a deeper understanding and positive perception of Chinese products.
- Second, the positive role of CUFC in improving PCPQ suggests that companies should invest in initiatives that increase cultural exchange and familiarity, such as cultural events, media representation, or collaboration with Nigerian influencers to build trust and confidence in Chinese products.
- Third, since PPCP significantly influences PCPQ, Chinese manufacturers should emphasize transparent production processes and certification standards when marketing to Nigerian consumers. Providing clear, verifiable information about product quality can help improve the perception of Chinese goods.
- Lastly, the findings suggest that enhancing FHEC, PPCP, and CUFC can improve PCPQ. Therefore, Chinese companies should focus on gathering and acting on feedback from Nigerian consumers to refine product offerings, tailor marketing campaigns, and create more culturally relevant messaging that resonates with the local market.

Limitations and Future Research: Though the research provides valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge some limitations. First, the study employs a cross-sectional design, capturing data at a single point in time. This approach does not account for long-term changes or evolving perceptions. Hence, A longitudinal study could be conducted to track changes in Nigerian consumer perceptions of Chinese products over time, considering how factors like economic shifts, policy changes, or brand reputation affect PCPQ. Second, the study focuses on FHEC, PPCP, and CUFC, but other factors such as price sensitivity, product availability, or local competition may also influence PCPQ and Country-of-Origin Bias. Therefore, future studies could include additional variables, such as price perception, marketing tactics, or technological advancements, to explore a more comprehensive model of how consumer perceptions of Chinese products are shaped.

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